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A Bubbly for Every Budget: Your New Year's Bottle Buying Guide

Maybe you need a Champagne for a midnight toast. Or a sparkling wine suited to a special meal. Whatever the occasion and the budget, our wine columnist recommends a bottle to match.



By [Lettie Teague](#) [Follow](#)

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ILLUSTRATION: MARGA CASTAÑO

It's a near-inviolable rule that sparkling wine of some sort must be served on New Year's Eve. The exact sort depends upon several factors.

How big is the celebration you are attending or hosting? How much or how little do you want to spend? Will those in attendance be serious wine lovers or just

casual imbibers? Is the wine meant for midnight toasting, or will it be served along with a meal? If the latter, what's on the menu?

With such questions in mind, I came up with the following sparkling options in five different price ranges. Whether at the budget end of the vinous spectrum or more of a splurge, each bottle is worthy of a raised glass (or perhaps two) and will go a long way toward assuring that 2025 gets off to a pleasurable start. As always in this column, the prices listed are what I actually paid for each wine; the numbers might be higher or lower in other stores and states.



\$10-\$20

Bohigas Brut Reserva Cava, \$14

Maybe you're hosting a New Year's party and need enough reasonably priced bottles to please a sizable crowd. Often as not, under these circumstances, I'll look for a good Cava. The price-quality ratio for these Spanish sparkling wines can be quite good.

One of my favorite affordable options, the Bohigas Brut Reserva

Cava, is bright, lively and quite crisp. (Think: green apple and pear.) Produced from native varieties such as Xarello just outside the Penedès region of Spain via the traditional (aka Champagne) method, this wine undergoes secondary fermentation in the bottle and is aged at least 18 months in the cellar before release. In other words, a fair amount of time and work goes into making this very reasonably priced wine. The Casanovas family has been producing cava for nearly 100 years; Maria Casanovas Giró, the great-granddaughter of winery founder Josep Maria Bohigas, oversees both the winemaking and the estate.

\$20-\$30



Roederer Estate Brut Anderson Valley, \$25

This beautifully balanced, rich yet elegant sparkling wine from the cool Anderson Valley of Mendocino County, Calif., bears a close resemblance to Champagne for a very good reason: The winery was founded in 1982 by Jean-Claude Rouzaud, then president of the Champagne house Louis Roederer. Forty-plus years on, the two estates remain closely tied.

Longtime Roederer head winemaker and senior vice president Arnaud Weyrich oversees all winemaking at Roederer Estate and determines the final blends. He also meets regularly with Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon, chef de caves (head winemaker) and executive vice president of Champagne Louis Roederer, during the latter's West Coast trips, helping to ensure a consistent Roederer style.

The Roederer Estate Brut is a multi-vintage blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, partially aged in French oak barrels and produced entirely from estate fruit. It's a wine for toasting or for pairing with food that will please both serious wine lovers and casual sippers.

\$30-\$40

2021 Schramsberg Vineyards Blanc de Blanc, \$38

Schramsberg Vineyards was established in Napa Valley in 1965 by proprietors Jack and Jamie Davies. The winery rose to national prominence in 1972, when the 1969 Schramsberg Blancs de Blancs was served at a momentous dinner in China.

The wine was selected by President Nixon's staff to honor Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and the breakthrough in Chinese-American relations they brokered. A



high-quality Champagne-method sparkling wine from California was such a novelty in those days, the bottle made it onto the “Today Show.”

Today Hugh Davies, son of Jack and Jamie, oversees the winery as well as Davies Vineyards in St. Helena, where the family also produces and still wines. The 2021 Schramsberg Vineyards Blanc de Blancs is made entirely of Chardonnay, produced from

Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino and a bit of Marin County fruit. It’s a fairly full-bodied sparkler with notes of toast, hazelnuts and crème brûlée—made to pair with food. (Perhaps a seafood stew?)

And while this particular vintage may not yet have featured in a dinner of high political consequence, who knows what 2025 might bring?



\$50-\$60

Gaston Chiquet Tradition Premier Cru Brut Champagne, \$55

There is no shortage of excellent non-vintage Champagne in this price range; selecting a single bottle was actually no easy task. But the family-owned Gaston Chiquet Champagne house is so reliably good that when I bought this bottle I was fairly confident it would deliver a good glass of wine.

The family first began bottling Champagne produced from its premier cru and grand cru vineyards over 100 years ago—a daring and extremely uncommon move at a time when big Champagne houses, aka “marques,” ruled the region. (They still do.) Today Nicholas Chiquet produces a range of well-crafted Champagnes, including this blend of Pinot Meunier, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir sourced from premier and grand cru sites. Truly stylish, truly dry (dosage is 4 grams per liter) and marked by floral and pear notes, this Champagne has enough complexity to pair with food.

Note: The Chiquets are among the many growers (known as *récoltants-manipulants* in Champagne) who print a disgorgement date on the back label of their bottles. This is a number I appreciate knowing, as the date of disgorgement—when dead yeast cells are expelled and the temporary closure is replaced by a Champagne cork—is also when the wine truly begins to age. Thus a disgorgement date of March 2024 on my bottle meant the wine was still young, fresh and vibrant.



\$80-\$100

***Ruinart Blanc de Blancs
Champagne, \$85***

Founded in 1729, Maison Ruinart is the oldest Champagne house, but it only began producing its distinctive, much-sought-after non-vintage Blanc de Blancs (all-Chardonnay) Champagne in 2001.

The house had the good sense to put its distinctive wine into an equally distinctive bottle, with a

design that dates back to the 18th century, according to Ruinart’s chef de caves Frédéric Panaiotis. The Ruinart family switched to the conventional Champagne bottle shape in the 19th century, but it revived the earlier shape a few decades ago, first for its rosé and later for its Blanc de Blancs Champagne.

The Ruinart family were cloth merchants before they were wine producers, a link that seems especially relevant with the recent (2021) launch of the bottle for this wine, covered in a light protective paper that looks a bit like a chic coat. This minimalist, eco-friendly packaging was created to replace the gift box that once housed the wine and to protect the wine inside the clear glass bottle from light.

Of course, neither bottle shape nor packaging would matter if the wine weren't so very lovely, lithe and ethereal as this one is. Sourced from both premier and grand cru vineyards, it is a Champagne of great finesse to sip or serve with a meal—my pairing would be crab cakes—or share with a truly deserving loved one.

Happy New Year to all!

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