



WINE
by Michael Cooper

Best bubbles

Celebrate the festive season with sparkling wines from Central Otago to Champagne, priced from \$10 to \$125.

Too much of anything is bad," believed F Scott Fitzgerald, "but too much Champagne is just right." A glass or two of chilled sparkling wine is certainly a great way to celebrate the end of the working year, Christmas or New Year. Simply popping the cork on a bottle of fizz feels festive.

Here's all you need to know about sparkling wine, or bubbly. The word "Champagne" should be reserved for the wines of that most famous of all wine regions, in northern France. The good news is that New Zealand's best sparkling wines are produced from the same grape varieties – mostly pinot noir and chardonnay – as in Champagne itself. They are also made by the same *méthode traditionnelle* as in Champagne, in which the wine undergoes its secondary, bubble-inducing fermentation in the bottle,

where it is matured, often for several years, in contact with its yeast lees, gaining in richness and complexity, until it is disgorged from its sediment, ready for consumption.

New Zealand doesn't produce a huge selection of sparkling wines, because most small wineries find the production of premium, bottle-fermented bubbly too time-consuming and costly. Here are some of the best buys, for everyday drinking and special occasions, including some top examples from Australia, Italy, Spain and France.

Akarua Central Otago Brut NV

★★★★★

This fragrant, yeasty wine is a 2:1 blend of chardonnay and

pinot noir, grown at Bannockburn. It is vivacious and smooth, with citrusy, slightly appley and biscuity flavours, showing very good complexity and a crisp, long, harmonious finish (13% alc/vol). \$35

Allan Scott Cecilia Brut NV

★★★★★

This elegant, non-vintage Marlborough bubbly is a 60/40 blend of chardonnay and pinot noir. It has good intensity of fresh, lively, citrusy, slightly appley and yeasty flavours, showing considerable complexity and a crisp, dryish finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$26

Alpha Domus AD Cumulus Méthode Traditionnelle 2015

★★★★★

This *blanc de blancs* (meaning "white of whites" – all chardonnay-based) style was hand-picked in the Bridge Pa Triangle, Hawke's Bay, partly barrel-fermented and closed with a beer-bottle-type seal rather than a cork. It has a fragrant, citrusy, yeasty bouquet, leading into a fresh, lemony, yeasty, fully dry wine, showing very good depth and complexity and a smooth finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$35

Amisfield Central Otago Méthode Traditionnelle Brut 2015

★★★★★

This classy, pinot noir-based wine was disgorged from its yeast lees in May 2018. Pale straw, with a complex, yeasty fragrance, it is crisp and lively,



with excellent vigour, intense citrusy, yeasty, biscuity flavours and a dry, lasting finish (12% alc/vol). \$45

Aurum Blanc de Blancs Vintage 2008

★★★★★

Still on sale, this is a distinctive, bone-dry style from Central Otago chardonnay, disgorged after six years of maturation on its yeast lees.

Crisp and zesty, it has good intensity of lively, citrusy flavour, yeasty and toasty notes adding complexity and excellent vigour and length (13% alc/vol). \$45



Billecart-Salmon Champagne Brut Rosé NV

From an old, medium-sized, family-owned producer, this pale-orange wine is enticingly fragrant. Unusually complex, it has intense, vigorous, strawberryish, yeasty flavours, with a sliver of sweetness and a very harmonious, lasting finish (12% alc/vol). \$100

Brancott Estate Brut Cuvée

There's a lot to like about this bottle-fermented blend of pinot noir and chardonnay, including its sharp price. Pale pink, it is lively, with fresh peach and strawberry flavours, biscuity, yeasty notes adding complexity and a smooth, dryish finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$14

Brancott Estate Sparkling Rosé

Pink/pale orange, this is an easy-drinking wine, fresh, lively and smooth, with good depth of berryish, peachy, gently yeasty flavours and a slightly sweet, crisp finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$17

Brown Brothers Patricia Pinot Noir & Chardonnay Brut 2011

★★★★★

Rich and vivacious, this Victorian bubbly comes from a cool, elevated vineyard and spent six years maturing on its yeast lees. Pale straw, with a very inviting, biscuity, yeasty fragrance, it has vibrant, intense, lemony, nutty, slightly peachy flavours. Crisp, lively and long (12% alc/vol). \$35



Campo Viejo Cava Brut Reserva

If you haven't tasted cava, widely regarded as a great-value substitute for Champagne (the real stuff), try this. Made from traditional Spanish varieties and bottle-fermented, it is fragrant and lively, crisp and dryish, with fruity, gently yeasty flavours, showing good complexity. Instantly appealing (11.5% alc/vol). \$27

Champagne Cristian Senez Cuvée Renoir NV

An ideal, all-purpose Champagne, this 50/50 blend of pinot noir and chardonnay was lees-aged for three years. It has a fragrant, yeasty bouquet, leading into a buoyant wine with peachy, citrusy flavours, biscuity notes adding complexity, balanced acidity and a dryish, very harmonious finish (12% alc/vol). \$45



Marion-Bosser Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut NV

From a *premier cru* site, this chardonnay-based Champagne was disgorged after three



years on its yeast lees. It has a strong presence, with a rich fragrance and penetrating, citrusy, biscuity, complex flavours. Dry, very lively and long (12.5% alc/vol) \$60

Cloudy Bay Pelorus

★★★★★

This non-vintage Marlborough sparkling is a chardonnay-dominant style, with 30% pinot noir, matured for at least two years on its yeast lees.

Invitingly scented, with a yeasty, citrusy bouquet, it is tightly structured and vivacious, with excellent richness and complexity and a finely balanced, persistent finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$37



Cloudy Bay Pelorus Rosé

This classy, non-vintage bubbly is a blend of pinot noir (mostly) and chardonnay, disgorged after a minimum of two years on its yeast lees. Pink/very pale red, it is a mouthfilling, rich, "serious" yet vivacious wine, with a strong surge of strawberryish, yeasty, complex flavours and a dryish, very harmonious and persistent finish (13% alc/vol). \$40



Cloudy Bay Pelorus Vintage 2010

A real mouthful of flavour, this Marlborough blend of pinot noir and chardonnay was disgorged after seven years on its yeast lees. Bright, light lemon/green, it has a highly fragrant, yeasty, complex bouquet, leading into an intense, vigorous wine packed with citrusy, peachy, biscuity flavours. Crisp and long (12.5% alc/vol). \$50

Daniel Le Brun Méthode Traditionnelle Brut NV

★★★★★

This Marlborough blend of chardonnay and pinot noir is fresh and zesty, with strong, yeasty aromas. Citrusy and peachy, it shows very good complexity, with a finely balanced, smooth, lingering finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$30



Daniel Le Brun Méthode Traditionnelle Rosé NV

A real charmer, this bright pink Marlborough bubbly was made from hand-picked pinot noir. Crisp and lively, it is dryish, with strawberryish, peachy, yeasty flavours showing excellent complexity and harmony. Good value (12.5% alc/vol). \$30



Deutz Marlborough Cuvée Blanc de Blancs 2015

This chardonnay-based label is one of New Zealand's most awarded sparklings. A vivacious wine with a scented, lemony, yeasty bouquet, it has fresh, citrusy, yeasty flavours, showing excellent intensity, delicacy and complexity that build to a dryish, lasting finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$30

Egly-Ouriet Brut Tradition Grand Cru NV

Full of personality, this well-regarded Champagne is a 3:1 blend of pinot noir and chardonnay, disgorged after 53 months on its yeast lees. Straw-coloured, with a highly fragrant, yeasty bouquet, it has rich, peachy, biscuity, slightly toasty flavours that are complex, yeasty, dry and persistent (12.5% alc/vol). \$125



Gibbston Valley NV Méthode Traditionnelle
★★★★★

From grapes hand-picked in Central Otago, this hugely drinkable wine was disgorged after 26 months on its yeast lees. Pale straw, it is crisp and very lively, with intense, citrusy, slightly peachy and appley flavours, good yeast-derived complexity and a smooth, very finely balanced, long finish (13.5% alc/vol). \$50



Gold Digger Frizzante Naturally Sparkling Pinot Gris ★★★

Ensnconced in a beer bottle with a crown seal, this vibrant non-vintage wine is from Māori Point Vineyard in Central Otago. Tank-fermented, it is a gently sparkling, slightly sweet style, scented, light and lively, with vibrant peach, pear and slight apple flavours. It is crisp and smooth (11.5% alc/vol). \$10 (330ml).

Graham Norton's Own Prosecco NV ★★★★★

From northern Italy, this refreshing bubbly is based on a white grape of Slovenian origin, glera. Frothy and vibrantly fruity, it is simple but delicious, with strong, citrusy, appley flavours, dryish, crisp and lively (11% alc/vol). \$19



Haha Brut Cuvée ★★★★★

This elegant, non-vintage wine offers good value. A blend of chardonnay and pinot noir, grown in Marlborough and Hawke's Bay, it is fresh and lively, with peachy, citrusy,



gently yeasty flavours and a very harmonious, dryish, lingering finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$22

Haha Brut Rosé ★★★★★

Priced right, this non-vintage sparkling is a 50/50 blend of chardonnay and pinot noir, grown in Marlborough and Hawke's Bay. Pale pink, it is attractively scented, crisp and lively, with strawberryish, gently yeasty flavours in a moderately complex style, very fresh, delicate and harmonious. A dry style, it's well worth trying (12.5% alc/vol). \$22



Jacob's Creek Reserve Chardonnay/Pinot Noir 2017 ★★★★★

Crisp, light and vivacious, this bottle-fermented Aussie blend is elegant and tightly structured, in a dryish, gently yeasty style with delicate, lingering flavours. Top value (11.5% alc/vol). \$16

Jacob's Creek Reserve Rosé NV ★★★★★

This bottle-fermented sparkling is a blend of pinot noir, pinot meunier and chardonnay (using the traditional Champagne recipe). An inviting light pink, it has delicate, strawberryish, yeasty aromas and flavours. It is crisp, lively, finely balanced and long (12% alc/vol). \$16

Johanneshof Cellars New Dawn Marlborough Brut 2010 ★★★★★

This classy, deliciously smooth, pinot noir-based sparkling was matured for more than five years on its yeast lees. Very



pale pink, it is highly scented, with gentle strawberry, peach and spice flavours, showing lovely delicacy and complexity. Yeasty and dryish with excellent harmony, it's well worth discovering (12.5% alc/vol). \$38

Lindauer Enlighten Moscato Rosé ★★★

Deliciously light and lively, this low-alcohol style is from muscat grapes blended with a splash of pinotage (hence its enticing, pale-pink hue). Unabashedly sweet, it is very crisp, fruity and well balanced, in a simple but vivacious style (8.5% alc/vol). \$13



Lindauer Special Reserve Blanc de Blancs ★★★★★

This non-vintage wine is made from Gisborne chardonnay. Light lemon/green, it has citrusy, yeasty aromas and flavours, showing a distinct touch of complexity, good depth and a crisp finish (11.5% alc/vol). \$16



Lindauer Special Reserve Rosé ★★★★★

Offering fine value, this non-vintage wine is pink/pale red, with a fresh, yeasty bouquet, lively, strawberryish flavours, yeasty notes adding complexity and a finely balanced, dryish finish (12% alc/vol). \$16



LV by Louis Vavasour Marlborough Méthode Traditionnelle NV ★★★★★
From Awatere River Wine

Company, this blend of pinot noir (predominantly) and chardonnay makes a powerful statement. Rich but refined, it has a highly fragrant, yeasty bouquet, leading into a lively wine with concentrated, peachy, biscuity flavours, finely balanced acidity and a smooth, dry, resounding finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$49

Morton [Black Label] Brut ★★★★★

Pale straw, this non-vintage blend of chardonnay and pinot noir has fresh, yeasty aromas and flavours. Crisp and dry, it is toasty and biscuity, with very good complexity and a dry, lingering finish (12% alc/vol). \$20



Nautilus Cuvée Marlborough Vintage Rosé 2015 ★★★★★

This pink/pale-orange wine was made entirely from pinot noir and disgorged after two and a half years on its yeast lees. Fragrant, it has strawberryish, yeasty aromas and flavours, with hints of oranges, excellent delicacy and harmony and a dryish, long finish (12% alc/vol). \$49



Osawa Prestige Collection Méthode Traditionnelle NV ★★★★★

This stylish Hawke's Bay bubbly was matured for three and a half years on its yeast lees, with base wine dating back to 2009. It has an invitingly fragrant, lively, yeasty bouquet. Crisp, with citrusy, biscuity flavours, it shows excellent



SPARKLING!

Graham Norton
CHIEF WINEMAKER



GRAHAM NORTON'S OWN PROSECCO HAS LANDED

Nothing's hotter in Europe this summer than a chilled Prosecco served with a picnic or on its own. Graham Norton's Own Prosecco is crafted in Italy to Graham's specifications and as Graham would say, "it's a party in a bottle!"

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vigour, complexity and length (12.5% alc/vol). \$55

Oyster Bay Sparkling Rosé NV
★★★★

This attractive bubbly is a blend of Hawke's Bay chardonnay (80%) and Marlborough pinot noir (20%). Onion skin-coloured, it is a fragrant, lively wine, with generous peach, strawberry and spice flavours, a touch of complexity and an off-dry, finely balanced finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$20

Palliser Estate The Griffin Martinborough Méthode Traditionnelle 2015 ★★★★★

Richly scented and racy, this 50/50 blend of pinot noir and chardonnay was matured on its yeast lees for more than three years. Bright, light lemon/green, with an inviting, yeasty fragrance, it's a very elegant wine with citrusy, slightly appley flavours, showing real delicacy and harmony, and a very long finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$52

Quartz Reef Méthode Traditionnelle Rosé ★★★★★

Instantly appealing, this non-vintage wine was grown at Bendigo, Central Otago. Bright pink, with a fragrant, berryish, gently yeasty bouquet, it is crisp, with lively peach, strawberry and apricot flavours, showing impressive depth and complexity and a smooth, dry finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$39

Quartz Reef Méthode Traditionnelle Vintage Blanc de Blancs 2013 ★★★★★

A wine of great presence, this blend of chardonnay (91%) and pinot noir (9%) was estate-grown at Bendigo. Pale straw, it has very intense, citrusy, yeasty, biscuity flavours, crisp acidity and a lasting, dry finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$75

Rock Ferry Blanc de Blancs 2011 ★★★★★

Certified organic, this chardonnay-based Marlborough wine was fermented in old oak and stainless-steel barrels and disgorged after four years. Tight-knit, crisp, citrusy and appley, it has excellent vigour and depth, with a finely balanced, dry finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$55

Saint Clair Dawn Méthode Traditionnelle 2013 ★★★★★

Still youthful, this elegant 2:1 blend of Marlborough chardonnay and pinot noir was disgorged after almost three years. It is fragrant and lively, with good intensity of citrusy, appley flavours, yeasty, biscuity notes adding complexity and a crisp, dryish, lingering finish (12% alc/vol). \$49

Saint Clair Vicar's Choice Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc Bubbles 2017 ★★★

Crisp and lively, this simple but refreshing, off-dry bubbly has vibrant, herbaceous flavours in a clearly varietal style. It tastes exactly as it is – sauvignon blanc with bubbles in it (12.5% alc/vol). \$18

Selaks Reserve Lighter Sparkling Hawke's Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2016 ★★★

Simple but highly drinkable, this vivacious wine is a low-alcohol style. It is light and lively, with juicy, appley, green-edged flavours, sweetish and crisp, and has lots of current-drinking appeal (9% alc/vol). \$15

Selaks Reserve Sparkling Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2017 ★★★

This fresh, strongly varietal wine is balanced for easy drinking with ripely herbaceous flavours, showing good depth, and a slightly sweet, crisp finish (12.5% alc/vol). \$15

Soljans Legacy Méthode Traditionnelle 2012 ★★★★★

Rich, yeasty and smooth, this is a multi-region blend of pinot noir and chardonnay. Bright lemon/green, it has peachy, slightly toasty flavours, balanced acidity, and excellent vigour, complexity and harmony (11.5% alc/vol). \$29

Te Hana Reserve Cuvée ★★★★★

This top-value Gisborne sparkling is a blend of chardonnay (mostly) and pinot noir. Pale straw, with a yeasty fragrance, showing good complexity, it is vivacious, with strong, citrusy, biscuity flavours and a crisp, dryish finish (12% alc/vol). \$17

Te Hana Rosé Cuvée ★★★★★

Offering great value, this Gisborne bubbly is bright pink, fresh and fragrant. Crisp and lively, it has strawberry and watermelon flavours, yeasty notes adding complexity and a finely poised finish (12% alc/vol). \$17

Tohu Rewa Marlborough Blanc de Blancs Méthode Traditionnelle

2015 ★★★★★

This attractive, very fresh and elegant sparkling was made entirely from chardonnay. Crisp and lively, with a fragrant, citrusy, yeasty bouquet, it is a tight-knit, complex wine with lemony, slightly appley flavours, showing good intensity and harmony and a lingering finish (12% alc/vol). \$34

Tohu Rewa Marlborough Rosé Méthode Traditionnelle 2015 ★★★★★

This bright, light-pink bubbly was made from pinot noir and disgorged after two years on its yeast lees. It is fresh and vivacious, with strawberryish, yeasty flavours, showing excellent delicacy, harmony and length (12% alc/vol). \$34

Twin Islands Pinot Noir/Chardonnay Brut NV ★★★★★

From Nautilus, this is dryish, crisp and lively, with strong, citrusy, slightly appley, gently yeasty flavours, showing considerable complexity (12% alc/vol). \$25

Villa Maria Dulcét Brut ★★★★★

Launched this year, this easy-drinking, non-vintage wine is a blend of Gisborne chardonnay and pinot noir, which gets its secondary, bubble-inducing fermentation in tanks. Fresh, crisp, peachy and citrusy, with a touch of complexity, it is vibrantly fruity, with good depth and a slightly sweet finish (12% alc/vol). \$20

