

## All that Sparkles Isn't French: Check Your Own Backyard

By Rich Cook | Dec 21, 2021

Let's put something to rest right out of the gate. I love Champagne. The "real" stuff, as they say, that comes from France is certainly worthy of the praise lauded upon it. I love almost everything from the best of the non-vintage releases from the best of the big houses to the hard-to-find, single vineyard expressions produced by the *récoltant* manipulants whose handwork produces them. I love the "Tete de Cuvée" or "Cuvée de Prestige" wines from the likes of Pol Roger, Louis Roederer, Krug, and Moët & Chandon, and I love discovering rarities like a new, Pinot Meunier-based example courtesy of other intrepid fans of that particular grape. But there's more to the world's bubbly story, and there are plenty of great bottles from the American West that are worth of your consideration. Over the past few weeks, I've visited a number of top producers and conducted some stay-at-home blind tastings in search of the best of these, and I'm pleased to share the results here.



DOMAINE CARNEROS.  
*By*  
TAITTINGER

### **93** | 2017 Domaine Carneros Brut, Carneros, \$36

The nose is a little shy at pouring, but it opens with warming time in the glass to show bright apple and lemon. A stony core carries the fruit into the distance – I'd age this a while.

### **93** | 2016 Domaine Carneros Ultra Brut, Carneros, \$48

I tasted this a few months ago at a favorite restaurant and promptly purchased the rest of the stock on hand. A fresh pour reminded me why I'd done that, with white flower, Meyer lemon and pear aromas leading to a zesty, citric palate that makes a great aperitif glass. Love this style!

