

# the drunken cyclist



*I have three passions: wine, cycling, travel, family, and math.*



## Top Sparkling Samples of 2020

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Today is the fourth post where I reflect on many of the great wines that I was fortunate enough to taste over the course of 2020. Today, it seems a bit appropriate to list the top ten sparkling wines that I received as samples this past year. While the year was certainly trying in many ways, I have to say that it was quite possibly loaded with the best group of sparkling wine samples in the nine years that I have been authoring this blog.

*The next four wines come from Third Annual Blind Tasting of American Sparkling Wine this past December. While I am not quite ready to assert that American sparklers writ large are on a par with the wines of Champagne, there are certainly an increasing number of domestic producers that might cause the French to look over their collective shoulder a bit.*



### **NV Domaine Carneros Cuvée de la Pompadour Brut Rosé, California, Carneros:**

Retail \$45. 72% Pinot Noir, 28% Chardonnay. Pale, really pale, with just a hint, a subtle hint, of an orangeish-pink. Flinty. Gunpowder. Rhubarb, creaminess, a splash of yeastiness. Tart, fresh, subtle fruit, really, really nice. While this does not have a ton to offer regarding fruit, it more than makes up for it in every other aspect. Long, deep, layered. This is really stellar. **OUTSTANDING. 95 POINTS.**

*These last two bottles were my top sparkling wine samples of the year, hands down. As I indicated in the notes, I tried the two side by side with the outgoing and incoming CEOs of Domaine Carneros on a Zoom call a few months ago. What a treat.*

### **2012 Domaine Carneros Le Rêve, Carneros, CA:**

Retail \$120. 100% Chardonnay. While there have been several Champagne houses that have found a foothold in the New World, most of them have since changed hands. Not Domaine Carneros, it's still owned and operated by the Taittinger family, and the wines not only have maintained their excellence, they have, in my opinion, only gotten better. While I have not tasted every vintage of Le Rêve, I have had quite a few, and this 2012 is right up there with those I have tried. Whoa. Golden apple, pear, acacia flower, and a bit of lemon rind on the nose. Yowza. The palate is initially quite tart but softens almost immediately as the sparkle begins to subside. Fruity (citrus, pineapple), yeasty, toasty (but far short of burnt). The finish starts with tart fruit, then evolves into a creamy crème brûlée, which lasts for minutes. Whoa. **OUTSTANDING. 95 POINTS.**



### **1992 Domaine Carneros Le Rêve Late Disgorged, Carneros, CA:**

Retail \$175? 85% Chardonnay, 15% Pinot Blanc. Whoa. I received this as part of an event to celebrate the retirement of longtime Domaine Carneros winemaker and CEO Eileen Crane and the ascension of her replacement Remi Cohen. This was the recent disgorgement of the first "Le Rêve" which I drank alongside the 2012 Le Rêve (above) on a Zoom call with Eileen and Remi. Golden in the glass with notes of ginger, marzipan, lemon rind, and more than a touch of baked croissant goodness. Whoa. The palate is a tad sherried, caramelized, even musty, but holy cow is it tasty. Whoa. I can safely say that it would take far less than a fistful of fingers to count the number of American sparklers that I would rate higher than this one. **OUTSTANDING. 96 POINTS.**

