

## Surprise your host with these sparklers

By Bill Daley

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**Problem:** Can you recommend a decent bottle of cheap Champagne I can bring to a [New Year's Eve](#) party without being embarrassed?

**Solution:** I can. Let's just hope your hosts don't read my recommendations until the morning after.

First off, don't buy Champagne. You'll pay extra for the name alone. Remember, Champagne is a specific geographical region in France where sparkling wines are produced using a specific roster of grape varieties: chardonnay, meunier and pinot noir. Everything else made everywhere else isn't really Champagne, although some makers in [California](#) still label their fizzle as such.

Second, have a realistic idea of what "cheap" means when it comes to sparkling wine. I, personally, think anything between \$12 and \$20 or so qualifies as "cheap" given the occasion. Anything less than that is usually too dreadful to enjoy.

Third, pick a "cheap" sparkler with a story. Spanish cava can be inexpensive and delicious, but I think people tend to know and dismiss it as something too familiar. (Not me, but there you are.) So, bring something your hosts won't expect. I love giving Gruet because it tastes fantastic and comes from, get this, [New Mexico](#). You can get it at some large stores for \$13 or so. Another good pick is L.Mawby from [Michigan](#). Expect to pay around \$19.

If you have to go French, consider a sparkler from one of the country's other wine regions, like a cremant d'Alsace, cremant de Bourgogne or cremant de Loire. You can usually find something for under \$20.