



NEWS

Forbes

November 20, 2017

Best Wine, Beer & Spirits Gifts Of 2017: Your Ultimate Holiday Gift Guide



As part of my annual series of Holiday Gift Guides, I'm tackling one of my favorite subjects, adult beverages. But unlike most magazine gift lists you will see, based on press releases, I have personally tried every one of the items on this list to give you quality assuredness. Please check out my other themed 2017 gift guides for [Food Lovers](#), for [Kitchen & Home](#) and for [Cyclists](#).



Ayala is the best champagne house many people have never heard of.

Brut Force: I previously visited Champagne Ayala, one of the world's oldest producers and one of the most important labels in the history of champagne, and wrote about it here in detail. Founded more than 150 years ago by a Spanish noble family, Ayala was long one of the top five producers, but the house's fortunes waned until 2005, when new French owners decided to turn things around. It is the only significant house whose flagship vintage product is a blanc de blanc, from 100% white grapes (chardonnay). But more importantly, it is one of the only houses making a Brut Nature (\$45), a nod to the Spanish roots, more associated with cava, in which no sugar is added for secondary fermentation, a more complicated production resulting in a drier wine. The entry level non-vintage offering, Brut Majeur (shown), is a traditional three grape blend of chardonnay, pinot noir, and pinot meunier that offers exceptional quality for the price (\$55) and has made Wine Spectator's Top 100, also garnering 91 points from Wine Enthusiast. Simply because it is a lesser known label of very high quality, any Ayala makes a distinctive gift that also happens to be delicious.



Bollinger is a great champagne, but this gift box makes the 2006 Rose even better.

Pink Is Better: I love pretty much all champagne, and it is the world's most quality controlled wine, with rules that ensure that even the least expensive entry level bottle of French sparkler is at a bare minimum very good. If it comes from France and says champagne you really cannot go wrong, but rose is even better, my favorite style. Bollinger, Queen Elizabeth's bubbly of choice and the movie favorite for secret agent James Bond in every 007 film since 1978, is especially renowned for rosé, and the current vintage release is the Bollinger Rosé 2006 (\$140), available for gifting in a limited edition metallic gift box that says "wow."