

**The New York Times**<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/26/dining/drinks/sparkling-wine-new-year.html>

Champagne will always be there, but prices are rising. The quality of American sparklers has soared and even the best are relatively affordable.

**By Eric Asimov**

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Champagne for the New Year is such a cliché, shouldn't we drink something else?

No. Well, not really. As wonderful as sparkling wines are regardless of the occasion, celebrations would not be complete without them. But Champagne is not the only option.

Almost any place that makes wine makes sparkling wine as well. They can be cheap commodities, as is the case with much of Prosecco and cava. They can be pale imitations of Champagne. Or they can be wonderful beverages with their own singular personalities, regardless of where they came from, how they were made or what grapes were used.

The universe of sparkling wine has expanded greatly, and quality has soared. From almost every region, I can point to great sparkling wines, even from the worlds of Prosecco and cava. They come from all over France and Italy. Germany, Spain and the United States can stand with anyone. So can England.

And what of Champagne?

While it has its share of clunkers like all wine regions, Champagne is unparalleled in its number of great producers, from small farmers to big houses, and for the volume of exceptional wines that are made. I love it.

But this year in particular, Champagne seems expensive. Decent bottles start at \$50 — barely. More likely, you will be asked to pay at least \$70 for good, entry-level wines, and prices skyrocket from there, with vintage Champagnes costing sometimes hundreds of dollars. This is partly because of tariffs, but prices have been rising for years now.

Price is only part of the equation. For many, Champagne, and only Champagne, can connote the proper combination of festivity and warm hospitality. I understand that and offer a set of updated Champagne recommendations as well.

But this year I want to focus on a less expensive alternative, like American sparkling wines, which I think have been long undervalued. Great bottles now come from all over the country, though California produces by far the most.



Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

I highly recommend these 12 bottles that I bought retail. They include 11 from California and one from the Finger Lakes of New York. All these wines were made by the traditional method, just like Champagne, in which the sparkle is generated in the bottle by a second fermentation. That means no pétillant naturels or bottles produced by other methods.

Wines from the bigger California producers should not be difficult to find. They include pioneers like Schramsberg, Iron Horse and California outposts opened by Champagne companies in the 1970s and '80s. Many smaller producers are now making excellent sparkling wines, too. I've included a few, though I could not find some that I like very much, like Cruse Wine Company, Hammerling and Rhys.

This year, I drank some wonderful sparkling wines from Oregon, but sadly they are difficult to find in New York, so I haven't included any. But I would highly recommend sparklers from newer producers like Pashey, Corollary, Maison Jussiaume and Mellen Meyer as well as old favorites like Soter, Argyle, Domaine Serene and Sokol Blosser.



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### **Limnad Finger Lakes Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut 2020, 12 percent, \$40**

This elegant blanc de blancs, made entirely from chardonnay, is like drinking a cloud. It's dry, delicate and perhaps a bit austere, like an icy martini, but it would be perfect as an aperitif or with a shrimp cocktail. Limnad is a sparkling wine label from Nancy Irelan of Red Tail Ridge, the excellent Finger Lakes producer.