



ALL OF the sparkling wines from the Golan Heights Winery are made strictly by the Traditional Method and represent excellent quality. (The Golan Heights Winery)

THE ULTIMATE PARTY WINE



• ADAM MONTEFIORE

You do not need a reason to drink a sparkling wine. It is the wine of celebration, the ultimate party wine, and the best wine to toast any achievement. However, New Year's Eve or Sylvester's is as good a reason as any!

The Rolls Royce of sparkling wine is Champagne, from the specific region in France. Here wines are made in the most expensive way. The bubbles come from a secondary fermentation that occurs in the actual bottle that is sold. The carbon dioxide that is a result of the fermentation is trapped in the bottle. The method used by the Champenoise is copied by other producers. Anywhere that the words "Classic Method" or "Traditional Method" appears on the label is your clue that the wine has been made by the "Methode Champenoise," though they can't call it Champagne, because the name is protected.

Champagne is normally made from a blend of Chardonnay,

Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. This is the best example of how a white wine can be made from red grapes. Famous Champagne names include Moët et Chandon, Veuve Clicquot and Bollinger. The wines are aged in the bottle on the yeast, known as lees. This can give a bready, yeasty aroma and greater complexity. The more expensive wines will be likely to have more aging in this way. An example of a prestige label is Krug or Dom Perignon, named after the blind monk who in mistaken folklore is said to have discovered sparkling wine. "Come quickly, I think I am drinking stars!" is the memorable quote attributed to him.

Other wines made by this expensive, long-winded method are Spanish Cava, Franciacorta in Italy, Cremant in France and our own Yarden and Gamla, produced by the Golan Heights Winery. Cava has become a kind of slang in Israel. Many will ask for a Cava, meaning any sparkling wine. The new quality player is England. This is clear evidence of the effect of global warming. They are making some excellent sparkling wines, but they are not cheap.

A more common, less costly way of making sparkling wines is the Charmat Method, also known as Cuvee Close. In this instance the

second fermentation takes place in a large tank. The wine is then bottled under pressure, so the bubbles are maintained. The famous brand made this way is Prosecco, which has exploded worldwide. It is made with the Glera grape and has a flowery aroma that has made it a big hit. Many think Prosecco is the grape variety, but it is a region in northwest Italy. In Israel, Carmel Winery is making a sparkling wine from the Charmat process. The bubbles tend to be larger than the more refined traditional-method wines.

The cheapest way of making sparkling wine is by carbonation. This is simply an injection of carbon dioxide, which I call the Coca-Cola method. Most of the sparkling wines sold in wedding halls will be made in this way. The fizz is usually fierce, but it dissipates quickly.

SOME WORDS to assist you. *Brut* means dry. Blanc de Blancs is made only from white grapes, usually Chardonnay. Blanc de Noirs is made only from red grapes. In Champagne, this means Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. Most sparkling wine is NV, that is to say Non Vintage, a blend. The better wines will have a vintage.

Then there are lightly sparkling wines, known as *frizzante* in Italian. Most popular in this category is Lambrusco, which is made in the Emilia Romagna region in Italy. It is an abused variety because of its popularity. It can be sweet, frothy and little else, in either red or white incarnations, and many love it. The better red Lambruscos have a tart flavor of red berries and cherries, and an acidity that balances the sweetness. Lambrusco is very popular in Israel. My late wife loved it, so who am I to deny anyone the right to enjoy it if they want to? However, if you have the opportunity to search for a better quality Lambrusco, don't turn it down out of hand because it is more expensive than the basic brands of Lambrusco.

Finally, there are the slightly sparkling wines, like Moscato. These are really low-alcohol dessert wines, with a spritz. The wine style hails from the Asti region in Piedmont. However, come New Year, they can be regarded as semi-sparkling wines. Bartenura, which is kosher, is the largest exported brand of Moscato. Israeli brands include Hermon by Golan Heights Winery and Buzz by Carmel.

Sparkling wines should be served ice cold and opened with great care. The pressure of a cork popping can be dangerous, particularly to eyes, as the cork is shaped in a way that could enter the eye socket. Open a bottle at 45 degrees, not pointing at anyone you like. Keep a finger on top of the cork, undo the protective wire, then hold the cork and turn the bottle while gently easing the cork. Forget about the Formula One-type celebrations. The bottle should open with an erotic sigh, rather than a pop and a splash.

The classic glass for sparkling wines is the flute- or tulip-shaped glass, but any white wine glass will do. Tipping the glass will help you to pour steadily. Sparkling wine is the classic aperitif wine, and it will go with first courses, fish dishes and poultry. It can be versatile. I have had some great meals with sparkling wine served throughout. Some like to end a banquet, after many courses, with clean, brut sparkling wine. Lambrusco is great with cold meats and the best with pizza. Moscato is an any-time, any-place wine, from breakfast to being drunk with fruit-based desserts at the end of an evening meal.

THE MOST famous sparkling wine cocktails are Bellini (Prosecco and peach nectar), Mimosa, aka Bucks Fizz (Champagne and freshly squeezed orange juice), and Kir Royale (sparkling wine with Crème de Cassis.) I think Mimosa is one of the finest drinks ever invented. Kir Royale is what you will often be served, using an inferior sparkling wine, when you arrive at weddings. There are plenty of options, all of which are kosher, except the Martini Brut and Maschio Prosecco.

- **Rothschild Champagne Brut NV** is a subtle blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. It is lively, with small, persistent bubbles. It has a fragrance with aromas of pear and white flowers, and a hint of yeasty toastiness. Flavorful and refreshing, it is a joint venture of the three wine-producing Rothschild families from the famous Bordeaux Chateaux Lafite, Mouton and Clarke. The wine represents chic luxury with the label and name to match the quality. *NIS 400*

- **Drappier Carte D'Or** is produced by the eighth generation of a family-owned and managed Champagne house. It is delicate and steely with aromas of pear and peach, backed by brioche. It is mainly made from Pinot Noir, which explains the delicate berry flavor on the palate, so it is almost a Blanc de Noir. This is a quality Champagne with a distinctive yellow label, the color of quince, an aroma many have found in the wine over the years. *NIS 240*



- **Yarden Blanc de Blancs 2011:** The Golan Heights Winery is our finest producer of sparkling wines, and this is one of the greatest Israeli wines. It is made entirely from Chardonnay, strictly by the traditional method, and matches the quality of the very finest Champagnes, yet is a fraction of the price. It has an aroma of green apple, pear and white flowers with a hint of recently baked bread. It is crisp yet complex, delicate yet with great depth. It is a vintage wine that was aged for a minimum of five years on its tirage yeast. A classic expression of a truly fine, quality sparkling wine. *NIS 130*

- **Yarden Rosé Brut 2013:** What goes for the Yarden Blanc de Blancs is also true of their Brut Rosé. It has a beautiful onion skin color, and a fragrance with a nose of strawberries and a hint of citrus. It is minerally on the palate, with a crisp finish. Another sparkling wine of the highest quality from the Golan Heights Winery. *NIS 130*

- **Gamla Brut NV:** This is quite simply the best value quality sparkling wine out there. It is a steal. It is made by the Golan Heights Winery from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, grown in the Northern Golan. It has a nose of lime and citrus, with a hint of white flowers, and has a piercing acidity, which is bracing and refreshing. Certainly a best buy. *NIS 65.*



- **Martini Brut:** Martini, the famous Vermouth producer, produces this sparkler made from Glera and Chardonnay, grown in the Veneto-Friuli region in Italy. It has pear and apple aromas and a refreshing bite on the finish. *NIS 65*

- **Maschio dei Cavalieri Prosecco Treviso:** This is Extra Dry. Confusingly named because in sparkling wine lingo, it means it has moderate sweetness. It has a fresh and fruity aroma, is light in the mouth and is eminently gluggable. *NIS 60*

- **Iberia Cava Brut:** Not the best Cava, but it does represent great value. It is refreshing, well balanced and also has a clean finish. An ideal wine for a sparkling wine cocktail. *NIS 25*

- **Ameradori Lambrusco Rosso:** This is red, frizzante, with ripe cherry-berry fruit, mouth-filling fruity sweetness offset by the bubbles. A fun wine to be enjoyed, and not taken too seriously. *NIS 25*



- **Bartenura Moscato:** Low alcohol, this is the largest brand of Italian Moscato from the Asti region, and the best-selling kosher wine in America. It may be recognized by its iconic blue bottle, copied by many others. Moscatos are sweeter, lower alcohol and only slightly sparkling, in comparison with its elder sister, Asti Spumante. *NIS 55*

- **Tabor Har Moscato:** This is 5.5% alcohol, made from Muscat Canelli. Light, frothy, grapey. Simple, tasty and sweet. I like the screw cap, which makes it so easy to open. *NIS 39* ■

The writer has advanced Israeli wine for over 30 years and is referred to as the English voice of Israeli wine. www.adammontefiore.com

(Photos: Wineries mentioned)

