



## **January at BNFB**

Now that all the major holidays are behind us, we can address Champagne and Traditional Method (*Champenoise*) sparklers in a clear-headed manner. There are several pertinent points worth discussing in order to get the most out of your bubbles: glasses, temperature, and food pairing. A little experimentation will make you taste bubbly in a whole new way.

### **Glass Shape**

The 300 year-old, saucer shaped Coupe glass was especially popular in America between the 1920s and 1960s but was eventually replaced by Flute glass, which is appreciated for height and bubble preserving properties. The tubular shape makes for a good vessel, but some glass makers have lost all sense of functionality through designs that do nothing for the wine. However, the popularity of the Flute persists because it's great for toasting: lots of them fit on a serving tray, 1-2 ounce portions appear adequate, and the glass is visible in the hand and good for clinking. But one major drawback of the flute is that it prevents the drinker from savoring nuanced aromas, so oenophiles are going a different route by serving bubbly in large flared Tulips, or even Bordeaux and Burgundy glasses. While this serving method might seem odd, let's not forget that Champagne is first and foremost a very fine wine made from Burgundian grapes. For better sparklers it's worth emphasizing the flavor over the fizz, so try using a regular wine glass and give your nose and palate a remarkable experience. Don't worry, the bubbles won't dissipate.

### **Temperature**

Inexpensive, as well as basic sparklers like most Cava and Prosecco, can be served right out of the fridge at 38-45° without affecting their flavor. In fact, the cold acts as a balancing agent for these wines, but high-end Champagne shows best at *cave* conditions of 45-55 degrees. Despite the fact that expensive and complex sparklers are usually thrown into ice buckets and left to chill like a 6-pack of brewski, excessive chilling mutes the best aspects of these labor intensive wines. If you really want to appreciate the multifaceted flavors of bubbly, then try it a little warmer than usual. You can always chill it down again. Furthermore, truly exemplary Champagne can even be gently decanted. Again, the bubbles will remain.

### **Food Pairing**

In addition to novelty glassware and vigorous cooling, incorrect food pairing is a common mistake when serving Champagne. Although there is a sparkler to go with virtually any type of food (except dense, fatty, red meats), one must always consider sugar levels. We've been trained to think that "Brut" is always superior or somehow more elegant than sweeter wine, but dry bubbly is a horrible match with most desserts and can even be a little tough on the gut when drunk on its own. To help you pair food with sparklers, here are the standard sweetness levels measured in grams of residual sugar per liter: Extra Brut/Brut Zero, Brut, Extra Sec, Sec, Demi-Sec, and Doux. For savory foods drink drier wines with sugar levels between Extra Brut and Extra Sec. Dessert and fruit dishes go wonderfully with wines in the range between Sec and Doux. As an aperitif drink Brut, Extra Sec and Sec.

**We hope this information helps expand your enjoyment of the great sparklers we've selected for this month. In summary: save your skinny flute glasses and ice buckets for simpler, inexpensive sparklers; experiment with regular wine glasses and warmer temperatures for Champagne. Finally, most Champagne available in America is Brut style dry wine, so there's rarely a need to scrutinize labels for sugar levels. However, leave yourself open to sweeter wines such as Extra Sec, Sec and Demi-Sec if you can ever find them. They're amazing expressions of Champagne.**

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## **Recommendations**

### **Domaine Mittnacht ~Crémant D'Alsace~ France NV \$24**

The Mittnacht family produces wonderfully complex wines on their 40 acre sustainable estate. Biodynamic farming is a very common practice among high-quality winemakers these days. Incorporating organic and Biodynamic farming methods, sustainability helps nourish the environment and encourages vines to yield unique fruit. The result of all the conscientious farming shows is this brilliant blend of 50% Pinot Auxerrois with roughly equal parts Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Gris. Only 15,000 cases made.

**Tasting Notes: Yeasty and biscuity with a very dry minerality. Made in the Methode Champanoise, and technically an Extra Brut (meaning super dry), this is a serious Crémant.**

### **Lenz ~Cuvee~ North Fork, Long Island 2005 \$32**

In business since 1978, Lenz is fortunate to have 70 acres of distinctly terroir-based, very old-vine Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Merlot, and Cabernet. Most of these vines even surpass the age of many California vineyards which have been replanted as a result of vineyard diseases like phylloxera. Lenz Vintage Cuvee is 100% Pinot Noir made only during great vintages and in the traditional Méthode

Champenoise process.

**Tasting Notes: Very dry and elegant with nuts and flowers on the nose. Subtle quince and apple on the palate with faint notes of yeasty lees. We should all take pride in a New York wine like this.**

#### **Paul Laurent ~Cuvee du Fondateur~ Champagne NV \$36**

The Gruet family has been making Champagne since the 1950s, and in 1993 they acquired Champagne Paul Laurent. Now, if the name Gruet sounds familiar to you, it's because the same family also makes one of BNFB's longtime staples, Gruet sparkling wine from New Mexico. These guys really know their bubbly and it shows in this 'Founder's Cuvee' dedicated to Gilbert Gruet. One of the best values in Champagne for under \$40.

**Tasting Notes: Aged on the lees of 18 months, this blend of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Chardonnay has a nice golden color and fine bubbles. Fruity nose with notes of pear, citrus and white flesh fruit. The palate has character and offers good balance and a fresh finish.**

#### **Chapuy ~Grand Cru Brut Reserve Blanc de Blancs~ Champagne NV \$42**

Chapuy (shap-wee) is a 20 acre winery located in the village of Oger within the Cotes de Blancs sub-region. Renowned for its Chardonnay, Oger happens to produce some of Champagne's finest. In fact, all of its vineyards are rated as 'Grand Cru' according to a rating system called the Échelle des Crus. This is 100% Reserve Chardonnay for the amazing price of \$42.

**Tasting Notes: A delicate nose that features white flowers and a hint of hazelnut. Bright, crisp lemon on a creamy palate. You will not find a better value for the money.**

#### **Chapuy ~Tradition Brut Rose'~ Champagne NV \$44**

A member of the Chapuy family has been the mayor of Oger since the French Revolution. While they owned land for a long time, Maison Chapuy only began making wine about 100 years ago. In the 1950s, this winery really became serious about producing fine bubbly at fair prices. This objective is aptly expressed in their credo, "Un champagne de grande qualité à un prix propriétaire" (Premium quality Champagne at 'owner' prices). That is, Chapuy is willing to share their excellent wines without tacking on an inflated mark-up.

**Tasting Notes: A blend of 84% Chardonnay & 16% Pinot Noir, this NV Brut Rose' is dry with delicate cherry and raspberry fruit delivered on a pillow of yeasty, biscuity MOUSSE.**

#### **Gaston-Chiquet ~1er Cru Brut Tradition~ Champagne NV \$50**

A true Grower Champagne. Gaston-Chiquet produces a grand total of 16,700 cases of wine per year – some commercial Champagne houses produce this much wine in a day. Gaston-Chiquet grows 100% of their own fruit in the northern Premier Cru villages of Dizy, Cumieres and Hautviller. The wine is a spot on expression of terroir, and that's why we've carried it for so many years.

**Tasting Notes: Made from a blend of Chard, Pinot Noir & Meunier, 'Tradition' exhibits hints of dried fruit, oleander & basil, and finishes with precise acid, stoniness and earth notes.**

#### **Gatinois ~Brut Rose'~ Ay, Champagne NV \$60**

A combination of 90% Pinot Noir and 10% Chardonnay, this special rosé is made by blending in a measure of oak aged Pinot Noir from 55+ year-old vines grown on Grand Cru plots. Like many other Champagne this wine is a blend of several vintages, mainly from 2004, with a little 2003 and 2005 mixed in. Situated on 15 acres in the village of Ay (*a-ye*), the House of Gatinois makes some of the finest Grand Cru bubbly for under \$100.

**Tasting Notes: Silky with cherry and raspberry fruit accented by bright acidity. Nicely balanced and very clean.**

#### **Egly-Ouriet ~Grand Cru 'Les Crayeres' Blanc de Noirs~ Champagne NV \$175**

Egly-Ouriet (el-lee oo-ree-ay) is one of the first, and more renowned, grower Champagnes to gain popularity in the US, but production has been kept intentionally small over the decades. In order to preserve the terroir of the Grand Cru villages of Ambonnay, Bouzy and Verzenay, all the base wines are left unfiltered and unfiltered before spending a minimum of three years on the lees. This Blanc de Noirs is made from 100% Pinot Noir grown on the Lieu-dit of Les Crayeres. There is no better wine than single vineyard, single vintage Champagne. While not listed, Francis Egly used exclusively 2005 wine and then aged it for 48 months in barrels. This top flight Blanc de Noirs is a much better value than comparably priced big-brand bubbly. Plus, it's at its peak right now.

**Tasting Notes: Les Crayeres explodes in the glass with ripe red fruit, mint, spices and licorice. The palate is very full-bodied and concentrated with dense fruit, yet it remains deftly balanced and elegant with enough acid and tannin.**

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### **Recipe: Baked Brie with Chutney**

If you're the chef in the family, January is the time when you need a serious break from all the holiday meals cooked over the last two months. So, start out the year with a dish that requires just a few ingredients and tools, and is done within an hour. Given the rich pastry and cheese, Baked Brie also brings an air of festivity to the sometimes gloomy months of mid-winter – especially when it's paired with Champagne.

#### **Ingredients**

1 sheet puff pastry

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- One 5-7inch round of French Brie, right out of the fridge
- 2 tablespoons whole grain mustard
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 1 cup of your favorite Chutney, or try sliced Membrillo (Quince Paste)
- Black pepper

**Preparation**

Preheat oven to 400 degrees

Spread out pastry on a cool surface and position your Brie in a spot where you can easily envelope the cheese.

Brush all sides of the cheese with the mustard, sprinkle with fresh ground pepper and fold the pastry over the Brie. Cut away the excess so you have a single, even layer of sealed dough all around. Use scraps to plug any gaps so the cheese doesn't leak out.

Place the Brie (smooth side facing up) on a baking sheet lined with parchment. Use a cookie cutter to make decorative shapes from the leftover scraps, place on top and brush all over with the egg wash.

Bake for 20 minutes at 400 degrees, lower the temperature to 325 and bake for another 20-25 minutes. Remove from the oven when deeply golden and let cool for 15 minutes. Put on a platter surrounded by ramekins of chutney made from pear, apple, mango or peach, plus another ramekin of mustard if desired. Slice and serve with plenty of your favorite bubbly.

## January Tastings

<p><b>Saturday, January 7th 4-6 PM</b></p>	<p><u>Spring in January:</u> As this newsletter is being prepared it is beautifully unseasonably warm in Park Slope, so we are going to open some of our favorite whites that we tend to drink more in the Spring or Summer than in January.</p>
<p><b>Saturday, January 14th 4-6 PM</b></p>	<p><u>Zinfandel:</u> We can't remember the last time we did a Zin tasting so now's the time! We have a handful of really great stuff that is balanced and restrained and we are excited to share them with you.</p>
<p><b>Saturday, January 21st 4-6 PM</b></p>	<p><u>Spanish Reds Beyond Rioja:</u> As famous and delicious as Rioja is, we have a great deal of wonderful Spanish red from regions all throughout the country. Stop by and taste for yourself!!</p>
<p><b>Saturday, January 28th 4-6 PM</b></p>	<p><u>Bubbly!!:</u> The holidays are over but there is certainly no reason to stop drinking sparkling wine! We will have a few of the selections listed above open for you to taste.</p>

*(remember that during the tasting featured wines are offered at a 15% discount)*

**Aaron, Mike, Travis, Jon, Dan, Matt, Kurt, Kurt, Tim and Tom**

<p><b>Big Nose Full Body 382 7th Ave (11th and 12th Streets) Brooklyn, NY 11215 (718) 369-4030</b></p>	<p><b>Hours:</b>  <b>Monday - Thursday: Noon - 9PM</b>  <b>Friday: Noon - 10PM</b>  <b>Saturday: 11AM - 10PM</b>  <b>Sunday: Noon - 9PM</b></p>	<p>We always offer a 15% <b>discount</b> on mixed or solid cases and a <b>5% discount</b> on 6 to 11 bottles.</p>
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## WINE CLASS

Join us on Saturday February 18th, 2012 at 2:30pm for our twenty first wine class that will feature **Terroir Driven Wines**. The class will last about one and a half hours, during which we will taste and discuss eight wines from various producers. Small snacks will be provided. The cost is only \$50 and is limited to 20 seats so sign up now!

**Classes are taught by Brian Mitchell (WSET Diploma Candidate)**

**Contact [brookvin@gmail.com](mailto:brookvin@gmail.com)**

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