



# To the bride and groom...

## Tips on choosing the right Champagne for your big event and making the perfect toast

By Charlotte Atkins  
Rome News-Tribune Editor  
CATkins@RN-T.com / 706-290-5279

A vintage tradition of most weddings is the Champagne toast. It's a time to celebrate the love of the couple and their relationships with friends and family — and enjoy a glass of sparkling wine too!

### The Bubbly

The first place to start is with the bubbly. Nothing adds to the festive occasion like Champagne. The bubbles you put in those glasses can range from inexpensive to pricey.

Champagne is sparkling wine, but not all sparkling wine is Champagne. It has to come from the Champagne region of France to officially bear the name. But there are a number of tasty California sparkling wines made in the same method.

This can be a big expense so often the bubbly is reserved for the toast. Plan for two glasses per guest to make sure you have enough — more if you plan to offer it up as a drink choice throughout the reception.

In the under \$10 range, the Spanish cava Freixinet comes in both Brut and Extra Dry. Note that Brut is actually the drier of the two. So the Extra Dry may suit a broader range of palates. Or offer both. Barefoot Bubbly is an inexpensive fun little California option. There are also a variety of Italian sparkling wines that can be a bargain, including Italian asti spumantes that are very sweet — on the opposite end of the spectrum from the brut wines.

There are several in the under \$20 a bottle category. Korbel is perhaps the best known for around \$13. Gruet from New Mexico is a solid bubbly for around \$14 a bottle. Mumm Napa and Domaine Chandon are both popular California sparkling wines with

French winemaker roots that will please both the novice and experienced wine drinker, both for around \$16.

We're seeing more and more Italian prosecco offerings on American shelves and they are often nice drinkable sparkling wines at a good price.

One of the best sparklers for around \$20 is Roederer Estate from Alexander Valley in California.

Over \$30, look for Veuve Clicquot's popular apricot-yellow label for a crowdpleaser. Other recommendations include Pommery, Laurent-Perrier and Piper-Heidsieck. All of these can be found in local grocery and liquor stores. This writer's favorite is Roederer's L'Ermitage, starting at around \$35.

Of course, there

are many non-alcoholic sparkling options such as grape juice or cider if that's a preference or if you want to let youngsters in on the toasting fun.

Remember, that since you'll be buying in bulk, the per-bottle rate may be reduced when buying by the case.

Your caterer or wedding planner will likely have some recommendations as well.



### The Toast

The other part of the Champagne toast are the words. Some people are more comfortable than others making a toast in front of a crowd of people.

Here are some tips from Toastmasters International:

**Keep it short** – no

more than a couple of minutes. Brevity is the soul of wit.

**Practice.** Think about what you want to say, and practice the toast in advance. Use friends as sounding boards beforehand.

**Speak slowly, clearly ... and loudly** (if no microphone is available).

**Be positive.** This is not the time to recite the groom's college pranks.

**Stay sober.** Being coherent helps, so save the alcohol for after the toast.

**Dress your best.** If you look good, you'll feel more confident.

**Use humor — but keep it clean.** Don't refer to "inside jokes" only a few people will understand.

**In summary** — End on a bright note. Be sincere, be brief, be seated.



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