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- [Relationships](#)
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- [Technology](#)
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Sparkling wine at the Beehive - an affordable luxury

 November 2, 10:47 PM
by [Julia Timakhovich](#), [Boston Wine Examiner](#)

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The Beehive, an artsy venue on Tremont Street in South End, isn't a new restaurant. But there is something about it you may not be aware of – it is the largest champagne and sparkling wine purchaser in town.



Natural question – why?

Bertil Jean-Chronberg, the sommelier and wine director, gave me a simple explanation that made perfect sense.

"It's an affordable luxury."

The bubbly, that is. In people's minds, drinking bubbly implies celebration, conjures up images of New Year's Eve and birthday parties. Not an everyday drink, especially in the US. Although it's almost counter-intuitive to drink anything celebratory when the economy is crashing, it is one of those simple pleasures you can afford—whether to smoothen a tiring workday, or to just have grown-up fun on Halloween night.

It absolutely doesn't have to be champagne. A good bottle from Champagne is not really an affordable luxury even at retail prices, let alone restaurants. Seeing so many on the menu was tempting—but not affordable. It really fits in with the artsy concept, however. Creativity is the name of the game—you almost expect to be surprised. Why not with sparkling wine? Luckily, the world of wine outside of Champagne makes decent bubbly, and at the Beehive, [you have good choices](#).

To begin Halloween (and an impromptu girls' night out), I picked two wines: a Spanish cava, *Segura Viudas "Reserva"* from Catalunya (next to Barcelona), and a French sparkler from the Loire Valley, *Gratien & Meyer "Fleur de Lys"*.

The Spanish have been making cava in the same method as the French make champagne. It usually costs a fraction of the price and works as a quaffable, easy beverage. The Loire Valley is the second largest producer of sparkling wines after Champagne. Their *cremant* (anything sparkling) tends to be on a fruitier, more playful and fragrant side than their cousin to the north.

Champagne, or in my case sparkling wine, complements almost any dish—no kidding. It cuts through the spiciness of Asian cuisines, washes down easy with oysters and seafood, and even flavors up some meats, like my appetizer of spicy lamb-filled phyllo dough spring rolls.

Super-efficient waitstaff clad in Halloween costumes cleared plates like there's no tomorrow, but respected the half-full glasses. It was too fun an atmosphere to treat those wines as serious consumption, but it did end up tasting like a celebration.

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Julia worked with wine for a number of years. She has studied the grape under Masters of Wine in Boston, and works in the industry on a freelance basis by covering wine events, consulting, and writing for wine publications.

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1 of 1

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