

## Affordable luxury

# Champagne ideal gift

Christmas gifts can trigger squeals of delight or sighs of despair. Knowing the satisfaction that comes from choosing just the right Christmas presents can add to your shopping pleasure and lend joy to year-end festivities.

For many of the people on your list, a bottle of Champagne from France is the ideal gift. Champagne is an affordable luxury that conveys quality, elegance and prestige. Moreover, with Champagne there's no color, size or gender problem.

Champagne is equally suitable for men or women, comes in many sizes, and can be golden or pink. And the festive bubbly may be chilled and served at once, or kept for a special occasion later on.

Here are a few useful pointers from the Champagne News and Information Bureau about selecting Champagne for Champagne gift-giving:

- Match the style of wine to the

recipient. Select a non-vintage, vintage or "special cuvee" super Champagne, according to the wine knowledge of the recipient and your own pocketbook.

Whatever the style, giving the legendary sparkling wine of France will be flattery to the good taste of the recipient and testimony to your own.

- Pick a size to please or impress. Champagne comes in seven bottle sizes, from the one-quarter bottle "split" to the 12-bottle Salamanzar. In between there are also the magnum (two bottles), Jeroboam (four bottles) and Methusalem (eight bottles.)

You might use a tiny split to dress up a gift package, or give a Salamanzar to a family.

- Think pink. Rose or pink Champagne is the ideal accompaniment to traditional Christmas dishes like turkey and ham. Add a rosy glow to the groaning board with a bottle of non-vintage or vintage pink Champagne.

- Avoid substitutes. Not every wine that sparkles is Champagne. True Champagne comes from a small region 90 miles east of Paris where the precious elixir has been laboriously produced in the traditional way for centuries.

In fact, if the words methode Champenoise appear on the label, you can be sure it not authentic Champagne from France.

- Add a crowning touch. Enhance your gift of Champagne with a pair of longstemmed flute or tulip glasses.

## Brunch suggestion

For many families, Christmas Day is a whole day of feasting and partying. First there's brunch, then a late lunch and finally, the long awaited turkey. The turkey is the easy part, but what about something to serve the gang for brunch?

Apple Bacon Pancake Pie is something totally different.

- 1 tablespoon (15 mL) butter
- 1 onion sliced
- ½ pound (225 g) bacon, sliced
- 2 pears, peeled and sliced
- 2 apples, peeled and sliced
- ½ teaspoon (2 mL) thyme
- ¾ cup (175 mL) flour
- 1 cup (250 mL) milk

- 2 eggs, beaten
- ½ teaspoon (2 mL) salt

Heat butter in a large frying pan. Add onion and bacon and cook until softened. Stir in pears, apples and thyme, and cook until heated through.

Place flour in a small bowl. Add ½ the milk and beat well. Add eggs and remaining milk and beat until smooth. Whisk in salt. Spread fruit mixture over bottom of a 9" x 13" (3 L) baking pan. Pour batter on top.

Bake in 350 degree F (180 degree C) oven for 30 minutes until puffed and lightly browned. Cut in squares and serve with warmed maple syrup.

## Light main course is quick and easy

Here's a holiday main course that's quick to prepare and lets you spend time with family and friends, not time in the kitchen. It's also nice and light, in case you're serving something rich and gooey for dessert!

- 2 tablespoons (30 mL) cornstarch
- 2 cups (500 mL) Milk
- ¼ cup (50 mL) butter
- 1 teaspoon (5 mL) salt
- ½ teaspoon (2 mL) dill weed
- 2 tablespoons (30 mL) lemon juice
- 1 cup (250 mL) peeled, seeded and chopped cucumber

poached, grilled or baked fresh salmon

Smoothly combine cornstarch and milk in a saucepan. Add butter, salt and dill weed. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture comes to a boil and thickens. Reduce heat and cook 2 minutes longer, stirring occasionally. Stir in lemon juice and cucumber. Heat through. Serve spooned over poached, grilled or baked fresh salmon.

Makes 3 cups/750 mL sauce.

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