

International Wine Review

Champagne & Sparkling Wine for the Holidays



There's no better way to celebrate the Holidays and the beginning of a New Year than sharing sparkling wine or Champagne with friends. Over the past year, we've tasted excellent sparklers from Champagne, California, Italy, Spain and South Africa. Reviews of our favorites are given below. See our full list of wine recommendations for the Holidays in our just released 2024 Holiday Guide available free of charge on our [website](#).

French Champagne

*Founded in Aÿ over 150 years ago, **Ayala** was purchased by the Bollinger Group in 2005. Hadrien Mouflard became head of Ayala in 2012, and Julian Gout is the current cellar master. **Champagne Bollinger** has 180 ha of vines, 85% of which are Grand and Premier Cru. Bollinger vinifies its best crus in oak barrels. Denis Bruner is Chef de Cave. The US importer of both Ayala and Bollinger is Vintus.*

Ayala 2018 A 18 Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut 93 Sourced predominantly from Grand Cru vineyards, this all Chardonnay Champagne opens with fragrant scents of incisive citrus, toasted grain, and dried flowers. It's fresh and pure in the mouth with nuanced flavors and a sense of overall finesse. The finish is tight and mineral. It's a blend of Chardonnay from the Côte des Blancs and Montagne de Reims. 12% alc. **Ayala 2014 No**

Bollinger 2015 La Grand Année Brut 96 An unusually dry growing season resulted in low yields and small berries harvested later than usual to ensure ripeness. The result is a bold wine dramatic in intensity and breadth. The bouquet reveals citrus, pear, spice and brioche and a texturally rich, dense palate. A special Champagne that can be cellared for many years. A 60/40 blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay fermented in oak barrels with 8 g/L dosage. Disgorged May 2023. 12.5% alc.