

# NAPA VALLEY

# life

MAGAZINE

## All That Sparkles

### EXPLORING NAPA VALLEY'S EXCITING EFFERVESCENT WINES

BY MARIA C. HUNT

With tiny streams of bubbles and bright effervescence that dances across the tongue, a glass of sparkling wine seems alive. And while champagne, prosecco and California bubbly all sparkle, each one has a unique personality. Champagne is toast and minerality, and Prosecco is soft and flora. And just like California is about sunshine, so is Napa Valley sparkling wine.

In the early days, California winemakers were inspired by the best French wines. After all, the 1976 Judgment of Paris tasting made connoisseurs take Napa wines seriously. In the early days, California sparkling winemakers used the same grapes and the same méthode champenoise, with a secondary fermentation in the bottle, to try to create an American version of champagne.

#### Living the Dream

The best bubbly begins with grapes that are picked early, when they're just ripe and bursting with acidity. With cool, foggy mornings and sunny days, the Carneros region offers ideal conditions for sparkling wine.

Domaine Carneros' estate vineyards are all in the Carneros region, where San Pablo Bay breezes and gentle fog create wines that are crisp and refined. "We're a cooler region, so the fruit matures more slowly," said Eileen Crane, head winemaker and CEO for 34 years. "You get more flavor evolution over the growing cycle." Crane said the wines make a statement that's fun, but substantive. "I think of our style as Audrey Hepburn in a little black dress," Crane said. "Everything is in its place, very elegant but not overdone." Domaine Carneros' Le Rêve,



Eileen Crane



DOMAINE CARNEROS.

By  
TAITTINGER

their signature wine made from 100% Chardonnay that's aged on proprietary yeast for six years, is a dreamy example.

As Crane prepares to retire and turn over winemaking to Zak Miller, she's looking forward to having time to relax in their newest tasting salon, Jardin d'Hiver. The glass-walled room with 180-degree views, is decorated with skylights, chandeliers, and Chinoiserie-inspired hand-painted panels. Its lines match the Louis IV-style winery, which is a larger version of the Taittinger family's home Château de la Marquetterie.

