

Champagne Adds Sparkle to Cocktails

By Annette Gallagher Weisman



Boca Sparkling 66

Champagne cocktails represent happiness in a glass. The good news is most of them are easy to make and require few ingredients.

Spanish Cava, Italian Prosecco, and California sparkling wines all can substitute for Champagne in a Champagne Cocktail. Lovers of “true” Champagne – the sparkling wine produced in that prestigious region in northeast France – may wish to differ; it all depends on your preference and your pocketbook.

I’m from Dublin, Ireland, yet I never acquired a taste for Guinness Stout until I discovered a Black Velvet, which consists of equal amounts Champagne and Guinness served in a flute. I asked for one in a Chicago bar once, and the bar man said, “That’s sparkling wine and cider right?” I said, “No, it’s with Guinness,” and told him the fifty-fifty ratio. It arrived in a pint glass! I hadn’t the heart to return it so began to sip a flute’s worth. Somehow, I ended up drinking almost a pint of Black Velvet.

A dreamy locale adds to the experience. Imagine dining at the Cafe de Paris in Monte Carlo with its view of the casino and the Lamborghinis and Maseratis parked outside. You could be sipping a Kir Royale or Kir Imperial while contemplating what to do with your winnings. To make at home, pour 1/2 ounce of Crème de Cassis for a Royale or 1/2 ounce of Chambord for an Imperial into two flute glasses; each liqueur is then topped off with sparkling wine.

At Senequier restaurant in Saint-Tropez, you can watch the luxurious yachts in the harbor while enjoying the classic French 75: 1 ounce gin, 1 ounce lemon juice, and 1/2 ounce simple syrup, topped with Champagne.

Let’s head for another to-die-for location: Aspen, Colorado, and the St. Regis Hotel,

which serves a Versailles 75. To say it’s an upgrade from a French 75 is putting it mildly. The Versailles 75 is a dreamy cocktail for lovers of fine Champagne, for whom \$360 a glass is not considered a wild extravagance. I don’t think you’ll be making this at home, but the recipe starts with 1 ounce of Louis XIII Cognac in a flute glass. Add fresh-squeezed lemon and simple syrup to taste, then top off with Ruinart Blanc de Blancs Champagne.

Italy’s Prosecco stands in for Champagne in a Bellini. I love this delicious concoction of 1 ounce of fresh peach puree topped with 3 1/2 ounces of Prosecco. Oh to sit in Harry’s Bar, in Venice, where this peach cocktail was first invented, and hear stories about a former regular at the bar, Ernest Hemingway.

In Italy, an Aperol Spritz is served almost any time of day. I first saw this pretty, orange aperitivo at the Antico Caffè Greco on the Via dei Condotti in Rome. A waiter in tails served me my morning cappuccino with one of their scrumptious pastries. The French woman next to me asked for an Aperol Spritz. Aperol tastes like Campari, only less bitter. To make the spritz, pour 2 parts Aperol to 3 parts Prosecco or any sparkling wine in a wine glass over ice, then add a splash of soda and an orange slice.

Boca, one of Cincinnati’s top restaurants, serves a Champagne cocktail it calls a Sparkling 66. Pour into a white wine glass 3/4 ounce Cardamaro liqueur, add a demerara sugar cube, followed by Prosecco.

By now, I’m in a Champagne kind of mood, so hand me a Sparkling 66 and let’s make a toast to 2019 and *molto* Champagne cocktails in our future! 🍾