

Tasting Monterey

A WINE ENTHUSIAST'S MONTHLY JOURNEY THROUGH MONTEREY'S WINE COUNTRY



STORE HOURS

A Taste of Monterey
Cannery Row
Sun-Thu 11am-6pm
Fri-Sat 11am-8pm*

Food service begins at
11:30am daily

*No new member tastings
after 6pm

FEBRUARY REFERRALS



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ALL ABOUT THE BUBBLES

There just seems to be something special about wine with bubbles in it. Be it at a wedding or on New Year's Eve - opening a bottle of sparkling wine marks a special occasion. Those effervescent bubbles seem to have a way of bringing out smiles, and its reputation of making one "giddy" far quicker than expected is well known (and memories of following day headaches solidify the tender remembrances).

Perhaps we should begin by defining a few things. First off, a bottle of sparkling wine can technically only be called "champagne" if it is grown and produced in the Champagne region of France, similar to brandy from Cognac or port from Portugal. Therefore, when discussing "the bubbly", we should stick with referring to it as sparkling wine on a generalized basis (this is also a public safety announcement as French regulatory agents take this matter extremely serious). Secondly, a sparkling wine is defined as a wine with significant levels of carbon dioxide within it, which provides the bubbles.

It does make one wonder though how anyone ever perceived that bubbles in wine would be a good thing...I mean can you imagine having your glass of Cabernet Sauvignon fizzing with bubbles? No, no you cannot, which is exactly what people thought centuries ago when they noticed that occasionally their wine bottles had carbonation in them.

You likely recognize the name Dom Perignon and associate him with champagne/sparkling wine. In fact, the Dom Perignon champagne label may arguably be more recognized than any other wine bottle on the planet. And, although it is appropriate for Monsieur Perignon to receive credit for promoting quality sparkling wine, he by no means invented the process from scratch; his discovery of the positive attributes of carbonation in wine was actually accidental. Perignon was tasked originally with figuring out how to rid the situation from certain bottles occasionally having bubbles in them!

Now, let's get into the vineyards. It may not be surprising that the most common varietal for white sparkling wine production is Chardonnay, but it may be that the second is most likely Pinot Noir. Grapes used for sparkling wine production tend to be best when sourced from cooler growing climates, which explains why the Champagne region, far in the northeast of France, is the ancestral home of sparkling wines (and this is also why our own Monterey County produces some fantastic sparklers as well!).

Sparkling wine grapes are harvested early in order to capture high acidity levels and to avoid high sugar levels; avoiding tannins is another goal. To deter this as much as possible, extra care is taken during the harvest to avoid splitting of the berries, and grapes destined for sparkling wine production are pressed as soon as possible.

Moving on, let's venture into the winemaking process. White wine grapes are the most popular for use in making sparkling wines, and it is even possible for winemakers to make varietal sparklers, such as blanc de blancs (white of whites), which is 100% Chardonnay. However, the vast majority of sparkling wines produced are blends of several varietals, vineyards, and vintages - this is why it is not uncommon at all to see non-vintage sparkling wines.

Red wine grapes can be used for white sparkling production (as the juice is initially clear without prolonged exposure to grape skins), and these sparklers are known as blanc de noirs (white of blacks). Rosé sparkling wines are quite popular, especially in Spain and Portugal. Although rare, there are also red sparklers.

For all sparkling wines, primary fermentation occurs in the winemaking process, just as it does with still wine production. The alteration in the process that distinguishes sparkling production occurs with the



Continued Inside



Sparkling Wine Flight @ A TASTE OF MONTEREY

SAMPLE 3-SPARKLING WINES
FOR ONLY \$29 PER COUPLE (SAVE \$15!)

A romantic treat for you and your partner, this Sparkling Wine experience is a great opportunity for you to enjoy Monterey's Wine Country at our ocean's edge location. Enjoy two 2-oz pours of Sofia Blanc de Blancs, Folktale Winery Rose Brut, and Scheid Isabelle.

Valid 2/11-16/2018 and purchase online only

MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

CRAFTWORK - 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon



The Cabernet grapes were sourced from their estate Hames Valley and San Lucas Vineyards. Hames is located at the southern edge of Monterey County and has a climate characterized by a high day-to-night temperature differential, with a variation of up to 50° quite common. San Lucas, about 20 miles north of Hames Valley, is characterized by its beautiful rolling topography, sunshine-filled days, and cool nights. A small amount of Petite Sirah and Petit Verdot from Hames Valley add to the complexity of this balanced, Bordeaux-style Cabernet Sauvignon.

A mouth-filling Cabernet Sauvignon with ripe berry aromas and a hint of cedar, followed by rich flavors of blackberry and cassis and a smooth, long finish. The firm tannins make it a terrific pairing with steaks, chops, and juicy burgers.

95% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petite Sirah, 2% Petite Verdot

12.6% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2022

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

HAHN - 2016 SLH Chardonnay



A dry and sunny year for Santa Lucia Highlands, however below average temperatures remained over the region through the end of May and into June. Gustly, northwesterly jet streams caused upwelling of very cold water in the Monterey Bay. This wind and cold water impacted the Salinas Valley day and nighttime temperatures. As most vineyards were in bloom during that period, the cooler temperatures caused an elongation of the typical time it takes for the fruit to set. After being carefully picked and precisely sorted for quality, the grapes were pressed off their skins and fermented entirely in small French oak barrels. They then hand-stirred the wine on its lees every three weeks for the 12 months this Chardonnay aged in barrel. Hahn's winemaker, Paul Clifton, selected the barrels he felt best expressed the aromas, flavors and texture of the Santa Lucia Highlands.

Hahn SLH Chardonnay greets the nose with citrus, stone fruit and hints of banana and vanilla. A viscous mouthfeel with welcoming acidity that showcases stone fruits, citrus and hints of apple and spices.

100% Chardonnay

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2021

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

HAHN - 2016 SLH Pinot Noir (Club Red)



Hahn's vineyards planted in the Santa Lucia Highlands experience a long and dry growing season that results in wines with remarkable depth, complexity and ripe fruit flavors. Their SLH vineyards – Lone Oak, Doctor's, Smith and Hook– are planted on a narrow bench at elevations ranging from 200 to 1,200 feet above sea level. Here, plentiful sun and well-drained soils aid concentration and flavor development. After the fruit has been carefully picked and sorted, it is fermented in open top stainless steel tanks. We then age this Pinot Noir for up to 11 months in a selection of small, 60-gallon French oak barrels.

Aromas of bright red cherry and strawberry with hints of earth, spices and toasty oak. An explosion of red fruit including strawberry, cherry and raspberry welcome the palate, finishing with refined tannins and a soft mouthfeel.

100% Pinot Noir

14.8% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2021

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

CRAFTWORK - 2016 Sauvignon Blanc



Monterey County, with its combination of warm days followed by cool winds in the late afternoon, has excellent climatic conditions for this classic variety. The brisk conditions bring out the fruitiness of Sauvignon Blanc, with a hint of mineral edginess. At Craftwork, they utilize trellis systems in the vineyard that shelter the grapes, allowing filtered sunshine through the canopy to gently and evenly ripen the clusters.

Striking aromatics of grapefruit and guava with hints of fresh herbs lead into ripe apple and melon flavors. Bright and crisp with balanced acidity, the wine wraps up with a refreshing tropical fruit finish. Delicious as an apéritif, this Sauvignon Blanc is extremely food-friendly and pairs well with a broad range of foods, including citrusy ceviche, grilled shrimp or scallops, gazpacho, and Asian stir fry.

100% Sauvignon Blanc

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2019

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued



méthode champenoise, sometimes referred to as the “traditional” method. In this method, a base blend wine (cuvée) is bottled with sugar and yeast, with the sugar providing a food source for the yeast, eventually releasing carbon dioxide into the wine. The dead yeast cells (called “lees”) are removed from the wine and voila!

Another method used to produce sparkling wines is the method charmant. This method uses stainless steel tanks that are pressurized, which stimulates the process of the yeast and sugar interaction, and then the wine is bottled (i.e. basically it's a faster process than the two previously described methods). The last method used is carbon injection, which doesn't involve a secondary fermentation process, and instead consists of injecting carbon dioxide gas directly into the wine... soda pop comes to mind. As you can imagine, the carbon injection method is used to produce the cheapest bottles of sparklers.

Brut or Doux: how sweet do you like your sparkling wines? The amount of sugar introduced for the secondary fermentation process will ultimately determine the level of sweetness in a sparkling wine. Brut Natural is the driest, although fairly limited in production. Extra Brut is the more common driest style of sparkling wine you will encounter, followed by Brut, which is arguably the most popular of all styles. Extra Dry (also called Extra Sec) is slightly less dry than Brut, followed by Sec. The two sweetest styles of sparkling wine are Demi-Sec and then Doux.

Sweet or dry in style, sparkling wines are produced around the world. California and France are major producers; the Aussies have a Shiraz sparkler; the Spanish produce Cava; the Portuguese have Espumante; the Germans have Sekt; the South Africans produce Cap Classique; and the Italians have various versions, with their generic term for sparkling wine being Spumante.

So, there you have a brief overview of this intriguing style of wine, and we hope that you will savor your glasses of bubbly. One last point is that although it may be fun to open a bottle of sparkling wine by “popping” the cork out and projecting a burst of fizz...keep in mind that by doing this you are doing your bottle a great disservice. Not only are you wasting wine (nothing less than a crime on its own), but you'll be releasing so much carbon dioxide that you will not be able to fully appreciate the bubbling in your glass!

introduction of a secondary fermentation (which can occur naturally on its own, explaining why Perignon began experimenting). This secondary fermentation is conducted in various methods explained below, but a by-product is the creation of carbon dioxide captured in the wine. Estimates of the amount of bubbles one bottle of sparkling can produce ranges from 50 to 250 million...that's a lot of bubbles!

As for the different methods to encourage the secondary fermentation, the most well known is the

Visiting Varietals



SÉMILLON

Pronunciation: Say-mee-YAWN

The word ‘Cabernet’ slips so easily off most people's lips we forget that in the 1950's, most Americans didn't even know what Cabernet Sauvignon was. In the mid-century, Americans felt that Cabernet Sauvignon was too difficult to pronounce. So now that Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay have become the norm it's time to get familiarized with some new wine grapes. Get your glasses ready.

Sémillon wine is loved for its full body, like Chardonnay, but with flavors closer to Pinot Gris or Sauvignon Blanc. It's an important blending component in White Bordeaux and is also planted throughout Australia. In the US, Sémillon wines are usually a great price for their quality. Despite how cheap it is, Sémillon has the pedigree to be alongside the most popular white wines in the world.

The primary fruit flavors in Sémillon wine are lemon, apple, pear and green papaya. There's something very waxy about the taste of Sémillon which wine writers often describe as lanolin. Depending on where Sémillon is grown it can range from being a zesty, palate-cleansing wine like Sauvignon Blanc to a rich, creamy, lemon-flavored wine like oaked Chardonnay.

Sémillon is commonly blended with Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle in White Bordeaux.

Sémillon is also the primary ingredient in Bordeaux's noble rot dessert wines which include Sauternes, Barsac, Cadillac, Loupiac, Sainte-Croix-du-Mont, Cérons and Premières Côtes de Bordeaux.

RECIPE

Moroccan-Style Stuffed Acorn Squash

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- 2 large acorn squash, halved and seeded
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 1 cup garbanzo beans, drained
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 (14 ounce) can chicken broth
- 1 cup uncooked couscous
- salt and pepper to taste



Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Arrange squash halves cut side down on a baking sheet. Bake 30 minutes, or until tender. Dissolve the sugar in the melted butter. Brush squash with the butter mixture, and keep squash warm while preparing the stuffing.

Heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Stir in the garlic, celery, and carrots, and cook 5 minutes. Mix in the garbanzo beans and raisins. Season with cumin, salt, and pepper, and continue to cook and stir until vegetables are tender.

Pour the chicken broth into the skillet, and mix in the couscous. Cover skillet, and turn off heat. Allow couscous to absorb liquid for 5 minutes. Stuff squash halves with the skillet mixture to serve.

CHEESE

Varietals



MIMOLETTE

Pronunciation: mee-moh-LET

Mimolette is a cheese traditionally produced around the city of Lille, France. In France, it is also known as Boule de Lille after its city of origin, or vieux Hollande for being made after the tradition of Edam cheese.

It was originally made by the request of Louis XIV, who – in the context of Jean-Baptiste Colbert's mercantilistic policies – was looking for a native French product to replace the then very popular Edam. To make it distinct from Edam he seasoned it with annatto to give it a sweet and nutty flavor and a distinct orange color.

It normally weighs about 2 kg (approximately 4.5 pounds) and is made from cow's milk. Its name comes from the French word molle, meaning "soft". This refers to the softness of the crust when young – with age it becomes harder. It has a grey crust and orangish flesh. The orange color comes from the natural seasoning, annatto, which has a sweet and nutty flavor. The cheese has a similar appearance to a cantaloupe melon.

The greyish crust of aged Mimolette is the result of cheese mites intentionally introduced to add flavor by their action on the surface of the cheese.















Mimolette can be consumed at different stages of aging. When younger, its taste resembles that of Parmesan. Many appreciate it most when "extra-old" (extra-vieille). At that point, it can become rather hard to chew, and the flesh takes a hazelnut-like flavor.

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