



BUBBLE YUM

FIVE SPARKLERS FOR A FESTIVE NIGHT

By Ivy Gracie | Photography Dolce Studios

If you're still tripping over party favors from New Year's Eve, perhaps Champagne is too recent a memory to revisit another pop of the cork. But it's a pity to relegate bubbles to one night of the year. There are always reasons to celebrate and even if one's not readily available, a sparkling wine can make an ordinary evening feel a little more festive.

Sparkling wines have been gaining in popularity and the selection is as varied as the pronunciation of *Méthode Champenoise*. Thankfully, Jack Farrell, Chairman and CEO of Haskell's Fine Wine and Spirits, put together a flight of five sparklers that deliver without breaking the bank. Try them one bottle at a time, or in the order shown here.

SCHLOSS NICHOLAS

This sparkling Riesling from Germany is soft and accessible. Playing yin to food's yang, this drinkable wine is great with smoked or grilled foods like pork chops, fish or shrimp. "It's easy to like," says Farrell. "It's the perfect wine for a big reception because everybody likes it." Made using the *Méthode Champenoise* (fermented in its own bottle), it's a bargain at \$8.99.

FUN FACT: Sparkling wine is called Sekt in Germany.

PARINGA SPARKLING SHIRAZ

Relatively new on the American scene, sparkling Shiraz has been a fixture in Australia for at least fifteen years. "Shiraz is

what [Australians] pride themselves on," says Farrell. "They do it better than most places in the world." But make no mistake: Sparkling Shiraz is the whimsical counterpart to its more reserved sibling. "Perhaps it's not the greatest use of the Shiraz grape, but it's an interesting wine to try," says Farrell, who suggests serving it with hardy but mellow foods like roast pork or turkey. "I don't think it's going to win any awards but it's different, it's unique and it's a pleasant drinking experience." And you'd be hard-pressed to find one over \$20.00.

FUN FACT: Sparkling Shiraz is loaded with polyphenols and antioxidants, so drink to your health — literally!

LOUIS BOUILLOT CRÉMANT DE BOURGOGNE ROSÉ, PERLE D'AURORE

Sparkling rosé has been experiencing a renaissance of late — and with good reason. "It's light, it's fruity, it's pleasant, and generally it's low in alcohol," says Farrell. "It makes a marvelous aperitif wine." And it shines with lighter fare. "It would be wonderful with a Salade Niçoise for lunch," says Farrell. "It's the perfect picnic wine — it brings an instant celebration to your picnic hamper!" And the \$11.99 price tag is another reason to celebrate.

FUN FACT: The Burgundy region produces as much sparkling wine as the Champagne region.

TENUTA TRAVANTO PROSECCO

Crisp and clean, Prosecco is the *Roman Holiday* of sparkling wines. "It's an extraordinarily pleasant aperitif — just simple, straightforward, not very complicated," says Farrell. "It's a little like Pinot Grigio, only it's sparkling ... It's like sipping a Pellegrino with a little kick." Because Prosecco is carbonated, it's always inexpensive. "You should never have to pay more than \$10.00 or \$11.00 for a Prosecco," says Farrell.

FUN FACT: Prosecco was the original main ingredient in the Bellini cocktail and can be used as a substitute for champagne in other cocktails like the Mimosa.

CENTENAIRE BRUT BLANC DE BLANCS

"This is the closest you'll get to real French champagne of all of these wines," gushes Farrell. "It's as close to real champagne as any sparkling wine you'll ever taste in your life. It's made in the foothills of the Alps and it's 100% *Méthode Champenoise*." And at \$11.99 a bottle, there's no risk in giving it a try. "If someone's a champagne aficionado and wants to watch their budget, which everybody probably does in 2009, this would be a phenomenal substitute for real Champagne."

FUN FACT: The bubbles in sparkling wine were originally considered to be a defect by early vintners. It was only later that they became a welcome effect.

