

Exploring 4 of the Most Popular French Wine Regions

By Kyle Swartz - April 6, 2022

Our [Spirit of France](#) coverage [continues](#) with a deep dive into four of the most popular French wine regions.

France is renown as one of the great wine-producing countries in the world. From Alsace and Champagne in the north to the Languedoc and Provence in the south, French winemakers uphold long-standing traditions as well as embrace new innovations. Here's a look at four of the popular French wine regions.

Champagne

Uncorked with a soft pop and poured into a flute, coupe or white wine glass with a large bowl, Champagne induces festive fun that's infectious. But its celebratory overtone belies the fact that this renowned sparkler is actually a serious wine that can more than hold its own at the table — and in fact makes for some unexpected and surprising pairings.

"In the last year or two I have seen Champagne for consumption outside of just special events, becoming increasingly more popular," notes Bobbie Burgess, wine director for Eat Local Starkville in Starkville, MS, and host of UnCorked on the local WCBI News. "People are realizing that they don't have to wait for a special occasion to start popping good bubbles."

Many of the houses got their start in the early to mid-1800s, and the next century saw explosive growth. Today there are 16,200 growers, 4,300 producers and 360 Champagne houses for over 34,300 hectares. Annually 244.1 bottles are shipped, 53.5% of those exported, and the caves are stocked with more than a billion bottles.

Knead Hospitality's Kulla says that it's refreshing to see more guests recognize and seek out grower producers such as Bereche and Pierre Péters. Also trending lately is a practice many producers abandoned in the 1950s: barrel-fermenting base wines for added complexity, mouthfeel and ageability.

To respond to climate change and sustainability challenges, the industry is taking measures including decreasing bottle weight by 20%, recycling and converting biomass. They're also experimenting with more tolerant grape varieties and determining methods to better protect grapes and must from the heat.



Champagne Bottles to try:

NV Billecart-Salmon Brut Sous Bois (\$85): Barrel-fermented and aged on the lees, with aromas of fresh citrus and white peaches and flavors of grilled brioche and toffee.

NV Domaine Bérèche et Fils – Brut Reserve NV (\$60): Made with equal parts biodynamically grown chardonnay, pinot noir and meunier, with orange, stone fruit and minerality.

NV Champagne Henriot Blanc de Blancs (\$65): Elegant aromas of delicate citrus, white peach, lemon curd and buttery brioche.

NV Champagne Ayala Rosé Majeur (\$72): Made mostly with chardonnay, the low dosage keeps it elegant, generous and full of finesse.