

Belgian sparkling wines now have their own quality label: BelBul

Flemish and Walloon winemakers unite their craftsmanship and tradition
under a quality label for sparkling wines.
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The Belgian wine sector launches BelBul, the very first quality label for Belgian sparkling wines. The label guarantees excellence in the production of Belgian sparkling wines made using the *méthode traditionnelle* and further puts Belgium on the map as a premium sparkling wine country.

Belgians are already known as true epicureans. From artisanal beers to culinary delights, Belgian food culture is all about quality and enjoyment.

This passion for flavor and craftsmanship is also evident in the rise of Belgian sparkling wines. More and more, Belgians are choosing locally produced bubbles—whether as a festive aperitif or the perfect companion to gourmet dishes. The growing interest in Belgian sparkling wines shows that consumers are increasingly seeking authenticity and craftsmanship from their own country.

Belgian sparkling wines are also making waves internationally, winning prestigious awards and recognition. They are often compared to the big names from France, Spain, and Italy, and are known for their elegance, crisp acidity, and refined aromas.

As of today, Belgians no longer need to order cava, prosecco, or champagne—just a glass of BelBul!

What's in a name: BelBul

The name BelBul didn't come about by chance. Belgian winemakers were often asked, "Do you have another bottle of cava?" Even though Belgian bubbles have nothing to do with cava, champagne, or prosecco, there was a clear need for a distinctive, recognizable name for sparkling wine from Belgian soil.

That need gave rise to BelBul, a name with multiple layers:

- Bel refers to bubbles in Dutch (*belletjes*)
- Bul is a nod to the French word *bulles* (bubbles)
- Phonetically, it sounds to French speakers like *Belles Bulles* ("beautiful bubbles")
- And finally, Bel is also short for Belgium in both national languages

A survey of over 300 respondents confirmed the name's potential: no less than 98% felt that BelBul sounded like a classy, youthful, and above all, Belgian name. That's exactly why the spelling is so important—both parts, Bel and Bul, must be clearly emphasized.

BelBul: A Quality Guarantee for Belgian Bubbles

With the launch of BelBul, initiated by the non-profit organizations *Belgische Wijnbouwers – Vlaanderen* and the *Association des Vignerons Belges – Wallonie*, Belgian sparkling wine now has an official quality label and a generic name. This label sets strict criteria for origin, production methods, and quality, giving consumers the assurance that they are holding a Belgian sparkling wine of exceptional quality. Producers who meet BelBul's high standards can count on increased visibility and recognition, both nationally and internationally.

"In our young but rapidly growing wine country, innovation is key. Thanks to this, we have managed to create top-quality wines in a short time. With the BelBul label, we're giving our Belgian sparkling wines a clear identity and aiming to position ourselves as producers of exceptional sparkling wines." — Lodewijk Waes, Chair of *Belgische Wijnbouwers – Vlaanderen*

“For the development and professionalization of the Belgian wine sector, it is essential that we work more closely together and rise above our geographical and linguistic boundaries. Together we are stronger. This label is a true milestone for Belgium as a wine country, and an investment in the future.” — Vanessa Vaxelaire, Chair of Association des Vignerons Belges – Wallonie

The Name ‘BelBul’ to Appear on Bottles from the Next Bottling Onward. The name BelBul will be introduced on bottles starting with the next bottling. A dedicated logo has also been designed for the brand, which will appear on the packaging and bottles. The generic name and logo serve as a recognizable quality mark, allowing consumers to immediately see that they are purchasing a certified Belgian sparkling wine.

To better inform both consumers and professionals about Belgian sparkling wine, the website BelBul.be is also being launched today. This site offers an overview of all wine estates producing BelBul-certified sparkling wines. In addition, the website will provide extensive information about production methods, the unique characteristics of Belgian bubbles, and the regions where they are produced. Consumers and hospitality professionals can also find out where to buy Belgian sparkling wines. In this way, BelBul becomes not just a quality label, but also a platform that enhances the visibility and accessibility of Belgian sparkling wines.

Criteria for the BelBul Label

Not every Belgian sparkling wine qualifies for the BelBul label. Winemakers must meet strict criteria that ensure the quality and authenticity of Belgian sparkling wines:

- The sparkling wines must be produced using the traditional method and comply with the applicable conditions and characteristics described in the sparkling wine product specifications established by the competent Region.
- The wines must be accredited by the recognition committee as BOB (Protected Designation of Origin) or AOP (Appellation d’Origine Protégée)
- The wines must be 100% Belgian, meaning that both the cultivation and vinification take place in Belgium. Purchased grapes from abroad are not permitted
- The vineyard is a family business; a member of one of the two industry associations and a shareholder of the CV Wijn en Mousseux - Vin et Mousseux.

These criteria ensure that BelBul remains a trustworthy quality label and that consumers can rely on authentic Belgian bubbles that meet the highest standards.

Clear Identity and Recognition

In an international wine market where competition with established sparkling wine countries like France, Italy, and Spain is fierce, it is crucial for Belgian sparkling wines to have a clear identity and strong recognition. The BelBul label helps distinguish Belgian sparkling wines as quality products that can compete with the best international sparkling wines. Moreover, the label offers consumers and hospitality professionals a reliable mark of quality, strengthening both the reputation and trust in Belgian bubbles.

In addition, a label like BelBul helps further structure and professionalize the Belgian wine sector. By establishing uniform quality standards, both established and emerging winemakers are encouraged to focus on sustainable and artisanal production methods. This not only contributes to the economic growth of the sector but also to the international recognition of Belgian sparkling wines as a premium product.

The Rise of Belgian Sparkling Wines

Belgian sparkling wine is gaining increasing prestige, both nationally and internationally. Thanks to favorable soil and climate conditions in certain parts of Belgium, the country offers ideal conditions for producing refined sparkling wines. Belgian sparkling wines are primarily made using the méthode traditionnelle, the same method used to produce Champagne. This involves a second fermentation in the bottle, resulting in a more complex flavor and fine, persistent bubbles.

The growing quality of Belgian sparkling wines is confirmed by an increasing number of international awards and recognitions. Belgian sparkling wines are often compared to the great names from France, Spain, and Italy, and are renowned for their elegance, crisp acidity, and refined aromas.

Growing Production and Expansion of Vineyards

The Belgian wine sector has seen remarkable development in recent years. In 2021, over 2.1 million liters of wine were produced. In 2022, that volume rose to more than 3 million liters, nearly half of which consisted of sparkling wine. In 2023, a new record was set with 3.4 million liters, an increase of nearly 13% compared to the previous year. The disappointing harvest year of 2024 caused production to drop to 1.2 million liters. However, this decline is relative—yields in 2023 and 2022 were exceptionally high. Compared to earlier years, the 2024 yield remains low, but the drop appears less steep.

The number of Belgian winegrowers also continues to grow each year. In 2024, 321 winegrowers were registered, up from 290 in 2023 and 259 in 2022. This includes both professional winemakers and hobbyists.

The total planted area increased to 958 hectares, with a clear focus on grape varieties suited for sparkling wines. Currently, more than 100 Belgian wine estates produce sparkling wine. This highlights the sector's strong growth and shows that the time is ripe to introduce a quality label like BelBul.

Regional Leaders and the Rise of Disease-Resistant Grape Varieties

The main wine-producing provinces in Belgium are Limburg, West Flanders, Liège, and Hainaut, accounting for two-thirds of the national production. Chardonnay remains the most widely planted grape variety, followed by Pinot Noir and Johanniter. Disease-resistant grape varieties such as Johanniter and Sauvignier Gris are gaining ground, thanks to their climate resilience and reduced need for crop protection.

Belgian winegrowers are constantly seeking innovation and sustainable techniques to improve the quality of their wines. By working with hybrid grape varieties that are less susceptible to disease, the use of pesticides is reduced, allowing winegrowers to better adapt to changing climatic conditions.

Growing Role in the Belgian Economy

The Belgian wine sector — and in particular the production of sparkling wines — is playing an increasingly important role in the Belgian economy. The sector's growth is leading to increased employment, both in agriculture and in the hospitality and tourism industries.

Wine tourism is on the rise in Belgium, with more and more wine enthusiasts and tourists visiting Belgian vineyards to enjoy local bubbles and discover the craftsmanship of the winemakers.

In addition, Belgian sparkling wines are boosting exports, as international demand for high-quality European sparkling wines continues to grow. With the continued professionalization of the sector and the introduction of BelBul, Belgium can strengthen its position as a premium wine-producing country and create additional economic opportunities.

Belgian Sparkling Wine in the World

The growing reputation of Belgian sparkling wines is opening new doors for export. More and more international wine lovers and experts are discovering the finesse of Belgian bubbles. With the launch of BelBul, the Belgian wine sector confirms its position as an important player in the international wine market.

BelBul reflects the passion and craftsmanship of Belgian winemakers and provides a strong foundation for further growth and innovation in the coming years.

Source: FOD Economie

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