



Lovely Bubbly

■ Think Bruce Springsteen raving up Thunder Road but backed by a glockenspiel knocking out a samba; this is the feeling that envelops you upon finding good a old chunky Australian Shiraz beset by bubbles. A seemingly incongruous juxtaposition of expectations. But those bubbly notes may interlace and coalesce wonderfully well if given a fair hearing as they traverse the taste buds, as indeed they do with the McGuigan Signature Premium Release Shiraz. Velvety textured red cherries and slivers of dark chocolate flourish among the plentiful froth, and being less acidic and more densely textured than your usual sparklers this is a perfect partner to the richer food fare, such as red meat and gourmet sausages, where the paler wines can rarely hold their own. Throw it in the chiller and it would make sense of anything, even Bruce's grunt rock samba fusion. All this sparkling versatility is available for just ¥79 from Metro (16.5 points).

The classic champagne grape combo comprises Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier; it is interesting to note that both Pinots are red skinned grapes, where gentle pressing and absence of skin contact during the fermentation process will ensure a

light gold colour; the Noir providing a touch of gravitas to the proceedings and Meunier lending some softness. Some maceration on the skins will produce a rosé, though more commonly a little still red Pinot Noir is added to the blend (cuvée).

Of course champagne in the right hands has a creamily deep and savoury definition that is hard to surpass elsewhere, but it is also a beautifully orchestrated cachet driven brand and there is plenty of sparkle out there outside of the Champagne demarcation (nothing can be called champagne outside the boundaries of Champagne) that could knock a champenois' offering clean into a cocked chapeau on occasion, especially on price. And those Shiraz bubbles above have a worthy sibling in the McGuigan Signature Premium Release Chardonnay/Pinot Noir. Crisp with tartly green apples resounding under a roof of lean and clean invigoration, this is very zingy stuff, tamed by a near-cold, rather than chilled, serving. A versatile sparkler for all hot weather and celebratory events; take one along with an ice bucket to your local 龙虾 stall (there should be several hillocks of langoustines less than two minutes away from wherever your sitting right now at this time of year), and you can guarantee a good time. Another good fizz-bang for the bucks at ¥79, from Metro (16 points).

Newold wine world (lower floor New City Mall, 99 Caochangmen Da Jie) also have a couple of bubblers which don't explode through the price roof. Again from Oz, the De Bortoli Sparkling Brut (¥138) is one made from 100 percent Chardonnay grapes (Blancs de Blancs in Champagne parlance), a style which typically flies a jib of cleaner cut than the conventional fizz blends, that sails along superbly with some enticing biscuity aromas above the pear and peach along with a trace of ginger, which all make for a lusciously bright and pleasing glassful (16 points). Finishing on a European note with Prosecco, the name for both the grape and DOC region within Veneto in north-east Italy, where the wines are now enjoying a huge surge in popularity, the ever popular Prosecco Zonin (¥148) engages the taste buds with a crisply precise attack of apple, with a hint of almond, encircled by fine and bright bubbles and aromas of white flowers. Lean and clean and suavely tailored, this is a savvy pre-dinner mingler if ever there was one (17 points). 

