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Could a New Tariff Send French Champagne Out of Your Price Range? Consider These Domestic Sparkling Wines

A proposed tariff on alcoholic beverages from the European Union could hit American Champagne lovers particularly hard. Here, our wine columnist shares her top picks for U.S. sparkling wines produced in the traditional Champagne style.



By *Lettie Teague* [Follow](#)



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If you read the news of some pretty steep pending tariffs—[potentially 200% on European alcohol](#), including, notably, Champagne—and, like me, you immediately began thinking about what sparkling wines you'd still be able to buy, I have some good news: There are plenty of very good domestic sparkling wines produced in the United States that are (still) affordably priced. (I list the

prices you'll find on the wineries' websites below, but prices will often be lower in stores and will vary from store to store and state to state.)

My favorites come from a variety of sources: a stateside winery connected with a French Champagne house, another founded by a French winemaker, and a couple of wineries created by Americans who fell in love with Champagne and decided to try their hand at producing their own, American version of the stuff.

One of my favorite reasonably priced domestic sparkling wine producers, Gruet Winery, was founded by Frenchman Gilbert Gruet, who went from making Champagne in his native France to making Champagne-method sparkling wine in New Mexico—a great story in itself. He produced his first Gruet wine in New Mexico in 1987. Many years and bottles later, the Gruet family sold the winery to a corporation, Precept Wine and Spirits, that increased the quantity while maintaining the quality. The [Gruet Brut Rosé](#) (\$17) is a Pinot Noir-dominant, juicy pink drink with bright acidity and notes of red fruit.

Born in France, west of Champagne, Gilles Martin ended up on the North Fork of Long Island, making wine for Tom and Cynthia Rosicki, an American couple in love with Champagne, at Sparkling Pointe Vineyards and Winery. For more than two decades, their wines have remained consistently high in quality, at prices comparable with those of (pre-tariff) Champagne. The toasty all-Chardonnay [2019 Sparkling Pointe Blanc de Blancs](#) (\$48) is distributed in several states and can be purchased directly from the winery.



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Of course, California is the biggest U.S. source of Champagne alternatives. Two California sparklers in particular that I've purchased over and over again for my personal cellar are widely distributed and thus easy to find, and reasonably priced.

The first of them, the [Roederer Estate Brut](#) (\$32), a rich, creamy blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir made in the Anderson Valley, has just the right balance of acidity and fruit. When Frenchman Jean-Claude Rouzaud, then the president of the French house

Champagne Louis Roederer, chose the cool Anderson Valley of Mendocino, Calif., as the place to realize his vision of producing Champagne-method (aka méthode traditionnelle) sparkling wine in the States, others soon followed. Today Anderson Valley is equally famous for high-quality (still) Pinot Noirs and high-quality sparkling wines.

My second-favorite Golden State sparkler, the crisp yet lush, pear-inflected [2021 Schramsberg Vineyards Blanc de Blancs](#) (\$44), is an all-Chardonnay wine produced at a Napa winery founded by an American couple. Jack and Jamie Davies wanted to make a world-class sparkling wine and certainly succeeded in getting the world's attention with this wine when it debuted in 1965. The first commercially produced all-Chardonnay Champagne-method sparkling wine produced in the States made the news again when then-President Nixon served a 1969 Schramsberg Blanc de Blancs to Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai on his historic visit to China in 1972.

While I'd be happy to drink any of these domestically produced sparkling alternatives to Champagne, I'm not giving up on drinking the stuff from France just yet. In fact, I'll be running to a few wine stores this weekend to stock up on Champagne from producers like Pol Roger, Ployez-Jacquemart and Louis Roederer before any tariffs—possibly—go into effect.

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