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Sparkling rosés are summer bargains

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Summertime is retweet Share

sparkling wine time, and it's not just because of weddings and other celebrations. Sparkling wines are great for sitting and sipping on a sultry summer day because they're chilled, bubbly and refreshing. These are versatile wines that can be served with or without food, or even as a mixer blended with fruit juice or liqueur.

While you might want to save pricey Champagne — the real stuff that comes from France's Champagne region — for special occasions, there's absolutely no reason to restrict less expensive sparklers to fancy meals or special events. The bubbles make them a great pairing with fried and salty foods — everything from fried chicken to popcorn.

If you want something festive, try a sparkling rosé. World Market is a good place to find a wide selection of inexpensive sparklers, plus a free membership entitles you to discounts on certain wines. I went to the Brentwood Promenade store and found several rosés that fit my qualifications: dry, made through different processes and priced under \$15. The two I chose were the Jaume Serra Cristalino Brut Rosé from Spain, selling at the member price of \$6.99, and the Charles de Fère Cuvée Jean-Louis Rosé from France, which sold at the member price of \$9.99.

The Cristalino is a cava, a Spanish sparkling wine named for the cellars in which they are produced. Cavas are primarily made in Penedès, west of Barcelona, and must be made through a process variously known as Méthode Champenoise, Méthode

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Tradicionelle or Método Tradicional. This is the same process used to produce French Champagne in which wines go through a second fermentation in their bottles.

The Jean-Louis is a French vin mousseux made through the charmat process, in which the wine goes through the alcoholic fermentation only once, in a closed vat.

I had always thought that Méthode Champenoise produced a better sparkler, so a friend and I tasted these wines blind to see if we could tell the difference. We incorrectly chose the Jean-Louis as the wine made through the Méthode Champenoise.


The wines have certain similar characteristics: dry, but not bone dry; tasting of strawberries; and very refreshing and easy to drink. But the Jean-Louis is more elegant, complex and most similar to real Champagne in its yeasty style with tiny pinpoint bubbles.

Charles de Fère Cuvée Jean-Louis Rosé from France



The Jean-Louis, which has an alcohol level of 12 percent, is a refined, salmon-colored sparkler with subtle strawberry and raspberry flavors and a hint of cinnamon spice. This is a lovely, aromatic wine that you could definitely serve for a special occasion as well as on a summer afternoon out on the patio.

The Cristalino, at 11.5 percent alcohol, is a crowd pleaser that makes a great party wine, especially for \$6.99 a bottle. In fact, Cristalino has been named a value brand for three consecutive years by Wine & Spirits Magazine. If you're already a Cristalino fan, you'll notice the label has changed, reflecting the results of a trademark battle with the Louis Roederer Champagne house. The new label clearly states that Cristalino is not in "anyway connected" to Roederer Cristal, a prestigious Champagne that sells for hundreds of dollars.



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