



Robert M. Parker, Jr.'s

The WINE ADVOCATE®

An independent consumer's bimonthly guide to Fine Wine

RATING SYSTEM

The WINE ADVOCATE's rating system employs a 50-100 point quality scale. It is my belief that the various twenty (20) point rating systems do not provide enough flexibility and often result in compressed and inflated wine ratings. The WINE ADVOCATE takes a hard, very critical look at wine, since it would prefer to underestimate the wine's quality than to overestimate it.

96-100

An extraordinary wine of profound and complex character displaying all the attributes expected of a classic wine of its variety. Wines of this caliber are worth a special effort to find and purchase.

90-95

An outstanding wine of great complexity and character.

80-89

A good to very good wine displaying considerable finesse and character with no noticeable flaws.

70-79

An average wine with little distinction except that it is a soundly made everyday table wine.

60-69

A below average wine containing noticeable flaws.

Below 60

A wine to be avoided.

IN THIS ISSUE

Champagne
Other Sparkling Wines

Domestic Chardonnay
Australian Reds

Odds and Ends

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

In the February, 1986 issue, Italian wines, both red and white, will be featured as will new release reports for American and European wines.

CREDITS AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

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SCHRAMSBERG	1982	"BLANC DE BLANCS"	(\$19.00)	79
SHCRAMSBERG	1982	"CUVÉE DE PINOT"	(\$18.00)	71
SCHRAMSBERG	1979	RESERVE	(\$30.00)	75

This winery has a great reputation, but I have never been a great fan of its sparkling wines. Yes, they are made in the USA and one should, I suppose, be a little chauvinistic, but these three current releases are hardly average in quality for sparkling wine, whether they were made in Italy, Spain, France or Germany. The 1982 Blanc de Blancs tastes like a green Muscadet that has been carbonated. The nose is odd, the wine has no middle range of flavor and a sharp finish. A second bottle proved identical. The 1982 rosé, the Cuvée de Pinot has a charming color but little else. There is no flavor, although what is present is clean and crisp with absolutely no follow through. You want a sparkling rosé wine from California? Concannon's new sparkling white zinfandel for \$8.00 has twice the character and appeal. Lastly, the 1979 Reserve, priced "modestly" at \$30.00, has some body and flavor, but no class or distinction. At \$8.00-9.00 it might compete with what else is on the market at this quality level. These are extremely disappointing wines.

SHADOW CREEK	1982	"BLANC DE NOIR"	SONOMA	(\$12.99)	83
SHADOW CREEK	1981	"BLANC DE BLANCS"	SONOMA	(\$13.99)	83
SHADOW CREEK		"CUVÉE #1 BRUT"	SONOMA	(\$11.99)	81

Shadow Creek's sparkling wines continue to be made at Château St. Jean's facility. They should consider giving St. Jean some advice, given the blandness of St. Jean's wines. The 1982 Blanc de Noir has surprising character for a sparkling wine from California. Rather than just bubbles and tartness, it offers some body and subtle pinot noir flavors in a medium bodied format. The 1981 Blanc de Blancs is quite light, clean with fresh, tart, crisp flavors, light body and zesty finish. The darker colored, medium straw colored Brut is clean, fresh, light to medium bodied, but lacks a little in comparison with the 1982 Blanc de Noir and 1981 Blanc de Blancs, which merit some attention.

Italy

Most people think of Italian sparkling wines as consisting totally of Asti Spumante. A festive wine, ranging from mildly sweet to cloyingly sweet, Asti Spumante is a big seller in America as much of this country's population's only experience with wine is limited to the sweet asti spumante and lambruscos. Most serious wine buffs probably recoil at the thought of drinking asti, but both Cinzano and Fontanafredda do indeed produce good Asti Spumantes. Both are delicate, not overly sweet and heavy, but lively, crisp and quite delicious as wines. Italy does have a growing band of producers making dry "metodo champenois" wines that can be quite good in the dry Brut style. I went through 23 Italian Brut sparkling wines and one producer's wines were vastly superior to any others. In fact, I recommend his wines to readers. That producer is Ca Del Bosco, located in Franciacorta. The wines are imported by Vinifera Imports, Wheaton, IL.

CA DEL BOSCO	1984	FRANCIACORTA BIANCO	(\$5.99)	84
CA DEL BOSCO		BRUT SPUMANTE NON-VINTAGE	(\$18.00)	86

Both of these are very good, dry, interesting sparkling wines. The 1984 Bianco is close in quality to the Brut Spumante yet sells for one third the price. It is fresh, crisp, with a toasted wheat bouquet, clean, medium intensity flavors and character. The Brut Spumante Non-Vintage is a richer, slightly more dramatic wine. Both of these dry sparkling wines are the best of their type I have tasted from Italy. Both are Recommended.

Australia

Surprise — sparkling wines from the land down under are indeed worthy of consumer interest. I tasted an assortment of Australian sparklers from wineries such as Tollana, Orlando, and Thomas Hardy, but the best I tasted were from a winery called Yellowglen. The quality of their sparkling wines was quite good, and the prices very reasonable. The importer is Northwind Enterprises, Brentwood, MD.

YELLOW GLEN		BRUT ROSÉ NON-VINTAGE	(\$8.99)	84
YELLOWGLEN		BRUT NON-VINTAGE	(\$8.95)	84

Both of these wines are well made, medium bodied, flavorful sparkling wines. The Brut Non-Vintage has quite a resemblance to a French wine, toasty, yeasty, with good flavors and a good, lingering effervescence. The Brut Rosé Non-Vintage is a particularly good value in a rosé sparkling wine, dry, delicate, crisp and fresh with a faint strawberry fruitiness. Both are Very Good Value.

France

Not everything that sparkles in France is Champagne. The best sparkling wine values that exist outside of Champagne are often French. Sparkling wines of quality that reach the United States come from Alsace, Burgundy, the Jura and Loire Valley. I tasted over 45 French sparkling wine brands that are heavily promoted in this country. Most tend to be rather soft, neutral wines with little character. The following 11 wines stood out in my tastings. Here are those that are the best. They are listed alphabetically. If you live in a market that actively discounts champagne, these wines may be poor values compared with the price for non-vintage champagnes.

MARC BREDIF		"SPARKLING VOUVRAY" BRUT NON-VINTAGE	(\$7.99-8.49)	80
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Clean, fresh, tart and dry, this light bodied sparkling wine from Vouvray is well made and refreshingly crisp. A Warren Straus Selection, Importer: Wines Ltd., Silver Spring, MD.

BRUT D'ARGENT	1984	BRUT ROSÉ	COTES DE JURA	(\$6.49-6.99)	84
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Perhaps the biggest surprise in the inexpensive rosé sparkling wines, the Brut D'Argent is medium bodied, fresh, with hints of good berry fruit and a pleasing roundness on the palate. Recommended. Importer: Hoffman Imports, Moonachie, NJ.