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Which Sparkling Wines Are Worth Your Holiday Jingle?

by [Serena Ball](#) in [Healthy Holidays](#), December 19, 2016

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If you think bubbly means big bucks, think again. When adding some sparkle to the holidays, it's not necessary to spend all your Christmas cash. Sparkling wines can be found in a range of prices, with many festive varieties priced at \$20 or less. How they are priced has a lot to do with how they are made. And that leads us to ask: How do they get those bubbles into a bottle?

The short answer: secondary fermentation. Sparkling wines begin much in the same way as white wines, but at the point at which white wine is bottled and sold, sparkling wine undergoes secondary fermentation with the addition of yeast and sugar. For higher-priced sparklers such as Champagne and cava, the subsequent secondary fermentation and aging occur in wine bottles in accordance with the *méthode Champenoise*. Instead of using bottles, vintners of prosecco and other more value-priced wines use stainless steel tanks to contain the buildup of carbon dioxide during secondary fermentation.

The cool thing is you can actually taste *and* see the difference in the final bottle of bubbly. Bottle-aged sparklers generally taste more nutty and yeasty and have tinier bubbles. Tank-aged wines are usually fruitier and can have large, bursting bubbles (although careful crafting in tanks can also produce tiny bubbles). All bubbles are a result of the carbon dioxide produced during secondary fermentation.

Value-priced sparklers can be found around the globe. Quality quaffs are available from cold climates like Germany, Austria and New York state, as well as from warm locales such as Australia and New Mexico.

Italian Prosecco

With floral aromas of peach and vanilla, the variety of proseccos available will please almost everyone. For **bubbly cocktails**, inexpensive proseccos are perfect. An Italian sparkler with a slightly higher price is the ideal glass to sip with a holiday dinner. In fact, all sparklers are food friendly, as the bubbles help cleanse the palate between bites.

For sipping: **Mionetto Prosecco Brut** (\$13)

Small splurge: **La Marca DOC Prosecco** (\$16)

Spanish Cava

Amazing values can also be found among these Spanish sparklers. Brian Kuchta, co-owner of Bin51 Wines in Edwardsville, Illinois, says that for the money, cava can give you Champagne-like quality. This is especially true for aged cavas, like reserva and gran reserva, which have bready and hazelnutty characteristics.

For sipping: **Poema Cava Brut** (\$12)

Small splurge: **Segura Viudas Gran Cuvee Reserva NV** (\$15)

Oregon Sparklers

It could be the climate, the terroir or just the fact that several Oregon wine houses are at the top of their game. But there are a lot of exceptional domestic sparklers being produced in Oregon, using both the *méthode Champenoise* and precise-tank production.

For sipping: [Sokol Blosser Evolution Sparkling](#) (\$20)

Small splurge: [2013 Argyle Vintage Brut](#) (\$28)

And one more tip: Consider rosé sparklers. Bubbly rosés are not usually thought of as holiday wines, but they should be top of mind. Almost any rosé is a good match for food, and because rosé matches the color of the season, it's, well, exceedingly festive.

Serena Ball, MS, RD is a registered dietitian nutritionist. She blogs at TeaspoonOfSpice.com sharing tips and tricks to help families find healthy living shortcuts. Follow her [@TspCurry](#) on Twitter and Snapchat.