

BUBBLY TIME FOR INDIAN WINE LOVERS!



Jyoti Balani takes a look at the growing number of Indian sparkling wines which are gradually finding place in the choices of Indian wine lovers out to have fun with a glass of wine.

Our own home-grown bubbly have come of age! We now have a wide range of wines to choose from when it is time to celebrate or just have fun with a glass of sparkling wine. The mood in the sparkling wine segment is upbeat with producers looking for greater share in the wine market.

Those producing sparkling wines in India include internationally acclaimed Moët & Chandon and Indian companies such as award-winning Grover Zampa Vineyards, York Wines, Sula Vineyards and Good Drop Wine Cellars.

Moët & Chandon produces two sparkling wines in Nashik — Chandon Brut and Chandon Brut Rose. Grover Zampa Vineyards' Zampa Soiree Brut and Zampa Soiree Brut Rose have been around for some time. Sula Vineyards sparkling portfolio consists of Sula Brut, Sula Brut Rose, Sula Seco and Sula Seco Rose. York Wines has come up with Sparkling Cuvée Brut. Then there is the Casablanca range of sparkling wines produced by Good Drop Wine Cellars.

Talking about the sparkling wine scenario, Sumedh Singh Mandla, CEO, Grover Zampa Vineyards, says, "Sparkling wine is a growing segment. Consumers in India appreciate



Sumedh Singh Mandla, CEO, Grover Zampa Vineyards

premium quality sparkling wines. This is evident from the fact that in India sparkling wines made with Méthode Traditionnelle enjoy larger share than those made with cheaper methods. Our sparkling wines have won numerous international awards and they are the most awarded sparkling wines from India. We are looking at expanding our production capacity to meet domestic and export requirements."

Zampa Soiree Brut wine has won several awards — a Gold at the All Things Nice Indian Wine Consumer's Choice Awards 2012 and 2014, a Silver at the Hong Kong International

Wine & Spirit Competition 2013 and 2014, and a Bronze at Decanter Asia Wine Awards 2013. Zampa Soiree Brut Rose is also recipient of prestigious awards — a Gold at the All Things Nice Indian Wine Consumer's Choice Awards 2014, a Bronze at the Hong Kong International Wine & Spirit Competition 2014 and commendation at 2012 the International Wine Challenge, London.



Ravi Gurnani, Managing Director, York Wines

York Wine's Sparkling Cuvée Brut has become very popular in a couple of months of its launch. Ravi Gurnani, Managing Director York Wines, tells about their Blanc de Blancs sparkling wine, "We only have one sparkling right now. We are excited about it. It is a limited production and that's how we would like to keep it going forward. It has been made by the traditional method of having secondary fermentation in the bottle. As with most of our brands, we don't want to scale up only for the sake of producing volume. We want to grow the brand organically, keeping our focus on quality."

Gurnani is "optimistic about the category as a whole. "They have produced only around 500 cases to start with. Their wine is currently available in Maharashtra (MRP Rs 975), Delhi (MRP Rs 900) and Rajasthan (MRP Rs 1,186).

The sparkling wines of Sula Vineyards contribute about 10-11% of the total production volume of this category in India. Deepak Bhatnagar, President, Sales and Marketing, Sula Vineyards says, "The sparkling wine industry, although at a nascent stage in India as compared to the rest of the world, is growing rapidly. At Sula, we are committed to put India on the global map of wine producing countries. Our premium offerings — Sula Brut and Sula Brut Rosé — are crafted in the true



Deepak Bhatnagar, President, Sales and Marketing, Sula Vineyards

'Méthode Champenoise'. These wines have a complex blend of various grape varieties. Besides, we have Sula Seco and our recently introduced Sula Seco Rosé which are competitively priced."

Sula sparkling wines are available in various cities across India. Sula Brut (1500ml) is priced between Rs 1600 and 3100 across various states. Sula Brut (750ml) is priced between Rs 750 and Rs 1500. Sula Brut Rosé (750ml) is priced between Rs 950 and Rs 2300 and Sula Seco (750 ml) between Rs 525 and Rs 1000. Their Sula Seco Rose (750 ml), priced at Rs 595, is currently available in Maharashtra only.

The most recent entry in the sparkling wines category is the 2014 Casablanca Rose Spumante produced by Good Drop Wine Cellars. Good Drop has earlier tasted success by launching India's first Prosecco-styled sparkling wine, Casablanca, which won the Indian Wine Consumers Choice Awards. The new wine, Casablanca Rose Spumante, is priced at Rs 900. Their other sparkling Casablanca Vino Spumante White Sparkling with 12% alcohol at 750 ml is priced at Rs 850, whereas the Casablanca Vino Spumante Rose Sparkling is priced at Rs 900. Available Currently in Maharashtra and Goa, these wines will be marketed in Daman, Rajasthan, Chandigarh and Punjab in the new financial year.



Ashwin Rodrigues, Owner, Good Drop Wine Cellars

Casablanca is India's only Charmat method sparkling wine made in the style of Prosecco. Regarding their decision to produce a Prosecco-style wine, Good Drop owner and wine maker Ashwin Rodrigues says, "We listened to Indian consumers and found that most of them prefer fruit forward, sweeter wines rather than a Champagne brut style. Our thinking was vindicated when Casablanca was declared the best sparkling at the Indian Wine Consumer Choice awards this year. Our Rose was launched in February and I've been very pleased with the feedback. Among our achievements, we have exported to the US and the UK under a private label and are also doing a private label for Titos Goa. 2015 is an important year for us as we establish our credentials as a specialist sparkling producer."

Good Drop Wine Cellars have produced 1,800 cases of sparkling wines in 2014-15 and their production projection for 2015-16 is 12,400 cases. ☺

SPARKLING FLAVOURS AND NOTES

MOËT & CHANDON SPARKLING WINES

Chandon Brut: Made from Chenin Blanc, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes, it is straw yellow in colour with flashes of green and a fine persistent effervescence. It has a bright and fresh fruit bouquet of citrus blossom, green apple with hints of tropical fruits and vanilla. The front palate is soft with generous primary fruit characters and well balanced acid. Aging on yeast gives a creamy textured middle palate complexed by vanilla and toasty notes, that extend to a lingering, crisp dry 'Brut' finish.

Chandon Brut Rose: Made from Shiraz and Pinot Noir grapes, it looks gorgeous with vibrant rose gold with hints of pink peach skin and a fine persistent effervescence. The aroma is of ripe cherries and pink grapefruit tones with subtle hints of guava and rose petals. The flavour evolves gently with mouth-filling small red fruits. Soft citrus tones keep the middle palate fresh and balanced with good acidity. The wine has a rich, creamy texture and persistence to a crisp 'Brut' finish.

GROVER ZAMPA SPARKLING WINES

Zampa Soiree Brut: Made with 100% Chenin Blanc grape, it is pale straw in colour and reveals a nose of floral, fresh lemon with hints of toasted bread and white fruit such as pear. Light and creamy, clean, fresh lemon, crisp acid, fine beads and persistent mousse with dry finish in classic brut style, it is brilliant served as an aperitif. It pairs well with mildly spiced Indian, Japanese, Chinese or Thai cuisine. Best served at 6°C.

Zampa Soiree Brut Rose: Made with 100% Shiraz grape, it is pale pink in colour with an aroma of bright red cherry fruits with a hint of strawberry and subtle yeast character to give its aroma a complexity and appeal. The wine is light and creamy with red cherry and strawberry that define the fruit character. Perfect during a meal with white meat or a dessert with a red fruit gratin. A great aperitif which is served at 6°C ideally.

YORK WINES SPARKLING WINES

Sparkling Cuvee Brut: Made with 100% Chenin Blanc grape, this light styled Blanc de Blancs sparkling wine has a good combination of primary fruity and secondary bottle fermentation characters. It gives a nose of perfumed characters of lemons and secondary characters of cheese and butterscotch. It has complex characters of cookies, cheese and cream on the palate. The acid is crisp as well as zesty and the wine has good length and structure.

SULA SPARKLING WINES

Sula Brut: It is one of the few Méthode Champenoise wines in the world to be crafted from five different grapes — Viognier, Chenin Blanc, Sultana, Shiraz and Pinot Noir. This exceptionally smooth, buttery and complex wine can be paired with fried or creamy dishes as well as lighter Asian dishes such as dim sum and steamed seafood.

Sula Brut Rosé: It is a blend of Pinot Noir, Zinfandel and Chenin Blanc. This salmon pink palate-pleaser packs a million tiny bubbles in every celebratory sip! Crafted in the true Méthode Champenoise style, this sparkler is creamy, smooth and well balanced. A versatile wine, it pairs perfectly with spicy Indian food as well as smoked salmon, chocolate, brie and berries.

Sula Seco: A light fruity sparkler, slightly sweet in style, it is perfect for everyday celebrations. It goes well with spicy curries, biryani and desserts. Perfect for mixing into Champagne cocktails.

Sula Seco Rosé: A medium dry rosé sparkling wine, it is lovely pink in colour and has sweet fruity aromas of nectarine, water melon, soft white fruits and deep scented white flowers. It is a youthful, lively, light, refreshing wine with fragrant notes, vibrant acidity and wonderful finish. It goes well with light Indian snacks/food and is just right as an aperitif. It could also be a wonderful after-dinner drink.

GOOD DROP WINE CELLAR SPARKLING WINES

Casablanca Rose Spumante: Made from Shiraz grape, it is bursting with fruit and floral notes. Shiraz used in it is harvested early to provide a crisp acid structure and a lingering finish. The juice has spent about twelve hours on skins just enough to give it a pale pink colour and some distinctive berry fruit. The fruit is surprisingly mature giving it a distinct tropical note and palate richness. The wine is made by the Charmat method which generates natural sparkles through secondary fermentation in tank. The light pinkish rose colour reveals its freshness and younger character. Its fruity nose is reminiscent of guava and grape fruit with floral undertones. The explosion of fruit on the entry is followed by a complex medium bodied palate carrying it through followed by a rich, soft and long finish. Pairs well with spicy Thai red chicken, tandoori fish, paella and creamy Italian dishes, goat's aged milk cheese, sweet cakes or strawberries dipped in chocolate.

Casablanca: It is a blend of four grape varieties. Chenin Blanc gives it the front palate and aromatics while Sauvignon Blanc adds to its length and crisp acidity. Symphony (a cross between Muscat and Grenache Gris) gives it a floral Muscat nose while Shiraz holds the mid-palate.