

A glass of bubbly is no longer reserved just for special occasions.

Bubbling Up

THE CONNOTATION OF CHAMPAGNE IS CHANGING, PARTICULARLY IN MIAMI, WHERE EUROPEANS KNOW HOW TO MAKE EVERY DAY A CELEBRATION. BY BIANA DEMARCO

The adage “when in Rome” usually applies to travel, but since Miami is such a melting pot, with cultural norms blending from all over the globe, you get to pick and choose your traditions. Maybe that’s the subtext for our love of Champagne—we follow the lead of the French, who, amazingly, consumed a whopping 175 million bottles in 2012, as compared to the US’s 18 million, according to the Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (CIVC). Even as US consumption has been on the rise for the past four years, the gap lies in a difference of mentality, says Enguerrand Baijot, managing director at Lanson International Americas. “Americans reserve Champagne for special occasions, whereas the French don’t need a special reason to celebrate life. It can be every day.” Of course, we all know Miami may be the most eclectic of our nation’s cities, and with our ethnic mix, an array of international cuisines, and a backdrop that appeals to all senses, life is one big celebration with or without the bride, championship trophy, or diploma.

Here, the Champagne tide is definitely starting to turn. More restaurants are serving better bubbly in wine glasses than ever before, allowing it room to open up and offer bouquet. Mixologists use it to add life and effervescence to cocktails, and companies like Moët & Chandon with its Moët & Chandon Imperial encourage us to drink it poolside over ice. “Americans are discovering that Champagne has a place at the table year-round, and can be enjoyed throughout the entire meal,” says Donae Burston, regional marketing director at Moët & Chandon.

According to Jennifer Wagoner, the head sommelier at **Zuma** (270 Biscayne Blvd. Way, Miami, 305-577-0277), this is precisely why Champagne is being enjoyed so much more here. “It is all about the climate and the atmosphere.” At any given time, this waterfront restaurant with its light, delicate food and sun-kissed terrace can be transformed into the perfect getaway for a cool glass of bubbly and a savory bite.

Another Champagne-intensive locale is the **SLS Hotel South Beach** (1701 Collins Ave., Miami Beach, 305-674-1701), where venues such as Bar Centro, Hyde Beach, Katsuya, and The Bazaar by José Andrés offer a landscape whose “high energy plays right into Champagne consumption,” says Lucas Paya, wine director at The Bazaar. Katsuya’s sushi pairs with a glass of Lanson Black Label Brut NV, while at The Bazaar, the French 75.2 cocktail blends sparkling wine with Le Grand Saint sparkling vodka. Turn in any direction at the SLS, and you’ll find a lot going on. The frivolity and lightness of Champagne make perfect sense. **OD**



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