

McLaren Vale Winery Sparkling Brut Shiraz Rose Australian Wine Club Membership

Winemaker Shocks with Preference for Sparkling Wine Over Champagne

Winemaker Shocks with Preference for Sparkling Wine Over Champagne French Champagne may have the reputation, and the price tag to match it, but McLaren Vale winemaker, Peter Cap, asserts that Australia's sparkling wines are contenders - and may be even better than champagne made using traditional methods. Testing his statement may prove to be palate-pleasing exercise, but understanding his reasoning may be sufficiently convincing.

Putting the Bubbles in The Wine Versus Putting the Bubbles in the Bottle Apart from the quality of the wine itself, what most people are looking for in champagne or sparkling wine is - you guessed it - bubbles. It's the sparkle that makes a celebration and the sensation of tiny bubbles bursting in the mouth that's part of the tasting experience.

There are two ways of achieving this. In wines made using the traditional champagne-making process, a secondary fermentation with added yeast puts bubble into the bottle. But Peter Cap feels that the more modern approach, that of using a carbonation process, produces a better result.

"Putting the bubbles into the wine rather than putting them into the bottle means that the wine remains infused with bubbles down to the very last drop," he explains. "Putting bubbles into the bottle using the Champagne-making method means that on opening, the bubbles rapidly rise to the top leaving the wine far less bubbly than it would have been had carbonation been used instead."

Look for the Frothy Mousse To demonstrate his point, Peter pours a glass of his own Manor Estate Sparkling Shiraz, a winning wine which was awarded an excellent rating during blind tasting by an internationally renowned panel of experts at Wine Enthusiast.

He points to the froth of violet foam topping the wine. "That frothy mousse is one of the things we love most about our sparkling wine - but looking at the wine itself, you can see that there are still bubbles - lots of them. That's what you get when you carbonate wine to produce a bubbly and it's something that you won't see in champagne which typically has fewer and smaller bubbles after being opened. By the time you reach the bottom of the bottle, there are hardly any bubbles to speak of."

Deciding Which is Better Depends on What Pleases a Person Despite the world-class reputation of Manor Estate wines, Peter is no rigid wine-snob. "People can tell you what you ought to think, but what really matters is what you think. Some people may be up in arms when the opinion that a good Aussie sparkling wine is better than French champagne is shared. But that's an opinion. Test it yourself. Make it a fair contest by choosing a really good Aussie sparkling wine like our Sparkling Shiraz or Sparkling Brut. Decide whether you agree. If you don't, that's fine too."

Manor estate offers wine events, a romantic wedding venue and luxury accommodation in McLaren Vale. For more information, or join their wine club, visit the Manor Estate Wines website or call their team of experts on (08) 8383 7300.

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