



California Fizzy.....

You don't have to trek to Champagne, France to enjoy Champagne-styled sparkling wines and to visit the wondrous wineries that make them. It's true that only sparkling wines made in the Champagne region of France can officially be called champagne - that fun fizzy elixir discovered in the 17th century by a now brand name monk called Dom Perignon. When bottled wines in his Benedictine cellar unintentionally underwent a second fermentation, naturally occurring carbon dioxide created the magical bubbles. The result was such a pleasant surprise that he later decrypted the process and a new wine-making technique was born.

All other effervescent vinos are known simply as "sparkling wine". The best producers employ the same time-consuming methods as in Champagne. Look for language like *méthode champenoise*, *méthode traditionnelle* or *classiqué* on the bottle for authenticity.

California is the homeland of some of the world's most delightful sparkling wines and aesthetically pleasing wineries that produce them. Cooler Northern California regions like Anderson Valley, Carneros, Sonoma and the slightly warmer Napa Valley have proven to be perfect locales for producing quality sparkling wines.

Now the Divas will let you in on some of our favorite places producing and pouring this precious product in their tasting rooms. Most wineries offer daily tours throughout the year, some by appointment only - so you'll want to call ahead to confirm. We recommend visiting during non-peak hours (try to drop by during the week vs. on crowded Saturday afternoons).

Here are a few Diva picks to get you going:

- **Domaine Chandon**, located in the heart of scenic Napa Valley, makes several styles of sparkling wine in partnership with the centuries-old Moët & Chandon Champagne house in France. One of our favorites is their rosé - perfect for Valentines day! In addition to spending some quality time tasting wines, we insist you stroll the grounds to experience engaging outdoor artwork and sculpture, gardens and spring-fed ponds amidst panoramic views of vast vineyards. See: <http://www.chandon.com> for more information.
- The Divas had an absolut blast at **J Vineyards** - situated in Sonoma County's lush Russian River Valley, founded in 1986 as a *methode champenoise* winery by a wonderful woman winemaker, Judy Jordan. J Vintage Brut is their flagship fiz, consistently delicious and award-winning each year. Be sure to bring your appetite to nosh at J's new Bubble Room for elegantly chef-paired foods and wines designed with the female in mind. For more information visit:



<http://www.jwine.com> Or call J's Visitor Center at (707) 431-3646 / toll free at 888-JWINECO.

- Step out onto the terrace of a beautiful sun-filled tasting room at the **Gloria Ferrer Winery** to see what Sonoma's southern Carneros appellation is all about. Breathe in the vista of the winery's estate vineyards while toasting their tasty Blanc de Noir sparkling wine with hints of bright strawberry and black cherry aromas and subtle vanilla highlights. While there, you may want to visit or host a private event in their Champagne Caves where you'll find everything you need to set the stage for a romantic evening. No surprise this winery specializes in weddings.

Savvy sippers know that champagnes and their sparkling sisters are perhaps the most versatile of all wines, to be enjoyed as aperitifs, during dinner, with (or in lieu of) dessert. They're unique wines perfect for "every day" and certainly special occasions. No doubt you'll want to bring some sparklers back home from your journey. Since traveling with any liquids like wine can be challenging (or near impossible) these days, we advise you arrange for shipping direct from the winery (depending on your state's laws of course) or check with TSA prior carrying on or checking your goods. If that fails, return home to

your favorite wine store, travel their isles for great bubbles and remember that wonderful visit to California wine country.

Happy Sipping!