

Patty's Pinot Closet Newsletter



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Blanc de Noirs

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Let me start this issue by wishing all of you the very best for this Holiday Season. My sincere hope is that you find many wonderful Pinots in the coming year.

Patty's Pinot Closet publishes this newsletter on the enjoyment and appreciation of Pinot Noir. I welcome you to enjoy the newsletters and to share them with others. I've devoted the December issue to Pinot Noir Sparkling Wine or Blanc de Noirs. In this issue I'm sharing my favorite sparkling pinots, some recipes, and some stories. The January issue will focus on Oregon Pinot Noirs.

If you missed the first issue on [Monterey County](#) or the second issue on [New Zealand](#), visit the website to view or download those issues.

Sparkling Wines from Pinot Noir

Blanc de Noirs are sparkling wines made with Pinot Noir. When Rosé is used on the label rather than Blanc de Noirs it implies that red wine (usually Pinot Noir) has been added to the sparkling wine. These wines can also be called Oeil de Perdrix (partridge eye) as they are called in Burgundy. Often a combination of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier is used to make Blanc de Noirs. The Pinot Noir adds richness and structure, Chardonnay adds elegance, and Pinot Meunier rounds out the flavors. Blanc de Noirs literally means "white of blacks." The Blanc de Noirs and Rosé sparkling wines often have a slight salmon color and occasionally you come across a dark salmon color such as the [Schug](#) 2000 Brut Rouge de Noirs. In California the grapes more often come from the cooler growing regions such as Carneros and Anderson Valley. Many growers harvest in early morning or even at night in order to get the least color in the sparkling wine.



Schug 2000 Brut Rouge de Noirs

History

I'll never forget being invited in 1979 to sit in on an interview with Jack Davies of Schramsberg. We sat on Jack's porch and drank Schramsberg and discussed sparkling wine for several hours. He brought out all of his yearly records documenting the Napa Valley's temperatures, rainfall, harvest and lots more I can't remember. He also had years of tasting notes on many Champagnes. After that discussion I was hooked on sparkling wines, especially Schramsberg. Jack Davies was a pioneer in the early days of the Agricultural Preserve, and fought for environmental issues with dedication and vigor. Schramsberg's winemakers and the staff of the Wine Spectator Greystone Restaurant at the Culinary Institute of America have developed a new sparkling wine called Querencia Brut Rosé. Proceeds from the sale of Querencia contribute to the Jack Davies Fund and are used to sustain efforts to preserve the Napa Valley. Querencia Brut Rosé is available from the [Schramsberg](#) website

Opening, Pouring, & Tasting Sparkling Wine

Opening: I'll now get on my soap box about opening sparkling wines. Even though, each year, restaurant wait staff are better trained, I still occasionally (2 weeks ago) see the wire cage taken off and then the bottle waved around while looking for the towel to cover the cork. At this point I usually scream and dive under the table. Don't they know these things are under tremendous pressure and can actually take out an eye! My [website](#) contains lots of information on opening, pouring and tasting sparkling wines.

Glasses: Sparkling wines are traditionally served in the saucer (Marie Antoinette) glass, a tulip glass or a flute. I prefer the flute as I love to watch the bubbles making the long trip to the top. One gauge of judging a sparkling wine is the size of the bubbles - the smaller the bubbles the better.

Aroma / Bouquet: What do you do when you order a sparkling wine in a restaurant and the sommelier pours you the first taste and stands back? Do you pick it up and smell? Yes, but you won't be given the opportunity very often. I love that yeasty nose that can have aromas of strawberry, black cherry, currants, roses, peaches, apples, vanilla, citrus blossom, tropical fruit, honey, pear, cranberries, spice and toast

Flavors: Some of the lovely flavors you're likely to encounter when you taste a sparkling wine are baked apples, toasted hazelnuts, almonds, ginger, currants, ripe pears, cherry, lemon, cola and honey.

Toasting: In 1979 I was with a group of avid American wine drinkers at Taittinger in Champagne. We were poured our first glass of sparkling wine and proceeded to joyfully click the glasses together toasting our host. Our host jumped up and started yelling NO! NO! STOP! We all stopped and looked at him with astonishment. He then explained, in an exasperated voice, that clinking the champagne glasses together was very bad luck. He went on to explain that you just raise the glass toward the person you are toasting.

Sparkling Wine with Food

Food: Below are some of the foods I've found go well with sparkling wines.

Main Courses:

1. Thai cuisine, Southwestern, Mexican and Asian cuisine.
2. Oysters, caviar, duck, roast pork, veal, quail, foie gras, crab, lobster, salmon, and tuna.
3. Entrees with rich cream sauces.

Seasoning affinities: star anise, ginger, truffles, plum sauce and tarragon.

Salad course: roasted beet salad with feta cheese and citrus dressing.

Cheese course:

1. Another favorite this time of year is persimmons. Try them with hazelnuts and green peppercorn Asiago from [Vella Cheese Co.](#) in Sonoma.
2. Hard aged and triple crème cheeses with almonds and dried figs.



Vella Green Peppercorn Cheese and Persimmons.

Desserts: semi-sweet desserts, crème brûlée, chocolate soufflé.

Restaurants: When I think of sparkling wine and restaurants I always think of [Domaine Chandon](#). This lovely restaurant has been going strong since 1977 in Yountville, CA. Here you can order the Tasting Menu with seven courses served with 4 different sparkling wines and one pinot noir. Each course is paired beautifully with a style of sparkling wine. One course was seared foie gras with wild mushrooms paired with their étoile Rosé.

Another lovely place to enjoy a glass of sparkling wine is [Domaine Carneros](#). Here you can sit on the Chateau terrace and sip sparkling wines while watching the sheep grazing in the fields (it took a while before I realized that the sheep were wooden cutouts. If the weather doesn't permit sitting outside (it never rains in California - right?) You can enjoy their sparkling wines and complementary hors d'oeuvres before the crackling fire within the chateau.

Recipes: Growing up, my family always had oysters on Christmas Eve. We had them raw, fried, and stewed. My Mom and her four sisters were always coming up with unusual ways to fix them. Today, for oysters I always head for Hog Island. The [Hog Island Oyster Company](#), located on Tomales Bay, in California, grows Sweetwater, Kumamoto, and Atlantic oysters. On their website you can find the recipe for Hog Wash - my favorite sauce to go with oysters. It's a blend of rice vinegar, shallot, jalapeño, cilantro, and lime juice. I've been known to down 3 dozen at one sitting. You can order their oysters sent to your home on their website. They also cater to groups at their facility or they'll come to your special event and serve oysters.



This time of year I start craving a recipe that my friend Nancy gave me twenty years ago. I almost always make Nancy's recipe, [Caviar Mountain](#), on News Years Eve to go with Blanc de Noirs. When serving caviar, avoid using silver as it imparts a bitter flavor into the eggs. Instead, use Mother-of-pearl, gold, stainless steel, wood, or plastic.

Sparkling wines also make wonderful cocktails. My favorite is one I developed for a Super Bowl party. Pour a shot of Grand Marnier into a tall glass, add a dash of bitters, and fill with crushed ice. Then fill with Blanc de Noirs and garnish with a half slice of orange. My guests named it **The Landee Landslide**.

Favorite Sparkling Wines

All of the wines listed in the newsletters are now listed on the [website](#). Previous reviews did not contain links to the wineries, which have been added, if available. Where possible, prices listed below have been taken from the winery website or other retail sources.

Winery	Year	Price	Rank	Description
Argyle Yamhill County, OR Knudsen Vineyard Brut	1996	\$35	90	70% Pinot Noir, 30% Chardonnay
Argyle Yamhill County, OR Brut Rosé	1997	\$24	89	100% Pinot Noir
Domaine Carneros (Taittinger) Carneros Brut Cuvée	2000	\$49	90	58% Pinot Noir, 39% Chardonnay, and 3% Pinot Blanc
Domaine Carneros (Taittinger) Carneros Brut Rosé	NV	\$34	88	62% pinot noir and 38% chardonnay
Domaine Chandon Carneros Brut Blanc de Noirs	NV	\$15	91	Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, Chardonnay
Domaine Chandon Napa/Sonoma Brut Rosé	NV		87	Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Meunier
Domaine Chandon Napa/Sonoma étoile ROSE	NV	\$36	90	Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier
Gloria Ferrer Sonoma Brut, Blanc de Noirs	NV	\$18	88	92% Pinot Noir, 8% Chardonnay
Gloria Ferrer Caneros Brut Carneros Cuvee	1995	\$40	90	70% Pinot Noir, 30% Chardonnay
Gloria Ferrer Caneros Brut Rosé, Lot 400	NV	\$35	88	92% Pinot Noir, 8% Chardonnay
J Vineyards & Winery Russian River J Vintage Brut	1998	\$30	88	53% Chardonnay, 44% Pinot Noir, 3% Pinot Meunier
Laurent Perrier Champagne, France Grand Siecle	NV	\$140	90	
Mumm Napa Brut Blanc de Noirs Magnum	NV	\$36	87	85% Pinot Noir, 15% Chardonnay
Mumm Napa Brut DVX Rosé	1999	\$55	91	
Mumm Napa Brut DVX Magnum	1996	\$125	88	50% Pinot Noir, 50% Chardonnay

Mumm Napa Brut DVX	1997	\$50	89	50% Pinot Noir, 50% Chardonnay
Pacific Echo Anderson Valley Brut Rosé	NV	\$38	91	Pinot Noir & Chardonnay
Piper Sonoma Sonoma Blanc De Noir	NV	\$36	89	
Robert Hunter Sonoma Brut de Noirs	1996	\$35	91	60% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay
Roederer Estate Anderson Valley L'Ermitage	1993	\$42.50	92	52% Chardonnay, 44% Pinot Noir, 4% reserve 1989 Chardonnay aged in French Oak
Roederer Estate Anderson Valley Brut Rosé	NV	\$35	88	60% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay
S. Anderson Napa Blanc de Noirs	1998	\$28	88	85% Pinot Noir, 15% Chardonnay
Schramsberg Napa Brut Blanc de Noirs	1997	\$30	90	Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier grapes
Schramsberg Napa Brut Rosé	1998	\$32.50	89	Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier grapes
Schug Carneros Brut Rouge de Noirs	2000	\$25	87	100% Pinot Noir
Iron Horse Sonoma Classic Vintage Brut	1998	\$28	90	75% Pinot Noir, 25% Chardonnay
Iron Horse Sonoma Brut Rosé	1998	\$30	90	72% Pinot Noir, 28% Chardonnay
Iron Horse Sonoma Wedding Cuvée	2000	\$29	88	85% Pinot Noir, 15% Chardonnay
Iron Horse Sonoma Brut LD	1996	\$50	91	50% Pinot Noir, 50% Chardonnay
Iron Horse Sonoma Russian Cuvée	1998	\$28	90	75% Pinot Noir, 25% Chardonnay

Subsequent Newsletters: will cover Oregon, Sonoma, Napa, Santa Barbara County, Burgundy and other Pinot Noir growing areas.

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Patty's Pinot Closet Web site: contains information on Pinot Noir such as newsletters (current and previous), Pinot Noir culture, wine making, serving, regions and wineries, storing, wine events, restaurants with good wine lists, gifts, and wine glossary. To access Patty's Pinot Closet [Click Here](#).

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