FOOD
DRINK
SPIRITS

BY KELLY MAGYARICS

POP THE TOP!

Reserving sparkling wines for marriage proposals—or any kind of proposal—is as needless a sacrifice as saving the good china for Mumsy's annual visit. Bubbly has become the versatile LBD of the wine world, welcome in the chicest lounge or in your Eames lounger. Captivating, effervescent sparklers work with anything from takeout Tuesday to a quicky thrown-together soirée in front of *Entourage*, and their crisp flavor profiles and alluring trails of bubbles wake up taste buds like no mere wine can. Since only vintage Champagne improves with age, most other bottles are screaming to be popped open the second you bring them home. We picked six selections that easily dress down with the most informal and unfussy foods. Bubblelicious indeed! ∎

1. POP ART

THE BUBBLY: Domaine Chandon Brut Classic. THE PAIRING: Buttered popcorn. Pop in the latest flick—an art-house film or a blockbuster guilty pleasure—as well as a bottle of this West Coast wonder, affiliated with French Champagne house Moët & Chandon. Its subtle nuttiness *so* works with the requisite movie snack. The rich butter and healthy dose of salt (de rigueur for any real popcorn buff) get washed away by the wine's effervescence, pulling you back for another drippy handful. WHERE TO FIND IT: $17, at Schneider's of Capitol Hill, 202.543.9300.

2. SHRIMP STUFF

THE BUBBLY: Zardetto NV Prosecco. THE PAIRING: Spicy steamed shrimp. Sipping prosecco with seafood is the libacious equivalent of bathing the dish with a zesty squirt of lemon wedge. Smartly pair this Italian offering from the Veneto region with shrimp steamed and kicked up with Chesapeake staple Old Bay seasoning. The wine's lemon notes bring a citric zing, while the bubbles and clean finish tame the savory heat of any peppery dish. WHERE TO FIND IT: $12, at Total Wine and More (multiple locations), *www.totalwine.com.*

3. GOING BACK TO CALI

THE BUBBLY: Schramsberg Blanc de Blancs. THE PAIRING: Fried chicken. What would a picnic be without this quintessential finger food? Dust off that old straw basket and don't forget to tuck in a cold bottle of the California original that's been served at White House state dinners since 1979. The persistent fizz cuts through the chicken's irresistible but greasy breading, and makes a meal of the humble bird anything but boring. Biscuits and gravy are up to you. WHERE TO FIND IT: $38, at Daily Planet Wine & Gourmet, 703.549.3444.

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4. THAI IT UP!

THE BUBBLY: Perrier Jouet NV Grand Brut. THE PAIRING: Pad Thai. It's Thursday night, which means takeout from your neighborhood Thai restaurant. Pad Thai has an eclectic combination of distinctive flavors: basil, peanuts, cilantro, chiles, limes and shrimp. But the complexity and versatility of France's real deal deftly holds its own. And despite Champagne's reputation as a decadent splurge, eating directly from the takeout container is definitely encouraged. WHERE TO FIND IT: $40, at Calvert Woodley Fine Wine & Spirits, 202.966.4400.

5. NEXT MEX

THE BUBBLY: Gruet Winery NV Brut. THE PAIRING: Bean and cheese enchiladas. Sparkling wine from New Mexico? Gruet's been bottling memorable, award-winning bubbly for 21 years and counting. Give the dependable margarita the night off, and instead sip Gruet NV Brut with some saucy, spicy cuisine that also hails from the southwest. Its gorgeous grapefruit and green apple flavors are even more refreshing than a lime wedge-topped beer bottle. WHERE TO FIND IT: $15, at Cleveland Park Wine and Spirits, 202.363.4265.

6. CURRY FAVOR!

THE BUBBLY: Vitteaut-Alberti Crémant de Bourgogne Blanc Brut. THE PAIRING: Indian curry. All Champagne comes from France, but not every French fizz qualifies as Champagne. No matter the technicalities—just grab a bottle of Burgundy's answer to the celebrated stuff made up north. This Crémant de Bourgogne has oodles of tiny bubbles and an eye-catching frothiness. Its floral aroma works in perfect synergy with the well-seasoned sauce in your favorite curry or vindaloo. WHERE TO FIND IT: $24, at MacArthur Beverages, 202.338.1433.