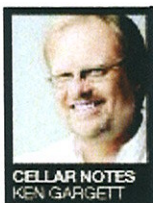




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CELLAR NOTES
KEN GARGETT

Having fizz in the fridge is a great way to add sparkle to spring and summer entertaining. There are plenty of domestic bubbles under \$15, but quality leaps if you pay a few dollars

more. If the budget extends to champagne there are superb wines around, including some from the 2002 vintage which early reports rate highly. Here's a suggested mix of locals and French. Start popping the corks.

1. Ad Hoc The Riddler Chardonnay

Pinot Noir NV (\$20) Barest whisper of a pink hue in this top-value fizz from Western Australia. Pemberton is not well known for sparkling fruit but maker Larry Cherubino has the Midas touch. Full-flavoured and approachable, it's one for drinking young, but a cut above most similarly priced Aussie bubbles. [90/100]

2. Brown Brothers Patricia Pinot Noir Chardonnay & Pinot Meunier 2004

(\$40) The fruit for this elegant, refined sparkler comes from the high-altitude Whitlands vineyard in Victoria's King Valley. It's a seriously good, complex fizz from an underrated producer. [93]

3. Freycinet Radenti 2000 (\$65)

Tasmania produces some of the finest sparkling wine and this example, from a first-class producer, is among the best. Stonefruit, fig, brioche, grilled cashews and much more all combine. Treat yourself. [95]

4. Billecart-Salmon Brut NV (\$90)

Always a superb champagne, but this current release seems even more elegant and ethereal. Citrus, hints of green apples and rose petal notes with a mineral background, showing knife-edge balance and gossamer-like delicacy. A wonderfully refreshing style. [95]

5. Pol Roger 1999 (\$110)

This provides compelling evidence as to why Pol is one of Australia's most loved champagnes. A lemony, soft style with deceptive concentration and amazing length, it's beautifully balanced and first-class, offering exceptional value. [95]

6. Veuve Clicquot 2002 (\$130)

This suggests that reports of 2002 being a great champagne vintage are spot-on. One of the best from Veuve for ages. Cashews, hazelnuts and stonefruit dominate. A brilliant champagne that lingers with intensity and will age gracefully for many years. [96]

