December 2022

Vol 22 Issue 8

HOUSTON WINE MERCHANT

Monthly Newsletter

Inside this Issue







CHAMPAGNE AND CELEBRATIONS

Nothing says celebration quite like champagne. But how did Champagne earn its sparkling reputation? You'll find the answer on page 2.

CLASSIC HOLIDAY COCKTAILS

When hosting a holiday party, make it memorable by creating a special signature cocktail. Check out the recipes on page 3.

DECEMBER JANUARY SAMPLER CASES

It's that time again. Check out the wonderful selection of wines in our holiday sampler cases on Page 2

December Staff Favorites

- **Charlie - Racines - Lost Draw Cellars - Syrah - Garrison Brothers Bourbon Barrel Aged, Vol. III 2019 $65.99** - Only 12 barrels of this Texas High Plains Syrah from Lost Draw were produced. It was aged for 45 days in used Garrison Brothers Bourbon barrels to finish.
- **Devon** - **Seleque - 7 Villages Rose NV $79.99** - Cranberry and peppermint are layered with firm acidity and a soft creamy mousse in this lightly toasty Champagne with a nut-tinged finish. 91 points/Wine Spectator
- **Jeffrey** - **Luis Seabra Mono C 2019 $59.99** - From a single vineyard planted in Castelão, the bouquet and texture remind me of Nebbiolo, but with a bit of the minerality from the Rhone. Super flexible food-friendly pairing!
- **Marcus** - **Racines, Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills Ca. 2018 $65.99** - Racines is a collaboration between Tyler Winery's Justin Willett, Domaine de Montille's Étienne de Montille, Brian Sieve, and Rodolphe Péters of Champagne Pierre Péters. This wine is dense and savory with darker fruit tones and is sourced from multiple vineyard sites including Domaine De La Cote, Sanford and Benedict, and Encantada.





Champagne and Celebrations

Whether a romantic dinner for two or a spectacular New Year's Eve celebration, Champagne has long been associated with celebration. But how did Champagne gain its sparkling reputation?

Believe it or not, Champagne was not always sparkling. Still, pink-tinged wines were grown in the Champagne region northeast of Paris since Roman times. Beginning in the 10th century, French coronations took place at the cathedral in Reims with local wines being a part of the festivities. By the 16th century, the region had built quite a reputation for producing exceptional wines. But it was the development of the méthode champenoise that cemented Champagne's reputation as a wine of celebration.

Like so many other things, Champagne was discovered by accident. In the 17th century, a Benedictine monk named Dom Pierre Perignon was trying to get rid of the bubbles that would form in the wine, thinking them an undesirable side effect of the wine-making process. Having no success, he decided to try the ruined wine (perhaps to drown his sorrows?). The story goes that he called to the other monks to "Come quick! I am tasting the stars." In England, scientist Christopher Merret discovered it was sugar that played a role in adding to Champagne's effervescence. Too much sugar and the bottle would explode; too little, and there weren't enough bubbles in the bubbly. Perignon continued to work on the ratio of sugar to yeast and perfected the means of sealing the sparkle in the bottle, thanks to the rediscovery of using a cork as a stopper. Thus the méthode champenoise – where bubbles are produced by adding yeast and sugar to wine in the bottle and leaving it to ferment – was established.

Over the years, artists, politicians, writers, and celebrities have continued to elevate the status of Champagne. The Champagne houses paid artists like Toulouse-Lautrec to create stunning images of their products to be used in advertising. During the First World War, Winston Churchill famously said “Remember gentlemen, it’s not just France we’re fighting for, it’s Champagne.” F. Scott Fitzgerald made Champagne synonymous with the Roaring Twenties in The Great Gatsby and Twentieth Century icons like Marilyn Monroe and Coco Chanel made Champagne a part of their legends by either allegedly bathing in it (Monroe) or uttering witty remarks about it (Chanel said “I only drink Champagne on two occasions, when I am in love, or when I am not”).

This holiday season, add some sparkle to your celebration with a bottle of champagne. In need of a suggestion? Stop in and talk with our buyers. They have all the best suggestions. Or **shop online** and check out our **gift guide**.

Champagne or Sparkling Wine

All Champagne is sparkling wine but not all sparkling wine is Champagne. So what exactly is the difference?

Sparkling wine is any wine that uses carbon dioxide to create its iconic bubbles. When sugar is added to the yeast during the fermentation process, carbon dioxide is produced. The gas captured in the bottle creates the fizz when the bottle is uncorked.

While many people use Champagne and sparkling wine interchangeably, it's actually incorrect. Champagne gets its name from the Champagne region of France and only sparkling wines from this region can be called Champagne. Champagne can only be made using Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier grapes. Champagne accounts for 60% of France's sparkling wine production.

December January Sampler Cases

Our new sampler cases are ready! Each case contains 6 specially selected wines perfect for the holiday season.

- **Best Value Sampler Case** $169.99
- **Premium Sampler Case** $209.99
- **All White Sampler Case** (includes the 6 white wines) $179.99
- **All Red Sampler Case** (includes the 6 red wines) $199.99
- **Tasting Flight Sampler Case** (includes one bottle from each case) $189.99

Best Value Sampler

- **Ant Moore - Pinot Noir Estate Range 2018** - Pale garnet with bright red hues. Lifted red cherry notes are accompanied by subtle earthiness and sweet red berry influence with just a touch of spice.
- **Hedges Family Estate - CMS Red Blend 2020** - Black cherry, raspberry, warm mulling spices with a bit of cocoa, vanilla, and anise. A sure crowd-pleaser.
- **Vera de Estenas - Bobal 2021** - With highlights of black fruits, the palate is fresh with balanced acidity. A touch of sweet spice and minerals, with the typical aromas of the Bobal.
- **Domaine des Trois Versants - Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine 2021** - A subtle pleasant sweetness, with hints of melon. Clean, and refreshing.
- **Mayu - Pedro Ximenez 2021** - A stylish white wine that offers appealing floral and fruit aromas and flavors balanced by fresh acidity, minerality, and a long finish. 90 points/Wine Advocate
- **Monmousseau - Brut Etoile NV** - From the Loire Valley of France, this excellent dry sparkling has almond, citrus, and pear flavors, a subtle richness, and a soft refreshing finish.

Premium Sampler Case

- **Powell & Son - GMS Riverside 2019** - Perfumed aromas of cherry liqueur and blackberry compote are complemented by notes of baking spice, lavender, and mint followed by velvety tannins
- **Yves Cuilleron - Syrah "Les Vignes d'a Cote 2020** - Featuring an expressive nose of black fruits combined with notes of spice and violets and flowing into a refreshing and surprisingly complex finish.
- **Mauro Molino - Nebbiolo Langhe 2020** - A fresh and fruity taste with soft and delicate tannins, and hints of rose and violet. 91 points/Wine Spectator
- **J de Villebois - Crémant de Loire Brut Méthode Traditionelle NV** - A blend of Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, and Cabernet Franc, this tangy, spicy wine has a crisp freshness to back up citrus and kiwi flavors. Lively and with a vibrant mousse, it is ready to drink. 88 points/Wine Enthusiast
- **Cordero Con Piel De Lobo - Chardonnay 2021** - On the nose, aromas of tropical fruits, such as pineapple. In the mouth, it is a fresh white wine, with excellent acidity and a persistent finish.
- **Schloss Gobelsburg - Gruner Veltliner 2021** - Bright, mineral-laden, and chock full of sweet green herbs, white pepper, ginger, and ripe fruits on the palate. A great introduction to Austrian wines.

Holiday Wines

- **Cuvelier Los Andes Cabernet Sauvignon 2018 $23.99** - Cuvelier Los Andes Cabernet shows an attractive red-ruby color, is well structured with spices, black pepper notes and good concentration and length.
- **Terroir Historic Priorat Negre 2018 $32.99** - Crisp red fruit aromas of pomegranate and hibiscus, fennel and blackberry are underscored with the savory accents of smoky garrigue. Fine-grained tannins shape the balanced palate into one both juicy and mouthwatering.
- **Lapierre le Beaujolais 2021 $34.99** - With enough depth and class to fool you into thinking you are drinking a much fancier and more expensive cru Beaujolais, Le Beaujolais is sweetly perfumed of ripe cherries and turned earth, backed by a vibrant freshness and silky, caressing tannins.
- **Vajara Barolo Albe 2018 $39.99** - This wine consistently delivers one of the greatest values to be found in Italian wine, offering bold cherry, wild plum and plenty of fragrant blue flower and violet. 93 points/Wine Advocate
- **Felsina Chianti Classico Rancia Reserva 2017 $57.99** - Distinctly medium in body and restrained, the Sangiovese grape is redolent of red fruit, wild berry, toasted almond, violet. 94 points/Wine Advocate
- **Maison Olivier Leflaive - Bourgogne Les Sétilles 2019 $36.99 (Special case price $239.88)** - "This is exactly what we expect from Bourgogne blanc! Very attractive nose of sliced pears, white flowers and citrus zest. Fresh and lively with a touch of creaminess on the mid-palate and a crisp acidity, this has some of the elegance Puligny-Montrachet is famous for." 91 points/James Suckling
- **Delamotte Brut Le Mesnil $49.99** - Without ever assaulting the palate, this is a beautifully powerful champagne. Freshness and roundness merge to deliver a clean, fruity finish, with well-balanced and elegant length.
- **Paul Bara Grand Cru Brut Rose $83.99** - Soft, pink colored champagne with abundant, fine bubbles. Aromas of red fruits dominated by wild strawberry and cherry, and the typical peppery note of Pinot Noir. The palate mirrors the nose with strawberry and raspberry flavors, leading into notes of freshly baked viennoisseries and a Morello cherry finish.

For more suggestions check out our Holiday Gift Guide

Classic Holiday Cocktails



Mulled Wine

Ingredients
2 bottles of dry red wine
1/2 C raw sugar
2 star anise
3 whole cloves
3 cinnamon sticks
1 lemon, peeled
1 orange, juiced and peeled
Nutmeg, grated

1.Bring all ingredients except wine to a boil. Turn down to a simmer for 45 minutes (toss in a splash of wine if it reduces too low).
2. Add the wine and keep it on very low heat. (Tip: If you want something stronger, add a 1/2 cup of brandy.)
3. Serve in glass mugs and garnish with fat orange twists.



Mistletoe Martini

Ingredients
1.5 ounces vodka
.5 ounce elderflower liqueur
1.5 ounces cranberry juice
.5 ounce simple syrup
Mint
Cranberries

1. Fill a cocktail shaker half full with ice
2. Add vodka, elderflower liqueur, cranberry juice and simple syrup
3. Shake until chilled
4. Strain into a martini glass
5. Garnish with mint and cranberries



Coquito-Puerto Rican Eggnog

Ingredients
1 can cream of coconut
1 can sweet condensed milk
1 can evaporated milk
12 ounces white rum
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp ground cloves
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg

1. Add all ingredients to a blender. Process until well combined.
2. Pour into a container (or leave in the mixer pitcher), cover and place in refrigerator
3. Refrigerate for at least an hour
4. Pour into glasses
5. Garnish with nutmeg and cinnamon



Happy New Year

Ingredients
1.5 ounces brandy
.75 ounces ruby port
.75 ounces orange juice
4 ounces Champagne

1. Add the brandy, port and orange juice to a shaker filled with ice
2. Shake well
3. Strain into glass
4. Top with Champagne



Hot Toddy

Ingredients
1 cup water
.1 tea bag or 1tsp loose tea
1 TBS honey
1.5 ounces whiskey or brandy or rum
1 TBS fresh lemon juice
Lemon wedge
Cinnamon stick

1. Bring the water to a boil
2. Steep tea 3-5 minutes
3. Coat bottom on glass with honey
4. Add liquor and lemon juice
5. Pour in hot tea and stir well to combine
6. Garnish with lemon wedge and cinnamon stick

COMING IN JANUARY

- Tasting Our Way Around the World - Italy
- New Expanded Gin Offerings
- January Staff Picks

Be Sure To Follow Us On

Facebook

Instagram

Houston Wine Merchant