

## More on Beverages & Spirits

- Wake up and rediscover the wonder of coffee
- What temperature white? And what red?

## More on Lifestyle

- 45 days of our readers' favorite holiday memories
- Pro tips: Dressing kids for holiday photos
- Are you in need of a relationship tune-up?

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### From The Nest

- More delicious drink recipes!
- Throw a cocktail party!
- Test your wine IQ!

## Instant Expert: Champagne

Here are the basics on bubbly.

Celeste Perron

### What's in a name?

True Champagne (yes, with a capital C) comes from the Champagne region of France. To get the C name, the sparkling wine is made to very specific – such as the degree of press applied to the grapes and the time that bottles must remain in contact with the less (sediment). Like Band-Aids and Q-tips, champagne (lower-case c) has become the catchall name for sparkling wine.

### Why the bubbles?

Champagne's bubbles are created when a bit of yeast and sugar are put into the bottles of a base, non-sparkling wine, causing a second fermentation (regular wine only ferments once) that results in bubbles of carbon dioxide.

### Taste Test

To tell a cheap sparkling wine from a fancy one, look at the bubbles. Expensive ones have tons of tiny bubbles. Cheaper champagnes have larger bubbles, which create a foamy feeling in your mouth.

### Reading Labels

Deciphering a Champagne label can be tricky for the uninitiated.

### Dryness Scale:

Champagne is classified according to how much sugar it contains.

- Brut:** Driest, least sweet; most good Champagnes are Brut or Extra-Dry.
- Extra-Dry:** The next driest; the term is confusing, since it's not as dry as Brut.
- Sec:** Means dry in French, but it's sweet.
- Demi-Sec:** Moderately sweet; serve it with desserts that aren't too sugary.
- Doux:** The sweetest.

### The Grapes

Champagnes can be made from the same type or a blend of grapes.

- Blanc de Blancs:** Champagne made entirely of white Chardonnay grapes.
- Cuvée:** Champagne made from a mix or blend of grapes from different years.
- Blanc de Noirs:** Made of the red grapes Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier (the skins are taken off so the bubbly is still white in color). These champagnes are less acidic and have a stronger fruit quality.
- Rosé:** Pink bubbly is made by leaving the juice of red grapes in contact with their skins for a while, or by blending the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir and/or Pinot Meunier wine.
- Vintage:** Made from grapes all from the same year – because the fruit was so amazing. You can recognize a vintage because the year will be on the bottle. A vintage bottle is often, though not always, pricier than a cuvée.

### Glass War: Flute vs. Tulip Glass

Connoisseurs recommend tall, skinny flutes because their elongated shape concentrates the bouquet and encourages the bubbles to rise to the surface. The wide-mouthed glass, called a tulip-shape, won't produce this same effect. Either glass: Don't spare the crystal! The rougher surface of glass works up bubble even more than a standard flute.

### 3 champagne cocktail recipes

- Kir Royale:** Pour one ounce of crème de cassis (black currant liqueur) into a glass and top with four to five ounces of champagne.  
**Perfect for** evening cocktails.
- Bellini:** Pour two ounces of peach nectar or Cipriani Bellini mix into four to six ounces of champagne.  
**Delicious for** brunch or afternoon sipping.

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● **Bubbling Lychee Grapefruit Martini:** Combine two parts Stolichvinsky vodka, two parts SOHO Lychee liqueur and a splash of grapefruit juice in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake and strain into a martini glass; top with two parts champagne. (Courtesy of NYC bar Happy Ending.)

**Wonderful for** wowing your dinner guests.

Photo: Antonis Achilleos

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