

Summer tastes for *discerning palates*

Regardless of the occasion, summer is a good reason to add a little sparkle to your wine. Wine guru, **Neil Fortes**, discusses wine in its bubbly form



Neil Fortes is an industrial psychologist and certified mediator by profession, but a wine guru at heart. He has a 25-year history in the wine business, consulting for many wine companies and marketing wines across Canada and the U.S. Please visit www.wineguru.ca for more information.

Summer is a good time to experiment with different varieties of wines. The more leisurely pace lends itself well to savouring the tastes of wines while socializing with friends and family. There are many to choose from, including sparkling wines and Champagnes, more commonly referred to as the bubbliies.

We all know what the bubbliies are: those Champagne-like beverages that produce an effervescence which is both pleasing to the eye and to the palate.

Consumers have long loved bubbly-type wines. These wines are central to celebratory events, whether it's New Year's Eve, a wedding or the birth of a new baby. And sometimes these bottles take centre stage just for the fun of it.

There are different methods used to produce bubbliies, and in different regions, which has a direct relationship to the price of the product. Made from still wines, some bubbliies are created by introducing carbonation into the wine whereas Champagnes, or method-traditional bubbliies, are made by introducing yeast into the wine-making process. Interestingly, the reference to all bubbliies as Champagne is incorrect. Similar to ports, which can only use the name if made in that region in Portugal, the word Champagne on the bottle means it can only come from the Champagne region of France. Champagne and method-traditional wines demand a higher price than carbonated bubbly wines. Champagnes or method-traditional wines are made by using a blend of chardonnay and pinot mineur or pure chardonnay. When the yeast is introduced, fermentation occurs, which produces bubbles. Bottles are racked and turned so as to produce an even distribution of bubbles.

A new approach is to mix something fruity with a carbonated wine. Of course, the new area of mixology is experimenting with new and exciting drinks using

all sorts of liquors and wines together with herbs and other condiments. For the purpose of this article, I will just be discussing carbonated wines without liquors or more complicated ingredients.

Over the past decade I believe wines have suffered an image problem and that general consumption has decreased, although the consumption of wines is starting to trend up. Younger drinkers have tended to drink beer and coolers. Producers have realized this and have understood the relationship between coolers and carbonated wines. This has caught the attention of the big, brand name companies, which have set up large factories just to produce these products.

Traditionally, white wines are used for Champagnes, but carbonated bubbliies can be made of other varietals using red and sometimes even pink-coloured wines. The effect is the same. The average person probably won't be able to tell the difference between carbonated wines and the authentic champagnes.

Here are some types to try this summer. Prosecco is a carbonated wine from Italy and will appeal to your patio clients. And because bubbliies are the choice for celebratory drinking, your customers will equate the good time and tastes with your patio.

Other good wines for any occasion are the sparkling wines and the lineup from Freixenet has a lot of variety to choose from. You can visit them at Freixenetusa.com and check out their cocktail and food recipes, sparkling wines 101 and wine pairing guides for tips and suggestions.

And if you don't want to go the bubbly route, there is always room for good, well-chilled, racy pinot grigio. Pinot grigio is made in Italy and if it's not on your wine list, then it should be! It is possible to buy and very well-priced at all liquor stores throughout Canada. In my opinion pinot grigio is that safe white wine that everybody knows about. Great for wines by the glass or a summer feature, pinot grigio is the patio pleaser. 🍷