

BUBBLY BLISS

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Champagne, which till recently was considered a drink for the rich and affluent, is fast gaining popularity among the Indian middle class. And Kolkata is definitely not lagging behind. Champagne, a sparkling wine, has long been a beverage associated with celebrations, a linkage that dates to the kings and queens of France. Rajiv Singhal, ambassador of Champagne to India, who was present at a city hotel recently, spoke about the bubbly drink at large. Consul General of France, Fabrice Etienne and chef Sharad Dewan were also present on the occasion. The chef showed some delicacies, which can accompany champagnes.



RAJIV SINGHAL ANSWERS SOME COMMON QUERIES ABOUT THE BUBBLY

How are champagnes classified?

Champagne is classified on the basis of the grape used, age of the wine, place of its origin and sugar level. Depending on the sugar content, champagne is classified as sweet, dry, brut and extra brut.

Is champagne a part of the wine family?

Any wine that is bubbly is called champagne. But I would like to clarify that not every sparkling wine is champagne. Champagne has a particular intensity and texture. It needs to be really smooth.

It's generally believed that wine gets better with age...

Its basically not about the age, its about the vintage year. The year in which the grape is harvested is called a vintage year. For champagnes, it is vintage when 95% of the wine comes from the grape.

Once the cork is opened, how long can we store champagne?

Ideally, one should not keep the bottle for more than a couple of days. You should cap the drink with a champagne stopper and refrigerate it.

What are the popular champagnes in India?

Moët and Chandon are popular in India. Besides, Cattier and Laurent Perrier are also gaining popularity.

A champagne you would suggest for women?

Laurent Perrier Rose, a



Rajiv Singhal, ambassador of Champagne to India



Consul General of France, Fabrice Etienne

pink coloured champagne, is popular with women. The mild and fruity flavoured drink is refreshing and has a smooth texture.

TYPES OF CHAMPAGNE

Philippe Gonet Blanc de Blancs

This zesty bubbly is a mineral-based champagne. The straggly yellow champagne has a sparkling texture and can accompany chicken risotto.

Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin

Made from three grape pulps, the drink is sugary and has a smooth texture. Dassy gold in colour, the drink goes well with samosa taco shell and masala ghugni.

Laurent Perrier Rose

This pale salmon coloured champagne has the aroma of strawberries and black cherries. Slightly acidic in taste, one gets to taste prominent flavours of berry fruits in the drink. You can have baked makha sandesh, a Bengal specialty with it.

Drappier

Fruity in taste, Drappier is a perfect drink for people with a sweet palate. You can have chicken pizzas with this light yellow champagne.

Krug Grand Cuvee

Different vintages make up a Krug. Smoky in taste, it has aromas of coffee, dark chocolate and caramel. Chicken teriyaki, a Japanese delicacy, goes well with it. Teriyaki is sweet and high on the soy sauce.

Taittinger

The pale golden coloured wine with fine bubbles is marked by refined Chardonnay fruit flavours and has a balanced acidic taste. Bengali delicacies like chingri malai curry on rice can accompany it.



HOW TO OPEN A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE?

- Ensure that the bottle is not shaken. Peel off the foil over the cork and point the bottle away from you.
- Remove the metal cover over the cork. Hold the cork in one hand and the bottle in the other.
- Gently twist the bottle without moving the cork.



THE CHAMPAGNE CHEAT SHEET

- Chardonnay, a green-skinned grape and Pinot noir, a black wine grape are the two most popular grapes used for making champagne.
- Champagnes are classified as vintage when it has a vintage period of minimum 36 months. On the other hand, non-vintage has a period frame of minimum 15 months.

- Champagne should be stored at a low temperature away from light and vibration.
- Apart from traditional corks, silicon covered corks and alcan openers can be used.
- A quarter or half the bottle is an appropriate measure to consume the drink.
- Champagne should be served in tulip-shaped flute glasses.

