



WINE

# A FIZZY LITTLE CHRISTMAS

We raise a glass to classy Canadian bubbly that will add patriotic pizzazz to your holiday celebrations

*They're a tried-and-true* holiday classic. And lately, Canada has been excelling at producing top-notch sparkling wines, so why not celebrate this season with a homegrown selection of bubbly?

Ontario has many producers of delightful brands (not surprising when you consider that in this province, one-fifth of the total annual spending on sparkling wines takes place in December). They're often made in the traditional champagne method (second fermentation takes place in the bottle) from the same variety of grape. (1) **Hillebrand 2006** (\$40) blends barrel-fermented traditional champagne grape wines – Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier, Pinot Noir – then re-ferments and ages the wine in the bottle on the lees (yeasts) for four years to make a rich, toasty-flavoured bubbly. The winery's **Trius Brut**, also from Niagara Peninsula grapes, is a more affordable (\$25), off-dry, fruit-forward sparkler made in the traditional method. (2) **Jackson Triggs Entourage méthode classique brut 2007** from the Niagara Peninsula (\$23) is a blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay; its bouquet is biscuity and the palate crisp with citrus and apple flavours.

Flat Rock Cellars harvests the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay for its (3) **2008 Riddled Sparkling** (\$25) from the Twenty Mile Bench appellation in Niagara. Made in the traditional method, it's balanced and refined with lots of toasty, nutty flavours. (The wine comes with a gift card with bottle opener enclosed.)

Château des Charmes has released a festive (4) **2009 Rosé Estate Bottled Wine** (\$29). It's a pretty ruby-pink colour with a forward strawberry, red-berry nose and taste that's slightly off-dry. (5) **Cave Spring Blanc de Blancs Brut** (\$30) is an all-Chardonnay bubbly that is refined, lively and lemony-fresh with mineral nuances.

A special treat from Niagara is Inniskillin's (6)

**Sparkling Vidal Icewine** (\$70). Sweet with intense flavours of nectarine, apricot and honey, it also has exotic notes of mango, lychee and pineapple. The lively bubbles and good acidity keep the wine fresh on the palate.

In Prince Edward County, Grange of Prince Edward makes (7) **Estate Brut 2008** (\$30) in the traditional method. It has good acidity and flavours of toasted brioche and baked apples.

British Columbia's Okanagan Valley is home to a number of terrific sparkling wine producers. (8) **Blue Mountain Brut** (\$24) is dry with citrus and toast flavours and a crisp lemon finish. Their **Brut Rosé 2008** (\$33), which spends 36 months on the lees, has a fine mousse and pleasing fresh strawberry notes. Stephen Cipes of Summerhill Pyramid winery has always had a goal to make the best sparkling in the world. His are from organically grown grapes and include (9) **Cipes Rosé** (\$30), from 100 per cent Pinot Noir with a red-berry bouquet and fruity, peachy palate.

Benjamin Bridge is Nova Scotia's first winery to produce traditional method sparkling wines using Champagne grape varieties. A limited supply of **2004 Brut Reserve LD** (\$95) was released in Ontario in 2012, selling out within days. They also handcraft the lightly sparkling (10) **Nova 7** (\$26) that's off-dry, fragrant, low alcohol (6.5 per cent) and refreshing in style.

In Quebec, the cideries work magic with fermented apples. Ciderie St-Nicolas's (11) **Pom'Or Crackling Cider** (\$14) has a terrific crisp-apple taste from its mix of old and new cider-apple varieties. Refreshing and quite dry, with seven per cent alcohol, it's a nice alternative to have with Christmas turkey. **H**

REPORT: MARGARET SWAINE