



## *Pétillant Naturel*

An ancestral method in modern times.

BY LAURA WINTER FALK

Sparkling wine made in the *pétillant naturel* style (*pét-nat* for short) is most likely one of the oldest forms of winemaking. Quite simply, it's taking fermenting juice that is still active, putting it in a bottle, capping it and then letting the yeast do their thing (converting sugars into alcohol and carbon dioxide) until they either eat all the sugar in juice or die trying.

The yeasts that make *pét-nats* are the natural, indigenous yeasts that live on the grapes in the vineyard and the winery. So each vintage at each winery is kind of like a box of Cracker Jacks, where you don't know what prize is inside until you open it. You can make

*pét-nat* from any grape. Most of the time the result is dry, but if for some reason the fermentation stalls in the bottle, you'll end up with a semi-dry version.

Some producers may disgorge the yeast, but many do not, leaving a layer of the dead yeasts (lees) at the bottom of the bottle. Either way, this style is hardly ever filtered, so it will always have some level of haziness to it. Versions left on the lees will continue to develop, so if you purchase a case and drink the bottles over the course of months, each one will have a set of flavor characteristics that will evolve the longer it sits in your cellar. But unlike traditional sparklings, this is not wine to age for too long. It's meant to be consumed young.



For this Wines of the Season installment, we have excitingly reintroduced our panel tasting of submitted pét-nats in the region. Our panel comprises our Edible team plus people representing different facets of the industry, including producers, retailers, wholesalers, credentialed wine professionals and wine writers. We reached out to producers of pét-nat in the region and asked them to submit a bottle for tasting. Then a panel of eight judges blindly tasted and rated them, with our top-rated wines listed below. The quality of these wines was excellent with less than 7/10 of a point separating them.

The Finger Lakes pét-nats sampled came from a variety of vinifera, hybrid and native grapes from around the region. Their flavor profiles range from crisp and mineral-driven to fruity and herbaceous. The one thing that unites all of them is their distinctiveness. They are fresh and lively, fun and fizzy and absolutely perfect for a summer filled with rediscovery as our world reopens.

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### Tasting Panel Top-Scoring Pet-Nats:

#### White Pét-Nat

- Atwater Pétillant Naturel Riesling 2020 – \$26 (46 cases made)
- Red Tail Ridge Pétillant Naturel Riesling 2019 – \$29.97 (350 cases)
- Buttonwood Grove Riesling Pét-Nat 2020 – \$19.99  
(241 cases; sold out for in-store and online purchases, available in select restaurants and liquor stores)
- Six Eighty Grüner Veltliner 2020 – \$19 (69 cases)
- Idol Ridge String of Pearls Riesling 2018 – \$26.99 (84 cases)

#### Red/Rosé Pet-Nat

- Kite & String Wine for my Friends, Pet-Nat with Riesling and Blaufränkisch 2020 – \$20 (80 cases)
- Red Tail Ridge Pinot Noir Rosé Pétillant Naturel 2020 – \$29.97 (189 cases)
- Six Eighty Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon 2020 – \$32 (23 cases) 