

the drunken cyclist



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



My Top Ten Sparkling Wines of the Year–2021

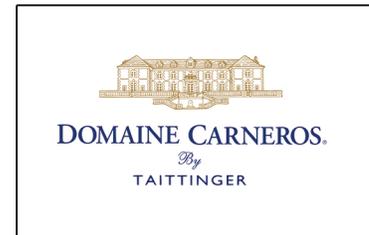
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Following my list the other day of my Top White Wines, and my Top Ten Red Wines, here are the top sparkling wines that I tasted this year. In order to be considered, the wine had to be received as a sample, rated well into the “Outstanding” category, and earned a “Whoa” (or at least came really close). No attention was paid to price, region, or whether it had a ridiculously heavy bottle (although those B.A.B. might be excluded in the future). I tasted well over a thousand wines this year, many of which occur during the three “big” tastings that I conduct at my house. One of those, the World’s Largest Blind Tasting of American Sparkling Wines, occurred just a few weeks ago and contributed several wines to this list.



2016 Domaine Carneros Brut, Carneros, CA:

Retail \$36. 53% Chardonnay, 47% Pinot Noir. Pale to light straw in the glass with, quite frankly, an amazing nose—I really had to do a double-take. Bright, fruity, yeasty, just oodles of sparkling wine goodness here. Yowza. Mostly ripe red delicious (or is it Fuji?) apple, a distinct minerality, and a whole bakery’s worth of yeastiness. Whoa. The palate is also “whoa-worthy” with a beautifully balanced wine: fruit (baked apple), tartness, and all that yeastiness. Yeah. Giddy-up. **OUTSTANDING. 96 POINTS.**



2015 Domaine Carneros Le Reve Rosé, Carneros, CA:

Retail \$140. 55% Estate Pinot Noir, 45% Estate Chardonnay. Like the Cuvée de la Pompadour Rosé, the (ever-so-slight salmon) color from this wine comes from a portion of the Pinot Noir macerating for a few days on the skins (as far as I know, that is particularly rare). While this wine is certainly above my pay-grade, it is incredible. While I feel it might need a bit more time, it is incredibly rich, laden with red berry fruit, perfectly balanced yeasty notes. Whoa. While I double-down on the fact that this wine could use a few years in the cellar, it is gangbusters. I would put this down for at least another 5-10 years.

INCREDIBLE. OUTSTANDING. 96 POINTS.



2014 Domaine Carneros Le Rêve, Carneros, CA:

Retail \$120. 100% Chardonnay. Pale yet brilliant straw in the glass with an amazing nose, really. Freshly baked pear tart, macadamia nut, crushed rock, holy cow. This wine is so lovely on the nose that I hesitate to even take a sip as I fear it could only go downhill from this heavenly aroma. Nope. Yowza, whoa, holy cow, and WTF? This is simply gangbusters with intense fruit, a gripping but also balancing acidity, and a French bakery incredibleness that few domestic sparklers could match. Whoa. Above all of that, impossibly? The finish lasts for days, maybe weeks.

OUTSTANDING PLUS. 97 POINTS.

