

Weekend Wine: Sparkling Wine for the Holidays

This week we look at sparkling wines from \$25 to \$75 a bottle. In this price range, we can start to look at real, honest Champagne as opposed to sparkling wines.

If you've ever wondered why Champagne costs more than other old world and domestic versions, I can tell you from firsthand experience that the reasons make sense. Foremost is that the winemakers of Champagne operate under stricter regulations than any other bubbly wine maker. There are limitations on quality, sugar levels, picking dates, bottling methodologies, naming conventions, and both barrel and bottle aging. You can find winemakers that adopt these strict methods, but nowhere else (except one tiny area of Italy called Franciacorta) are the standards adopted industry wide. Their goal is to assure you, the consumer, that if it comes from Champagne, you know they got the details right.



[Bollinger Brut Special Cuvée \(\\$75\)](#) is my personal favorite in this price category. It is big and bold and, even though it is Bollinger's least expensive wines, it tastes the equal of many wines in the way over \$100 range. One of the classic aromas of the best Champagne is of fresh baked biscuits and this has enough to make a wine lover swoon. By the way, when Champagne aficionados talk about biscuits, they don't mean like we would eat with cream gravy, but more of a light, not too sweet cookie like the Brits would refer to as in "tea and biscuits." Don't ask me.