

# Chapter 42

## Sparkling Wines of the World



## Champagne

- Champagne AC
  - Villages have cru status = 44 Premier Cru + 17 Grand Cru (not separate appellations)
- 5 key regions
  - Montagne de Reims
  - Vallée de Marne
  - Côte des Blanc (close to Reims/Epernay)
  - Côte de Sezanne (SW of Epernay)
  - Côte des Bar (100km SE)
- Reviewing delineation of appellation - appellation has 100s of villages - not all surface area entitled to grow champagne grapes
  - Review if additional land can be added

### Climate and Grape Growing

- Climate: **cool continental**
- Risks: winter freeze/ spring frosts/ rain + cloudy weather
- Even in warm years = grapes low sugar/high acid
- Frost = risk minimised by slope plantings
- **Chalk soil** = good drainage after storms but retains enough for dry periods
- Sustainability pledge - reduce use of fertilisers and pesticides

### Grape varieties

1. **Chardonnay** (Côte des Blanc/Côtes de Sezanne) - light body/high acid/floral/citrus
2. **Pinot Noir** (Montagne de Reims/Côte des Bar) - greater body/structural backbone/red fruits
3. **Pinot Meunier** (Vallée de la Marne) - buds late - vdlm - protected again spring frost - fruity flavours - enjoyed young

### Winemaking

- Grapes handpicked = allow selection + retain whole/healthy bunches
- Pressing (controlled)
  - 'Cuvée' = first liquid off the press (purest/makes the best Champagne)
  - 'Taille' = remaining juice
- Primary fermentation - stainless steel, oak vats or mixture. (MLF optional.) Base wines can be oak aged or stored inert.

- Blending - wines fermented in small parcels to allow for blending options (for house style).
  - Ageing
    - NV - min 15 months (12 on lees)
    - Vintage - min 36 months (no lees specified)
  - Styles
    - NV = light body/ fresh fruit some complexity is reserve
    - Vintage = (best years) concentrated/ yeasty/ biscuity/ toasty (longer lees)
    - Rosé Champagne = autolysis/ subtle red fruit
    - Blanc de Blanc = light-med body/ citrus
    - Blanc de Noirs = fuller-body/ red fruit
    - Prestige Cuvée = finest wines (often vintage) from best grape parcels. (Austere - youth - better after cellaring.)
  - Brut (most popular) = Brut Nature (up and coming)
- 

## Cremant

- Cremant d'Alsace/ Cremant de Bourgogne/ Cremant de Loire (min 9 months lees ageing)
  - Muscat/Gewurztraminer - not permitted in Cremant d'Alsace
  - Grapes usually from region
- 

## Saumur and Vouvray

Loire Valley - 2nd biggest producer after Champagne

- Sparkling Saumur
    - Local grapes (**Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Cabernet Franc**)
    - Sparkling red = with Cabernet France
  - Sparkling Vouvray
    - Made more than still Vouvray
    - Made solely from **Chenin Blanc** (high acid)
      - Smokey/toasty
    - **Traditional method - 9 month lees aging minimum**
- 

## Cava

- Majority of vineyards near **Sant Sadurni d'Anoia** in Catalan
    - Producers in Navarra/Rioja/Valencia too
  - **Traditional method - 9 months lees ageing minimum**
  - Grape varieties (white) = **Macabero** (Viura)/ **Xarel-lo**/ **Parellada**
  - Grape varieties (black) = **Garnacha**/ **Monastrell**
  - PN, Chard - recently permitted - adds fruit flavours (controversial)
  - Dry/med acid/some autolysis flavour
  - NV - ready to drink on release
    - Few premium producers do extended aging
- 

## Asti

- Asti DOCG, Piemonte
  - Variety: **Muscat Blanc a Petits Grains**
  - Method: Asti Method
  - Peach/grape/floral/sweet/low alcohol (7% abv)
  - Drink young as possible
- 

## Prosecco

- Prosecco DOC (covers **Veneto/Friuli**)
    - **Conegliano-Valdobbiadene DOCG** (high quality)
      - Grown between 2 towns - steep limestone hills NW of Venice
  - 'Cartize' and 'Rive' = wine from exceptional sites
  - Grape: **Glera** (previously 'Prosecco')
  - Method: **Tank method**
  - Med acid/green apple/melon
  - Brut/Extra-Dry/Dry (generally still more RS)
    - RS from interrupting fermentation with chilling/filtering
  - Consumed young
- 

## Sekt

- Huge market; highest consumption per capita (Germany)
  - Method: **Tank method**
  - Base wines from France/Italy - turned sparkling in Germany
  - **Deutscher Sekt** = grapes grown in Germany
    - Best from Riesling
  - If all grapes from quality region = **Deutscher Sekt bA**
  - Some traditional method - but v. rare
- 

## Australia

- Made (premium) in cool-mod regions
    - **Yarra Valley/ Adelaide Hills/ Tasmania** (Chard/PN)
  - Inexpensive sparkling from **Riverina**. **Tank method** or **carbonation**. Fruity. Different grape varieties.
  - Generally successful sparkling reds - from **Shiraz/Cab Sauv/Merlot**
    - Made in various methods depending on quality
    - Full body/red berry/smooth tannin/some RS
- 

## New Zealand

- High quality - classic Champagne varieties
  - Southernly position, maritime climate, cool sea breezes = Chard/PN can ripen slowly to produce elegant sparkling wines
- Grapes grown everywhere (except Auckland)
  - Marlborough (highest volume)
- North Island richer than South (producers can blend)
- Sauv Blanc - carbonation/tank - retain aromas

---

## South Africa

- **Méthode Cap Classique** (Traditional method) → producers can join Cap Classique Producers Association = 12 months min lees aging
    - Not joined, stil 'Cap Classique' = 9 months min lees ageing
  - Site selection = hillside slopes/ SE aspect/ near coast (best)
  - Domestic market = off-dry → sweet carbonated sparkling wines
- 

## USA

- California → cooler locations = **Los Carneros AVA/ Anderson Valley AVA**
  - Traditional method (PN/Chard)
  - Premium = extended lees (ie, 5 years)
    - Complex flavours/high acid
  - Inexpensive sparkling = tank/carbonation
    - Fruity/med-sweet → sweet
    - Grapes from warm Central Valley
- 

## Multiple Choice Practice Questions

- 1) Which region is most famous for producing Prosecco?
  - a) Champagne, France
  - b) Veneto, Italy
  - c) Cava, Spain
  - d) Napa Valley, USA
- 2) Which of the following grape varieties is primarily used in the production of Cava?
  - a) Glera
  - b) Chardonnay
  - c) Xarel-lo
  - d) Pinot Noir
- 3) What is the typical aging requirement for non-vintage Champagne?
  - a) 12 months on lees
  - b) 9 months on lees
  - c) 15 months on lees
  - d) 24 months on lees
- 4) Which sparkling wine is produced using the Metodo Classico in Italy?
  - a) Asti
  - b) Franciacorta

- c) Sekt
- d) Lambrusco

5) Which of the following sparkling wines is known for its sweet style and is produced in the Piedmont region of Italy?

- a) Franciacorta
- b) Prosecco
- c) Asti
- d) Lambrusco

6) Which region in France, outside of Champagne, is known for producing Crémant d'Alsace?

- a) Loire Valley
- b) Burgundy
- c) Alsace
- d) Rhône Valley

7) What distinguishes Sekt from other sparkling wines?

- a) It is produced exclusively from Pinot Noir
- b) It is aged on lees for a minimum of 36 months
- c) It is produced in the Rhône Valley using Syrah
- d) It is Germany's traditional sparkling wine, often made from Riesling

8) Which of the following regions is known for producing sparkling wine using the Méthode Cap Classique (MCC)

- a) Loire Valley, France
- b) South Africa
- c) Central Otago, New Zealand
- d) Mendoza, Argentina

9) Which of the following is a characteristic of Crémant de Loire?

- a) Made exclusively from Chardonnay
- b) Produced using the Traditional Method
- c) Aged for a minimum of 36 months on lees
- d) Produced primarily in the Languedoc region

10) Which of the following regions is renowned for producing high-quality sparkling wines in Australia?

- a) Barossa Valley
- b) Hunter Valley
- c) Margaret River
- d) Yarra Valley

## Answers

**1. b) Veneto, Italy**

**2. c) Xarel-lo**

**3. a) 12 months on lees**

**4. b) Franciacorta**

**5. c) Asti**

**6. c) Alsace**

**7. d) It is Germany's traditional sparkling wine, often made from Riesling**

**8. b) South Africa**

**9. b) Produced using the Traditional Method**

**10. d) Yarra Valley**