

Tasting Panel Report

BY ANTHONY DIAS BLUE

WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN'

We've scouted out this year's hottest cocktail shakers, perfectly suitable as a glamorous gift or for mixing it up in style. The statuesque **METROKANE BULLET** (\$35) is a minimalist classic and comes in brushed or polished stainless steel; for a list of retailers, go to metrokane.com. Budget-minded mixologists will like the kitschy **HIPSTER'S CHOICE** (\$5), printed with handy drink recipes; available at mcphee.com and local groovy tchotchke shops. A handsome olive-motif **MARTINI SHAKER** (\$17) from Sur La Table is perfect for those of the shaken-not-stirred persuasion; to order, go to surlatable.com. The museum-worthy **GLASS SLIPPER** comes in several colors of handblown Zelle Glass with pewter (\$350) or sterling silver (\$500) fittings. This and other luxury shakers are available at cocktailshaker.com.

GOLD STANDARD

Hungary's celebrated amber desert wine, Tokaji (pronounced *toh-KAE*), makes a lusciously sweet end for a holiday meal. The creamy **OREMUS 1999 TOKAJI FURMINT LATE**

HARVEST (\$20) has deep, ripe fruit and lovely acidity. Pricier *aszú* (dried berry) versions, such as the **DISZNÓKÓ 1995 TOKAJI ASZÚ 5 PUTTONYOS** (\$33), are a step up in flavor. The sweetness is measured by the number of buckets (*puttonyos*) of super-ripe grapes that were added. The **DOBOGÓ 1997 TOKAJI ASZÚ 6 PUTTONYOS** (\$42) has beautiful, aromatic white-fruit tones. Prune fruit and spice flavors make the **ROYAL TOKAJI 1995 BIRSALMÁS 5 PUTTONYOS** (\$55) an opulent wine.



A WINTER'S ALE

This year's best seasonal specialty beers include the hearty **WINTER SOLSTICE** (\$9 per six-pack) from Northern California's Anderson Valley Brewing Company and the festive **NUTCRACKER ALE** (\$7 per six-pack) from Kansas City's Boulevard Brewing Co. Chill a malty Blue Ridge **SNOWBALL'S CHANCE** (\$8 per six-pack), from Maryland, for your front-yard snowman. Cinnamon and nutmeg spice up Boston's **HARPOON WINTER WARMER** (\$7 per six-pack). Leave St. Nick a bottle of **SANTA'S PRIVATE RESERVE** (\$4 per bottle) from Oregon's Rogue Ales.

THE TOP TEN: SPARKLING WINES

HERE ARE YOUR BEST BETS FOR THE MONTH, SELECTED BY THE *BON APPÉTIT* TASTING PANEL.

Bouvet 2000 Saphir Brut, Saumur (\$17). A creamy and sophisticated Loire Valley sparkler.

Gloria Ferrer 2000 Blanc de Blancs, Carneros (\$18). The first vintage *blanc de blancs* from this Sonoma producer is concentrated, polished, and a value.

Segura Viudas Nonvintage Reserva Heredad, Cava (\$20). A rich, fleshy *cava* from one of Spain's premier sparkling-wine houses.

Yarden Blanc de Blancs, Galilee (\$22). This bubbly from Israel offers fine balance, bright fruit flavors, and a yeasty finish—plus, it's kosher.

Pol Roger Nonvintage Brut, Champagne (\$35). Luscious fruit and complex flavors play through this nonvintage brut.

Laurent-Perrier Nonvintage Cuvée Ultra Brut, Champagne (\$39). "Refreshing and food-friendly," reports Frank X. Delzio, L.A. restaurant Josie's co-owner and wine buyer.

Schramsberg 1997 Brut Reserve, California (\$60). This beauty from Napa, Mendocino, and Sonoma counties is a consistent standout among sparklers from the United States.

Ca' del Bosco 1995 Cuvée Annamaria Clementi, Franciacorta (\$120). Finesse and verve combine in this stylish Italian bubbly from the region of Lombardy.

Taittinger 1995 Brut Blanc de Blancs Comtes de Champagne, (\$152). A rich, ripe Champagne from an amazing vintage.

Moët & Chandon 1993 Cuvée Dom Pérignon Rosé, Epernay (\$230). "The ultimate expression of elegance in a glass," raves Ralph Hersom, wine director at Le Cirque 2000 in New York. ←

Listed prices are approximate. The Tasting Panel meets under the direction of wine and spirits editor Anthony Dias Blue and his associates, David Gadd and Jack R. Weiner.