



## *Valentine Thoughts*

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### ***Champagne & Chocolate ~ For Valentines Day***

You go into your favourite restaurant and start by ordering the chocolate cheese-cake, and when you have finished that, you request a bowl of their famous fish chowder. By now the proprietor is giving you that "the lights are on, but nobody is home" look. Surly, they think, you must know that sweetness clogs up the taste buds and that is why dessert is the last course.

When I give my valentine a box of the best Belgian chocolate extensive studies have shown that women have a lower biological tolerance for bitter, sour and salty flavours, more than likely due to their keener sense of smell. The fact is that they, in general, appreciate sweets and chocolate even more than the males of our species do.

The box of chocolate is opened and she knows full-well that the second bite will not be as good as the first, due to 10,000 taste buds being slightly clogged. Of course, there is a solution and a way to make ensuing bites even better! Before I carry on I should say that half the research I have done on wine and chocolate says that this is a bad idea and half say that it works very well. I prefer the "glass half full" philosophy as I am of the school of thought that the acidity and tiny bubbles in sparkling wines are perfect for palate cleansing and of course these wines are associated with celebrations and love.



**Santa Margherita Sparkling Rose'**

**Santa Margherita Sparkling Rosé** should not be confused with their Prosecco as it is an entirely different offering with a full bouquet of pleasing floral aromas and hints of red berries. It is crafted from a blend of Chardonnay, Glera (the Prosecco grape) and Malbec as the red varietal that lends its perfect light pink colour. It is a delicate, well-rounded but vibrant wine. Like most bubbly it is versatile and although happy with sweets and rich desserts it can be enjoyed with antipasti, seafood and intensely flavoured Asian dishes. A good sparkling wine is far more effective than bread or water in removing painful hot oils from the tongue and palate. \$21.75.

Ever since President Nixon took Schramsberg to China for official toasts back in 1972 it has been the official wine for State Department functions. Although it was quite recently served to the President of France, during his state visit to the U.S.A., it was even enjoyed back in the 1800's when author Robert Louis Stevenson wrote about enjoying Schramsberg wines on his honeymoon.



**Schramsberg Mirabelle Brut Rose'**

To demonstrate versatility let me quote from the Schramsberg web site "Enjoy this rich, delicious sparkler on almost any occasion: at your favorite restaurant, a special dinner at home, at a beach picnic or a backyard barbecue. A very versatile wine; try it with sushi, salmon, rock shrimp, pizza, roast chicken, BBQ ribs, burgers, chocolate raspberry tarts and creamy, mild cheeses with summer fruits. Prosciutto, ham, spicy meats and vegetable dips, spring rolls, onion puffs, dim sum. Courses might include scrambled eggs and chives, grilled salmon, chicken with lemon and herbs, boned quail, Andouille sausage, gumbo, shellfish pasta, pasta Putenesca, pesto dishes, Asian cuisine".

The Connoisseurs Guide has to say about **Schramsberg Mirabelle Non-Vintage Mirabelle Brut Rosé**, "53% Chardonnay; 47% Pinot Noir. It succeeds as a distinctly fruity and friendly offering with all the juicy exuberance that California grapes can bring to the party. Its aromas are pleasantly outgoing and its open, well-balanced flavours make it a wine to remember when choosing a bottle of bubbles for all sorts of happy occasions from tailgating to birthday celebrations". \$38.25.



**Laurent Perrier Brut Rosé**

One on-line shipper is suggesting Strawberry and Star Anise Velvet Truffles with **Laurent Perrier Brut Rosé Champagne** and another one thinks that white, milk or even dark chocolate matches well. As this 100% Pinot Noir adds crisp aromas of strawberries, raspberries and black cherries what could be more perfect? This Champagne, that rates 96/100 with the Connoisseurs Guide, is the most asked for Rosé Champagne in the world and it is considered the benchmark. \$99.50.

The general movement towards drier wines, together with the habit of drinking champagne as an aperitif, has popularized the consumption of brut champagnes. However, many wine-lovers still enjoy the sweetness of past pleasures provided by a Demi-Sec. **Laurent-Perrier Harmony** is a **Demi-Sec Champagne**, rounded and delicate, thanks to a high proportion of Chardonnay and a well-balanced dosage. As you probably know, once a bottle of Champagne is opened to remove the left-over “lees”, such as dead yeast cells from fermentation in the bottle, it is topped up with a final “dosage” of some reserve wine and sugar and then the final cork is installed. A Brut has less than twelve grams of sugar per litre and a demi-sec has between thirty-two and fifty grams per litre. **Laurent Perrier Demi Sec** has forty-five grams and it smells slightly sweet but is not cloying. You will notice apple and tropical fruit along with pear. Almonds and hazelnuts are also present. It is perfect with most deserts and ideal for those with a slightly sweet tooth. \$57.60.

Hopefully those millions of tiny, scrubbing bubbles estimated to be in a bottle of sparkling wine, along with the cleansing acidity will make for a perfect Valentine’s day treat.



*Laurent Perrier Harmony (Demi-Sec)*

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