

A Glass of Indian Bubbly

Indian wine industry is in its infancy, but surprisingly, its foundations were built on sparkling wines. Shyam Chougule, an industrialist from Maharashtra, was very fond of Champagne. He decided to produce sparkling wine in Narayangaon, Maharashtra and founded Champagne Indage in the mid 1980s despite all the odds. He put India on the world wine map with the export of Omar Khayyam Brut which was fresh and fruity. Unfortunately, the company had financial problems in 2008 and the bubbly is history.

The leading producer Sula Vineyards started production in 2000. In 2002 it released a similar version, Sula Champagne, later changed to Sula Brut by 'Methode Champenoise'. It became popular and is a brand leader today though has undergone significant changes in style over the years. It also has a rosé brut using Zinfandel and Shiraz.

Zampa Vineyards, another new entrant also brought out sparkling wine, using Chenin for the brut and Shiraz for the rosé. The defining moment for the sparkling wine industry came in 2013 when Moët Hennessey India launched their brut and rosé brut by using experts from Domaine Chandon Australia, who helped supervise the cultivation of purchased grapes crushing them at the rented York Winery near Sula, but keeping the process a closely guarded secret.

A month before the Chandon launch, Fratelli Vineyards, an Indo-Italian partnership introduced Gran Cuvée using 100% Chenin Blanc with zero dosage. Quite dry and unique, this bubbly is becoming increasingly popular. Earlier this year, York introduced a Brut using 100% Chenin Blanc, fermenting a part of the free run juice and ageing in barrels, giving it complexity and autolytic character with creamy texture.

Sula Brut Tropicale Blanc de Noirs, recently released, uses a majority of Shiraz, Zin and Pinot Noir grapes. This crisp and fruity bubbly has a tinge of pink because of longer skin contact with the juice and is more complex.

Keeping in view the spicy Indian food, all except Fratelli Gran Cuvée Zero Dosage use around 10-12 gms of sugar. Most of the leading Indian sparkling wines are produced with the 'Methode Traditionelle'. Some labels like Sula Seco and Sula Seco Rosé are produced using the tank method. Casablanca is another brand produced in the 'Prosecco style'. The total current market of sparkling wines is under 100,000 cases, out of which about 65,000 are Indian produce, with Sula having the majority share.



Sula Vineyards



Winemaker
Karishma
Grover



Rajeev Samant with
Sula Brut Tropicale

Chandon sells around 10,000 cases and is aiming for 20,000 cases this year. Indian sparkling wine is increasingly being paired with Indian food and exciting times are ahead to enjoy a glass of bubbly at any time of the day in India.



BY **SUBHASH ARORA**

President of Indian Wine Academy
@Wineguyindia
indianwineacademy.com

