

Chef from the Hood Recipes



Nothing says "Cheers!"

...like our selection of Sparkling Wine & Champagne!

Kristi and Jeff have gathered an incredible selection of festive sparklers for your table this year.

English: Cheers! German: Prost! (also means cheers) Italian: Per cent'anni! (for 100 years) Chinese: Ganbei! Japanese: Kanpai! (both mean "dry your cup") Hebrew: Le'chaim! (to life) French: Santé!, Irish: Sláinte!, Italian: Salute!, Spanish: Salud!, Dutch: Prost!, Russian: Vashe zdorovie!, Welsh: Iechyd da! (all mean "to health!"). Americans have the wordiest toasts: usually a short speech with wise reflections on friendship, love &/or family.

Thank You Sonoma County!

With special cheers to those that farm, fish, prep, cook, bake, and toil to create good food for others. We wish you rest, peace & warm holidays!

Ken Silveira, Fiesta & Pacific

You say "Champagne", I say, ahhhh?

Champagne is a region of France, and only wines which come from this region are called Champagne. Bubbles from the rest of the world (and there are many) are known as sparkling wine (with one exception). Korbel of Sonoma County, California (yep, our neighbors!) challenged this "rule" in court and as a result, they also call their excellent and inexpensive sparkling wine "Champagne". Spain's sparkling wine is Cava, (which means cave or cellar); South Africa calls their bubbly Cap Classique or Cape Classic; Germany's sparkling wine is Sekt; Italians make Asti Spumanti and Prosecco...

Who is responsible for those bubbles?

Though famous for bubbles, neither Lawrence Welk nor Don Ho made Champagne. But in the 1700s, French winemaker and monk Dom Pérignon DID make wine. One year, perhaps due to the high sugar content in the grapes he had used, his wine fizzed with bubbles. Initially he believed his wine was ruined. But after some careful blending, Dom realized that the bubbles could be considered an asset. Romantic Dom had a way with words as well as wine, and reputedly explained about his new "Champagne", "It's like drinking the stars!" Soon afterward, Champagne became the rage of modern French aristocracy. No celebration or wedding since has been the same without this prestigious beverage.

To market, to market to buy a...

Brut, the style with the most GREAT choices is also the driest. Extra-dry is less dry than Brut. Sec is sweet, and Demi Sec is even sweeter. Wines labeled with a vintage year are made from a single year's grapes while non-vintage wines are made from a blend of years of grape crops.

To keep and to share from this day forward...

Store all wine bottles on their sides at around 55F, in a dark, damp location. Never store wine or Champagne in a regular refrigerator as the cork will dry out and ruin the bottle's contents. Serve all bubbles at about 45 degrees in tall, narrow glass flutes (the linear shape helps the wine preserve its bubbles and flavor.) Spontaneous celebration? Canapes of caviar, shellfish, crab and good cheese are the perfect accompaniment to sparkling wine. Chill wine quickly by filling a sink with enough ice AND water to cover the bottle. (Water is the key to a quick chill.) Twirl the bottle in ice water for 5 minutes or just leave it in the ice water for about ten minutes. Voila! Properly chilled and ready to pour or hold in your refrigerator for an hour or so! To open, drape a cloth towel over the neck of the bottle while you carefully remove the foil and the metal wire cage. The cloth is a precaution to the rare possibility that the cork will shoot out like a cannonball - so watch where you point that bottle! Next, grasp the cork with the towel and twist the bottle, not the cork. You'll feel the cork coming free. Ease the cork out at the last second... the gentle twisting of the bottle will give you a nice "pop" sound but spare you the amateurish fizz geyser (that messy drama looses too much wine and also flattens the lovely bubbles that remain in the bottle!). As the host, don't forget the toast!

Kristi Mohar (wine buyer for Fiesta and Pacific Markets); and her assistant Jeff Wickersham (he's also a student in the Wine Biz program at Sonoma State and a bartender at K & L Wine Bar & Bistro) encourage you to practice your toasts!