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ON THE BUBBLY!

It is the drink that signifies class, style and celebration. This season, we get Lisa Srao, Chairman & M.D, I Brands Beverages Ltd to open the cork on the champagne essentials

As the famous American novelist Mark Twain put it, "Too much of a thing is bad, but too much of champagne is just right"; this sums up my absolute passion for the drink.

Being a veteran of the liquor industry, and having launched three successful international brands in the country under my holding company I Brands Beverages Pvt Ltd, it has been my experience that choosing the right drink for an occasion, determining the perfect presentation and creating the perfect ambience are all critical factors in ensuring that an event is successful.

Champagne is the kind of drink that is essential in celebrating success, and the one you turn to for comfort during defeat. That said, choosing the right champagne for your wedding is critical, as it is a very essential part in savoring the memorable and emotional moments of your wedding, from the ecstasy associated with popping the first bottle over the announcement of the engagement, to raising one's flutes for the toast, to, of course, the fun filled moments that follow with the consumption of many bottles of Champagne.

Serving Champagne at your wedding is also a statement of elegance and panache. It makes for a beautiful decorative statement, as well as the perfect anecdote to great photography, as there is nothing like looking back at a photograph of your near and dear ones holding up flutes of Champagne. It will always take you back to that happy moment of celebration.

I personally feel that presentation is key. It is something that I carefully consider when

marketing my own brands Three Royals Whisky, Granton Whisky and Rum 99, as it leaves one with an after taste of luxury which can be enjoyed and savored in ones imagination for many moments to come. A 'Welcome Champagne Bar' for guests as they arrive is the perfect way to present champagne at a wedding. Pair this with a cheese counter, complimented with light seafood and olives. It will create that perfect first impression of style, elegance and celebration, that in many cases is the only impression that one can control, and the one that is longest lasting.

Now in terms of choosing the correct champagne for your wedding, Moët and Chanson, Dom Perignon, Veuve Clicquot, Krug, Cristal and Pommery are great options. My personally favorite though is Veuve Clicquot. It's not the most expensive, yet a little on the pricy side, but it's perfect consistency and after taste is to die for!

Most of these champagnes are available in India, and some of them can even be ordered online and delivered to your doorstep.

In composition, champagne is essentially a sparkling wine produced from grapes grown in the Champagne area in France, that have undergone secondary fermentation in the bottle, in order to create carbonation. The drink's popularity has lead it to become a term generically used to refer to sparkling wine. However strictly speaking, the term champagne should only be used when referring to a sparkling wine made under the rules of appellation (growing of grapes) in the Champagne area.

This is also the reason why serving a good quality Prosecco or sparkling wine from elsewhere is better than a bargain basement champagne. A light pear toned Prosecco will go down equally well, and looks fabulous served out of a magnum, which one can afford to do, when one is no required to pay the premium on champagne.

It is easy however, to get confused when choosing the right champagne from shelf loads of options. Reading the label carefully will give you an insight

on the grapes used, and therefore the taste, consistency and composition of the champagne.

Brut NV (Non Vintage) for example, is a blend that is from a number of different crus (vineyards), harvested over several years. It has the least amount of sugar.

Vintage Champagne is produced exclusively from a single harvest, and is generally more expensive than non-vintage blends.

Rose Champagne is Champagne that gets its color from grape skins that are added during fermentation, or even by adding locally produced red wine to the blend. Special Cuvees are made from the finest and most complex of wines, and can either be vintage or non-vintage.

Demi Sec Champagnes are sweet, as more sugar has been added, as compared to a Brut. Blanc de Blancs are made exclusively from Chardonnay grapes, and Blanc de Noirs are made exclusively from Pinot Noir or Meunier

THE FRENCH 95:

3/4 oz. Three Royals whisky
 3/4 oz. simple syrup
 1/2 oz. fresh lemon juice
 1 oz. fresh orange juice
 Champagne
 Shake all ingredients (except the Champagne) with ice and strain into an ice-filled goblet. Top up with Champagne and serve.

SEXY IN OHIO

3/4 oz. Rosso Vermouth
 3/4 oz. Three Royals whisky
 1 dash triple sec
 1 dash Angostura® bitters
 2 oz. Champagne

grapes.

Once you have understood the composition of the champagne, consider its appearance, is it shiny or dull? A dull wine is generally faulty. Consider the color, the older the wine, the more golden it is. Now for the taste. Once the effervescence has settled, bring the glass to your nose and inhale slowly, perhaps even twice. Take a sip, roll it around in your mouth and sense its texture and weight. As you swallow, try to remember the imprint of the wine on your palate. The after taste is an indication of the quality of the wine. The longer the after taste, the better



Image Courtesy: Moët & Chandon

the wine.

May I remind you that champagne is always best enjoyed one slow sip at a time, don't get carried away by its sweet seduction, and start shooting it. I must warn you that even the greatest amongst us have found it hard to withstand its tantalizing nature, as Winston Churchill once put it, "Remember gentlemen its not France we are fighting for, its Champagne!"

However, knowing that champagne has health benefits is like music to ones ears. Moderate consumption helps the brain cope with the trauma of a stroke, or Alzheimer's and even Parkinson's disease. Research has pointed out that the high amount of antioxidant polyphenols contained in sparkling wine can help prevent deterioration of brain cells, caused due to oxidative stress. So go get yourself a fabulous glass of bubbly and celebrate!

Now for that extra kick to keep the guests on their knees, try the divine champagne cocktail recipes below. They are not only exotic in appearance, but also provide the perfect elegant wedding party fix. I would recommend using Three Royals Whisky for these cocktails as it has the perfect blend to compliment Champagne's crisp after taste. It is also a whisky that is easy on your pocket, but creates the aura of luxury with its premium international standard look and feel, that when placed on your bar, will definitely impress your guests!

Stir all ingredients (except the Champagne) in a mixing glass filled with ice cubes. Strain into a Champagne flute, fill with Champagne and serve.