

BOOK AND FILM REVIEWS

Anthony Rose: Fizz! Champagne and Sparkling Wines of the World

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Few beverages elicit as much delight or inspire as many memorable quotations as sparkling wine. “Champagne is the only wine that leaves a woman beautiful after drinking it,” Madame de Pompadour famously declared, while Winston Churchill reminded his officers that “it’s not just France we are fighting for, it’s Champagne!” For centuries, bubbles have accompanied celebration, marking life’s milestones and elevating the mundane. Anthony Rose’s *Fizz! Champagne and Sparkling Wines of the World* is a fitting tribute to this remarkable beverage.

Published by the Académie du Vin Library, a house known for its beautifully produced and intellectually engaging wine literature, *Fizz!* succeeds in being both accessible and comprehensive. Anthony Rose’s global survey does not limit itself to the grandeur of Champagne, but ventures thoughtfully into every significant sparkling wine region, style, and production method.

The book provides a detailed history of sparkling wine – and no, Dom Pérignon didn’t invent it. Rose credits Dr. Christopher Merrett’s 1662 paper to the Royal Society, which described the deliberate method of creating bubbles by adding sugar. This practice was made feasible only once English glassmakers, using coal-fired furnaces, produced bottles sturdy enough to withstand the resulting pressure from secondary fermentation. While Dom Pérignon’s famous quote “come quickly, I am drinking the stars” is surely apocryphal, Pérignon was indeed important in blending different grapes, vineyards into one assemblage – one of the hallmarks of Champagne to this day. But why let the facts get in the way of great marketing?

While there are many styles of sparkling wine on the market today, dry to off-dry styles dominate, although this was not always the case. Madame Pommery is credited with developing drier styles of Champagne and leading the trend towards Brut wine in the late 19th century. Prior to this most Champagne was incredibly sweet, often beyond normal scales, as was preferred by the Russian Imperial Court.

Fizz! excels in explaining the different methods by which bubbles are coaxed into wine. While the traditional method (*Méthode Champenoise*) naturally commands the greatest attention, Rose provides clear, detailed discussions of tank, ancestral, and carbonation methods as well. For students preparing for the WSET Diploma (Unit D4) or the Advanced Sommelier examinations, these sections alone make the book a valuable resource. Sparkling wine making is extremely technical, and Rose expertly breaks it down into understandable components. He even goes deep into chemical reactions like the Maillard reaction, which is a critical component for adding complexity in some sparkling wines.

No contemporary wine text would be complete without addressing climate change. Rose devotes thoughtful consideration to its impact on harvest dates in Champagne, noting the region's ongoing efforts to adapt to earlier ripening and the new challenges posed by spring frosts. His treatment of this subject is both sobering and hopeful, acknowledging the industry's resilience and innovation.

Interwoven throughout are anecdotes that enliven the narrative. One particularly memorable example is the story behind Cristal's distinctive flat-bottomed, clear glass bottle. Created for Tsar Alexander II, who feared assassination attempts via bombs hidden in Champagne punts, Cristal remains bottled in this uncommon style. The bottle to this day is the same shape and in clear glass despite the issue with light strike, but that is why they now sell it in a cellophane wrapper that blocks 98% of UV light – it's not just for decoration.

While Champagne naturally receives the most extensive coverage, justifiably occupying sixty pages, Rose's book is refreshingly geographically inclusive. *Fizz!* profiles Crémant from France, German Sekt, Italy's Franciacorta, Prosecco, and Lambrusco, as well as Cap Classique from South Africa, Cava from Spain (as well as some of its spin-offs), and notable producers from California. He even devotes space, however briefly, to emerging sparkling wine regions such as China, Japan, Austria, Moldova, and Portugal. There is quite a bit written about the English Sparkling Wine industry – as one would rightly expect from a British publishing house. His global lens reminds us that quality sparkling wine is no longer confined to a handful of historic strongholds.

Fizz! also includes the important facts and figures we've come to cherish from the Académie du Vin Library. For example, in Champagne there are 319 Villages that can grow grapes for Champagnes, of which there are 17 Grand Crus and 42 Premier Crus. Unlike Burgundy where each vineyard is rated, in Champagne, the entire village receives a rating; although clearly not all Grand Cru fruit is equal.

Above all, Rose's real achievement lies in his ability to render a technically complex subject both engaging and readable. This is, without exaggeration, the most thorough and enjoyable book on sparkling wine I have encountered. For students, professionals, or enthusiasts eager to deepen their understanding – or simply to enhance the pleasure of the next glass of bubbles – *Fizz!* deserves a place on the shelf.