

QUESO DIEGO

THE SAN DIEGO CHEESE CLUB

A Cheese and Champagne Experience
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“Come quickly, I am tasting the stars!” –*Dom Perignon*

What is Champagne?

A sparkling wine produced by inducing the in-bottle secondary fermentation of the wine to effect carbonation. Simply, it's just wine with bubbles.

The term "Champagne" is used to refer to wine produced exclusively within the Champagne region of France, 90 minutes north of Paris in an area that produces approximately 280 million bottles a year. Champagne accounts for 10% of the world's sparkling wines.

How is it made?

Most sparkling winemaking methods use a technique known as "Method Champenoise" with slight difference varying by region.

- 1). **Grapes are selected**, sorted and pressed. Grapes **MUST** be one of the three approved grapes; chardonnay, pinot noir or pinot meunier
- 2). **Fermentation** – All wines go through an initial fermentation where the grape juice is converted into wine. Generally takes 2-3 weeks.
- 3). **Blending** – The winemaker determines which type of champagne to make, blending any combination of the original approved grapes.
- 4). **The Tirage** - sugar, yeast, and yeast nutrients are added and the entire concoction, called the tirage, and is placed in a thick walled glass bottle then sealed with a bottle cap to begin the second slow fermentation. Here alcohol and carbon dioxide are produced. Since

the bottle is sealed, the carbon dioxide cannot escape, and, thereby produces the sparkle of Champagne.

5). **Aging on dead yeast** – As the fermentation proceeds, yeast cells die and after several months, the fermentation is complete. The champagne however, continues to cool in a cellar for several more years resulting its toasty, yeasty characteristic. During this aging period the yeast cells split open and spill into the champagne.

6). **Riddle me this** – once aging is complete, the dead yeast cells are removed through a process known as riddling. The champagne bottle is placed upside down at a 75 degree angle. The riddler pays a visit to each bottle each day to turn the bottle 1/8th of a turn while keeping it upside down. This forces the dead yeast cells into the neck of the bottle where they will be subsequently removed.

7). **Disgorging** – The top of the bottle will then be dipped into an icy, salt bath and frozen. This allows a plug of frozen wine containing the dead yeast cells to form.

8). **Dosage** – A combo of wine and sugar cane is added to the bottle allowing the winemaker the means to make a sweeter or more dry style.

9). **Recorking** - bottles are recorked with a real cork instead of a bottle cap