

# CUTTING EDGE SELECTIONS

✧ HAND-CRAFTED WINES ✧

*Stephen Tanzer's*  
INTERNATIONAL WINE CELLAR

## Cava: Spain's Great Value in Sparkling Wine

By Josh Reynolds

Not long ago, Cava barely registered on the radar of the average bubblehead. As far as serious winos were concerned, Spain's answer to Champagne was what you consumed with orange juice at all-you-can-drink brunches or for \$100 a bottle at "gentlemen's clubs." Things sure have changed.

Thanks to the efforts of a number of energetic importers, many of Spain's best bubblyies are now available in the U.S., and at prices that are often astonishingly reasonable compared to Champagne. Yes, there's still plenty of rustic, overly sweet and downright crude Cava out there (usually identified by prices under \$10), but this category is far less of a minefield than previously. Until recently, too many Cavas were simply dull, without the clarity and energy one usually seeks in sparkling wine. The traditional Cava varieties (xarel-lo, macabeo and parellada) aren't exactly stellar, and without a skillful winemaker's care these grapes usually produce wines that are simply too rough-hewn and herbal for the palates of most Americans. Nowadays, however, some of the best Cavas incorporate percentages of international varieties like chardonnay and pinot noir. As the following notes on the finest Cavas of my recent tastings attest, there are plenty of excellent Cavas available in the marketplace now, and some of them are stunning values.

## Marques de Gelida

### 2004 Marques de Gelida Brut Cava Exclusive Reserva

(\$15; 35% macabeo, 30% xarel-lo, 20% parellada and 15% chardonnay) Light, bright yellow with a fine bead. Impressively complex aromas of pear, white peach, mango and baking spices. Creamy orchard fruit flavors are given a bitter edge by peach pit and anise, with gentle mineral bite on the back end. Becomes more floral with air and finishes with very good clarity and length. This is a superb value.

**89 points**

### 2005 Marques de Gelida Brut Rose Cava

(\$16; 100% pinot noir) Medium pink. Smoky raspberry and cherry on the nose, with dusty minerals and musky underbrush adding interest. Firm redcurrant and bitter cherry flavors possess good depth, with a refreshing note of bitter cherry skin adding grip. Finishes dry and persistent. (Fine Estates from Spain, Dedham, MA)

**88 points**