

## Inside Trader Joe's Podcast Transcript — Episode 69: Trader Joe's Rings in the New Year... with Bubbles!

*[Light upbeat music begins.]*

Tara: What a year.

Matt: Yes! Trader Joe's has grown to 545 stores and almost 65,000 crew members. And we have a lot more growing to do in 2024.

Tara: We do. In this episode, we want to take a few minutes and raise a glass of sparkling wine to our customers and our crew.

Matt: We're going to break out the good stuff, and in doing so, we'll let you in on the story behind fantastic Crémant de Bourgogne.

Tara: I cannot wait.

Matt: Let's go Inside Trader Joe's.

*[Theme music begins and two bells at a neighborhood Trader Joe's.]*

Tara: I am Tara Miller, director of words and phrases and clauses.

Matt: And I'm Matt Sloan, the culture and innovation guy at Trader Joe's.

Tara: On this episode, we are sipping La Burgundy Crémant de Bourgogne Brut.

Matt: And La Burgundy Crémant de Bourgogne Rosé Brut.

Tara: They're fantastique sparkling wines from France. See what I did there?

Matt: I like it. Now of course, you don't have to go to France to get these wines. I mean, please go, travel, have fun, drop us a postcard while you're out, but back home we've got a whole bunch of other festive holiday beverages for your New Year's celebration. And these sparklers are available at your neighborhood Trader Joe's, if that is, your store sells wine.

Tara: Through the magic of podcasting, we're taking you, our listeners, to France on an adventure in wine making.

*[Theme music ends. Airplane flying by.]*

Tara: Just close your eyes and picture that beautiful French countryside.

*[Birds chirping.]*

Tara: A sparkling wine factory built into the side of a small mountain alongside the Yonne River in the Burgundy region of Central France.

*[Light music begins.]*

Matt: I can see it now.

Tara: (chuckles)

Matt: We're in France.

Tara: We're in France, Matt.

Matt: We're in a small tasting room that's up above the production facility for Crémant de Bourgogne or sparkling wine from Burgundy. If we look out the window, it's a beautiful, idyllic setting. This has to be one of the most interesting wine facilities I've ever seen in the world. This is, like, a little mountain and the winemaking happens inside the mountain, and this place kinda looks like Batman's secret headquarters to make sparkling wine. I love it. We are with two important people, producers of La Burgundy Crémant de Bourgogne, Burgundian Sparkling Wine.

Tara: Can you each introduce yourselves?

Sylvain: So I'm Sylvain.

Julien: I am Julien.

Tara: At Trader Joe's you'll find two wines labeled La Burgundy. One is a Brut Reserve and one is a Brut Rosé. They are slightly different, obviously.

Matt: Yes. Crémant de Bourgogne is a specific thing. There's a certification that's known by the French acronym AOC. We're looking at sparkling wine from Burgundy, from a very specific place, a specific spot in Burgundy. Crémant de Bourgogne is a protected thing. This AOC designation, the point of origin is controlled and a set of requirements behind that control. What are some of the things that must happen from the growing and harvesting of the grapes to the wine making?

Sylvain: Grapes have to come to Burgundy for sure. You can use grapes like Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Aligoté, Gamay and Susumaniello. It has to be harvested by hand and when you have finished the vinification of the steel base wine, you need to do a second fermentation in bottle. When you have done your second fermentation in bottle, your wine has to stay on lees in your cellar at least nine months and most of the time it's more than that. And after that you need to remove the dead yeast from the bottle so you need to do a disgorgement. When you remove that deposit, after that disgorgement, you will re-add or not re-add

some sugar and you will have the mentioned brut or semi-sweet or things like that. Re-add the cork and label and it will be ready to go to Trader Joe's.

- Tara: These specific things have to be followed in order for this wine to be called Crémant de Bourgogne.
- Sylvain: Yes, because Crémant you can find them in many places in France and in Europe. Crémant de Bourgogne you need to be from Bourgogne and with the specific grapes from Bourgogne.
- Tara: They have to be harvested by hand. I was very interested in that detail because I know a lot of grapes are mechanically harvested.
- Sylvain: We have to harvest by hand because to do a really high quality sparkling, you need to put your grapes in a one shape in your press so you harvest by hand in the small cases.
- Matt: So the grapes used for these wines, how close to the winemaking facility or how far away can they be?
- Sylvain: Grapes could be grown in all the Bourgogne, so that means basically south of Paris to north of Lyon. For us, it's mainly around our winery, that means in the Yonne, so it's in the north of Burgundy. And the climate in north of Burgundy, until now because it's changing, was a bit cooler than in the south. If you want to have acidity and sugar, you need to have a temperate climate. If you go too high with the sun or with temperature during spring or summer, you will have less acidity and you will have less balanced wine.
- Matt: What's interesting in looking at these two wines, the Brut Reserve and the Brut Rosé, they're missing a couple pieces of information that people buying wine in the US often see. You don't see a vintage date and you don't necessarily immediately see the type of grapes used.
- Sylvain: The AOC spirit is to put on the front more the origin than a grape. And for example, if you take the Chardonnay, you will have Chardonnay in Bourgogne, in South of France in Loire Valley, but it's mainly first Bourgogne or Loire or Languedoc wine made with Chardonnay than a Chardonnay.
- Matt: So that place is what matters most.
- Sylvain: Yeah. In the AOC rules, first things will be where it is from and after you will have some grapes you can use or you are not allowed to use, but first things will be where it's from. That's why it's Crémant de Bourgogne and it's not first a Chardonnay or Pinot Noir or blend of grapes.

Second thing, it's not vintage, even if it's 95% or more. Only one vintage in the bottle because for us it's more an identity of Brut Rosé or Brut Reserve that we're providing in the bottle than a vintage. Since 50 years of learning how to improve to do good grapes, then good sparkling when we're retaining a Brut Rosé or a Brut Reserve, we're retaining our identity of what could be a Brut Rosé or a Brut

Reserve. Normally, whatever is a vintage, you will be able to drink, not exactly the same if you look at the pH, the alcohol content, the sugar content, but the same spirit, the same identity, in fact. That's why it's not vintage.

Matt: So I want to know if this is true. I've heard something about Crémant from this area. Is this where sparkling wine started in France? I mean people in Champagne might take issue with this, but I think that maybe some monks in Champagne took a great idea from a different place, maybe from here?

Sylvain: In France you are sparkling in almost every areas. You have producers of sparkling Burgundy since 200 centuries, one of the best sparkling in the world. It's quite a fight between people to say where it was from, the birth. If you speak with English people, they will say now that it has been created in England. If you go in Champagne, they will say it's one of the priests who do that. And if you go in Libourne, they got paper in the 15th century, I think, where they were doing bubbles. The only things that is certain is the bubble 200 years ago and the bubble right now, it's not the same thing because the glass at that time, maybe you were producing 10 bottles to be sure to retain one because-

Matt: Because the glass wasn't holding-

Sylvain: ... the glass wasn't holding the pressure like it is hold now and everything was different. So you will have wine with bubbles in the glasses from many, many different places. But now Crémant Bourgogne or some champagne or some other sparkling, it's completely not the same thing.

Matt: Could it be that once upon a time people saw the result of having the sparkling, of having the bubbles, was maybe an accident and then people tried to do that on purpose.

Sylvain: Most of the time things that happen are first an accident or something that happened and you don't know why. And then after that people, some smart people, they try to understand why it happens. And after Pasteur, after the microscope and many things like that. First it was working, you don't know why and after you can see the yeast, you can see the bacteria roots, you can understand the process and when you understand how it happens, it's easier to increase so where to do it.

Matt: Maybe if you understand it, you can do it again on purpose.

Sylvain: Yeah.

Tara: After the grapes are crushed and it's turned into juice and it goes into a tank to ferment, how long does that process last?

Sylvain: So the fermentation takes place between seven days to two, three weeks, depending mostly of the temperature. If you are able to control the temperature around 10, 12 degrees centigrade, it'll be longer. If you are not controlling your temperature and it's going higher than 28, it could take place in one night. Most

of the time we try to be in temperature control around 18 to 20, 22 degrees and that means the fermentation will be complete in 10 days.

Tara: What happens next?

*[Music transition.]*

Sylvain: After the fermentation is done, we will rack the wine through the air to refresh the aromas, remove the yeast taste, and do what is called second fermentation. But this one is not a really second fermentation, it's malolactic fermentation. In some grapes you have malic acid and basically it's the acid of the green apple. So that means it's green, it's unripe, even if it's a really sunny year. And you transform with bacteroides with acid from malic acid to lactic acid. And after this malolactic fermentation, we will re-rack the wine to same thing, reopen the aromas and remove some taste of the malolactic fermentation. And we will do a taste to select the blend to get the identity. For example, we will do the blend to do the Brut Rosé or to do one of the Brut Rosé..

Matt: When you say rack the wine?

Sylvain: You put your wine from a tank through another, but instead of just using some hoses and a pump, you put your wine through the air by letting it falling down in some bucket, some basket on the floor. And like that your wine, instead of just going from tank to tank through the hoses, it's getting through the air before to be in the bucket.

Matt: So it's exposing the wine to the air.

Sylvain: Yeah, it's exactly the same process where you are decanting your wine before to pour it. It just re-adds some oxygen to re-increase some kind of aromas and if you are speaking about fermentation or malolactic fermentation, removing yeasty taste or malolactic fermentation. Sometimes you may have some milky taste and by putting everything through the air you remove that.

Tara: And then you talked about blending.

Sylvain: Yeah.

Tara: You're potentially taking wine at this point from different tanks and mixing them together to create the taste that you're looking for for the final product.

Sylvain: Yes. At the beginning when you press, you will separate cuvée and taille. That means for the first 75% and the last 25%. Because when you crush a grape, the juice coming at the beginning, in the middle and at the end is not the same. So by separating it, we are making two different qualities instead on an average one. And we will blend, for example for the rosé, some Pinot Noir and some Gamay for the Brut Reserve and grape varieties. Basically you are recreating every year the same consistency of any identity of our Crémant.

Tara: When a customer picks up the bottle, if they've purchased it before, they have an expectation and when they purchase it again, that expectation will be met.

Sylvain: That's the goal, to be consistent at a high level.

Tara: So the blend is created and that wine is then put into bottles.

Sylvain: Yeah, and after that you do the second fermentation in bottle. It's part of the traditional method. We pick by hand, we do the wine and to get the gas our way, traditional method is second fermentation in bottle. That means we will blend and when you have bottled it, you will have what we call prise de mousse, basically second fermentation in bottle. Prise de mousse and aging is at least nine months, and it could be 10 years. It could be whatever you want, but at least it will be nine months.

Matt: I'm curious about this traditional method. Is this what we see if we see on a label methode champenoise.

Sylvain: Since '94, if you read on the Crémant Bourgogne method, Champenoise, you can call the Champagne people and they will shoot us,...

Tara: )laughs)

Sylvain: ...so we avoiding that. Basically traditional method and method Champenoise, it's exactly the same process, but Champagne method is Champagne and we are doing traditional method. But you know, it doesn't matter because we are making Bourgogne wine and Bourgogne wine compared to any other place in the world, it's unique. So we don't care if it's method of Champenoise or method of whatever it is, but it's another story.

Tara: (chuckles)

Matt: What I'm hoping is to share this story so that people become interested in and try. And I'm betting that they will like Crémant from this part of Burgundy because it's such an amazing story. And the product, the quality from this producer is outstanding. This facility has been producing wines for a little over 50 years.

Tara: I think we should taste it.

Sylvain: Yes!

Tara: I'm just saying.

Matt: Sylvain, some people say they would like to hear the pop, other people say that you don't want to hear the pop. What is your thought?

Sylvain: My thought is that after removing the corks, the wine has to stay in the bottle.

Tara: That's it.

Sylvain: You get two things to remember. First, the more temperature you have, the more the pressure is increasing. So it's not even the same bottle at 10 centigrade or 40 centigrade. It's not the same pressure in the bottle. And sometimes they leaves the bottle in the trunks, in some places where the temperature is going high and the bottle could explode. Second one, take care of your cork because you may have some incident. By releasing the cork, we like to keep that in your hand. Most of the time when you get the pop or you remove a lot of gas...

*[Hissing of cork being released.]*

Sylvain: ...at the beginning or you remove a lot of wine with the pop. So that's why.

Tara: That was perfect.

Matt: That's a subtle.

Tara: And so if you get the big pop and you remove a lot of the gas, that means you'll lose a lot of the bubbles. Is that right?

Sylvain: Yes.

Matt: Or you could just-

Tara: Or it could fly out.

Matt: ... push it out [inaudible 00:16:39] glass of wine.

Sylvain: Just do like in the Formula One arriving.

Tara & Matt: (laughs)

*[Placing glasses on table.]*

Sylvain: And when you drink sparkling, just after it has been poured, it's full of gas. So if you put your nose on the glass, you will just smelling and breathing carbonic gas. It's not good. So you say, "Oh, it's not good wine." No, you just have to wait a bit or to spin your glass of wine and you will have the aromas after.

Matt: And so swirling sparkling wine is maybe not something people think of doing.

Sylvain: Yeah, because many people they are not associating sparkling wine to wine.

*[Music transition.]*

Tara: If somebody were to ask you what is your favorite food to enjoy with Crémant de Bourgogne, what would you say?

Sylvain: For me, wine is nothing if it's not ... it has to be shared. And when you share wine, it will be because you are sad, because you're happy, because the

circumstances are never the same. I will say there is not something just one occasion or one food or one pairing, or it's the same wine with always the same people. For me, it's a way to connect. So sometimes you need to connect because you are sad and sometimes you need to connect because you're happy. Honestly, I hope when you drink our wine, you'll remember the moment and not the wine.

Tara: I like that answer. Thank you for that.

Sylvain: You're welcome.

Matt: Now there's somebody who really understands the bigger picture. I mean, he's not just in the sparkling wine business, he helps create memories.

Tara: We want to send out a big thanks to Sylvain and Julien and their entire team for hosting us in France. We really will carry those memories with us forever.

Matt: That was great to see that facility.

*[Music transition. Transition to facility. Machinery whirling in background.]*

Tara: I could watch the machinery all day long. It's just mesmerizing. It's like they're dancing. What's happening here right now, Julien?

Julien: It's ready to be labeled and put in the ...

Tara: Put in the boxes.

Julien: Yeah.

Tara: Okay. So these cases that will arrive at Trader Joe's here are empty. Just empty waiting for bottles to come inside.

Matt: Boxes to have the sparkling wine put in and then go to a boat. So when we're shipping wine from this part of France, where is the port? These go to a port to be put on a boat.

Julien: I think it goes most of the time-

Matt: Le Havre?

Julien: ... the Atlantic Coast, Le Havre.

Matt: Okay, so that's a bit of a drive northwest?

Julien: West.

Matt: Yeah, straight west.



Julien: Straight west.

Tara: We shot some video of that tour and it's posted at [TraderJoe's.com](http://TraderJoe's.com) and on the [Trader Joe's YouTube](#) channel and we hope everyone will check it out.

*[Popping open a bottle. Pouring sparkling wine into a glass.]*

Tara: And now Matt, we raise a glass of Crémant de Bourgogne and propose a toast.

*[Auld Lang Syne begins.]*

Matt: So here's to the year wrapping up, the year ahead and the adventure that awaits. And cheers to our wonderful people, amazing customers, and our incredible crew.

Tara: Hear, hear.

*[Glasses clinking.]*

Tara: Until next year, thanks for listening.

Matt: And thanks for listening.