

Friday, December 28th, 4-7 p.m.
The Wines of Alsace
With Drew Murphy of A&B Imports
\$10 Tasting Fee

The French wine region of Alsace is unlike any other wine region in France. On the nation's northeastern edge, 300 miles east of Paris, it is a narrow strip pushed up against Germany's Rhine River in an area fought over for the past 400 years. At times it seems as much German as it is French, with its quaint whitewashed half-timbered homes and frequent German names.

Nearly as far north as Champagne, Alsace has better weather since the region is protected by the rain shadow of the towering Jura Mountains to the west. This is the only region dedicated almost entirely to white wines, and the wines it produces are different from wines made from the same grapes in other regions.

One of the region's most intriguing wine appellations is Cremant d'Alsace, producing the white and rosé sparkling wines of the region. Apart from Champagne 150 miles to the west, Cremant d'Alsace is France's most-prolific sparkling wine appellation.

Camille Braun Orschwihr Cremant d'Alsace Brut \$26.99

This sparkling wine is fruity, crisp, delicate and clean. All finesse, it's a blend of 60% Auxerrois and 40% Pinot Blanc, 1000 to 1200 cases produced. With 90% of the domaine's production sold directly to loyal private customers, there is precious little available for sale beyond Western Europe. While Cremant sales are surging in France, they are just beginning in the U.S.

Camille Braun Orschwihr Cremant d'Alsace Brut Rosé \$26.99

This is a sheer delight: pale pink with an expansive fruity nose and a full mousse of bubbles in the glass. On the palate the fruit persists in a wine showing delightful balance. This is 100% Pinot Noir in a region that grows very little red grapes.

Schroedel Cremant d'Alsace Brut \$16.99

This estate lies in an Alsatian village known for its exceptional microclimate of sunny and dry days that allows the grapes to ripen gradually for supremely aromatic and concentrated wines. Pale gold in color, the wine shows a yeasty bouquet with notes of pear with lemony essence on the mid palate with bright acidity and a long finish. Crisp, refreshing and loaded with minerals and shells, this sparkler leaves the palate completely clean.

Schroedel Cremant d'Alsace Brut Rosé \$18.99

This pink cremant is another made with 100% Pinot Noir. Offering deliciously tiny bubbles, it also presents a honey nose and spiced green and red apple aromas with a round mouthfeel and toasty notes on the finish.

Emile Beyer Eguisheim 2010 Pinot Blanc \$18.99

This Pinot Blanc exudes charm, flavor, and an ethereal quality that will make you want to keep on drinking it. Its aromas of mountain apples and pears are infused with hints of freshly baked spiced bread, setting the tone for finely honed fruit flavors and pinpoint minerality.

Emile Beyer Eguisheim 2010 Pinot Gris \$22.99

Alsatian Pinot Gris, like this from Emile Beyer, has such depth and richness that it's actually reminiscent of white Burgundy! Unlike its Italian cousins, it's full bodied, offering flavors of almond, peach, ginger, smoke and earth.

Emile Beyer Eguisheim 2010 Gewurztraminer \$22.99

The varied terroir of Alsace imparts a wide range of powerful flavors to Gewurztraminer grown there. Notes of litchi nut, gingerbread, vanilla, fruit cocktail and grapefruit meld with notes smoke, spice and minerality abound in a wine seemingly sweet because of the fruit but which is actually quite dry.