

Red, White and Boom: Fourth of July Wines Part Two



When I was growing up in a “small town” in Central California, the Fourth of July meant ice cold watermelon, cookouts, a parade down Main Street, and fireworks at the community college stadium. And beer. Lots and lots of beer. I don’t really remember anyone drinking wine with their burgers and ribs, even in California. But that was then.

Today, wine is a familiar site at backyard barbeques across the country, and celebrating the birth of our nation in the nation’s capital with an assortment of red, white and sparkling wines is a great way to declare your own independence. As Benjamin Franklin, one of our Founding Father’s put it, “Wine makes daily living easier, less hurried, with fewer tensions and more tolerance.” I’ll drink to that.

Last week, I talked about a couple of red wines and a couple of white wines that would fit the Fourth of July holiday barbeque genre. But since my most vivid memory of the Fourth was running around with my friends, waving sparklers to-and-fro, I thought this week that the **BOOM** would be an ode to sparkling wines. And as a nod to mom, who was always concerned about our safety, “just be careful where you point that cork, you could put somebody’s eye out!”

No matter how many times I tell my friends that New Mexico – yes, New Mexico – makes a delicious, value-oriented sparkling wine, I still have to actually pour the **Non-vintage Gruet Blanc de Noir** to convince them. Blanc de Noirs means white from black, so this is a white wine made from pinot noir grapes. Aromas of strawberry and rose petals dominate the nose while flavors of strawberry, ripe apricots and baked bread glide over the tongue on a crisp frame. The bright finish delivers notes of toasty oak and vanilla. **\$15**

The sparkling wines from the Cava region of Spain are the unsung hero of bubbly. The **Non-Vintage Segura Viudas Brut Reserva Heredad** from Cava, Spain, is an excellent example of how delicious these wines can be. I really like this wine for its balance and abundant flavors. It has a pretty nose of rose petals and crème brulee. It’s nutty and creamy at the same time with flavors of green apple and ripe pear filling out the midpalate. **\$20**

If you’re looking for an All-American sparkling wine with a domestic label, the **Non-vintage J Vineyards Cuvee 20 Brut** from the Russian River Valley of California is a great pick. It sports a wonderful bouquet that features toasted brioche, green apple and lemon scents on the nose. Tight, compact bubbles carry flavors of ripe apple, citrus and roasted almonds across the entire palate. **\$22**

Considering that the French kind of help us out of a tight jam during the war of Independence, it’s only fitting that we finish with a big bang. The **2006 Moët & Chandon Grand Vintage Rosé** is made only in exceptional years and is the first vintage rose that Chief Winemaker Benoit Gouez’s worked on from growing season through production. It is powerful, expansive, gracious and aged for seven years in cellar before it is released. It has beautiful depth and elegance, featuring notes of biscuit and spice bread, followed by stone fruits like cherry, plum and prune, and completed by nuances of wild herbs like rosemary and lemon peel. The delicious finish has hints of raspberry and dried rose petals, all supported by ultra-fine bubbles. Worth the splurge. **\$90**