

What's up Pet?



“Pét-nats are interesting as they are never the same. It’s difficult to control how the wine will taste as the process is low intervention and experimental. It’s the epitome of what the UK wine industry is about. We’re not constrained by many regulations, and that makes for an exciting vintage every year.”

Jo Smith, Wine Garden of England

If you're looking to bring some cool factor wine to your next dinner party, pétillant naturel, or pét-nat is sparkling wine in its most naturally unpretentious form... and so on-trend right now.

Originally discovered (by mistake) by monks in France over 500 years ago (way before Champagne), the recognition of 'pét-nat' as a wine style is surprisingly only a few decades old. Here we find out how it became the darling of the natural wine movement worldwide and discover the UK producers creating their own fizzy versions.

How is pét-nat made?

This is an ancient wine made in an ancient way. The monks in the 1500s would have bottled their wine after harvest and kept them cool in a nearby stream, essentially putting the yeast to sleep before fermentation was complete. Some time later, the bottle would have been moved for consumption (in the spring or to a warmer environment), nudging the sleeping and now hungry yeast awake. The by-product of the yeast munching through the remaining sugar in the wine – bubbly CO2 and some more alcohol – would have come as a (possibly shattering) shock to the monks upon opening the bottle.

Today this 'ancestral' method follows a similar process, where wine is bottled before fermentation is complete, allowing it to continue to ferment in the bottle. After being capped, CO2 bubbles are created by the still alive yeast in the wine. This contrasts to the traditional (Champagne) method, where the second fermentation in the bottle is assisted with the addition of sugar and yeast after the fermentation of the base wine has been completed in a tank or barrel.

Pét-nat is designed to drink early, it is quicker to make and usually more affordable than Champagne. Yet this does not mean it is easier to create. With low production and minimal intervention there's more work by hand, and a lack of additives means there is nothing for the winemaker to hide behind. Crowned as an easy drinking sparkling, it is fresh and typically low in alcohol, perfect for a mid-week treat, a dinner aperitif or picnics in the sunshine.

Why is pét-nat so exciting?

As a style, pét-nat is ancient however as a trend it is relatively new, having been resurrected as recent as the 1990s. It was in these early, heady days of the natural and organic wine movement that the late Christian Chaussard researched the ancestral method to make natural sparkling wine at his winery in the Loire. From here pét-nats took flight from France and out to the world.

Pét-nats feel experimental, there are no rules, and it's all the more exciting for it – the wine is essentially still 'alive', still fermenting in the bottle when purchased, the downside of which is less control on the outcome. One pét-nat may not taste the same as the next, even if they're from the same vintage, grapes and winemakers. The wine can also be made from any grape variety, white or red, sweet or dry, which allows a lot more variation and innovation. With the winemaker diligently managing the outcome from vine to wine, every bottle is a personal project of love and passion, created in collaboration with Mother Nature.

For traditionalists, the rustic, mysterious nature of pét-nats can be off-putting, they can seem less refined, sometimes cloudy, with a softer, almost frothy fizz. If your pét-nat is cloudy, it's just leftover yeast cells which are fine to drink. For futurists, this is what makes pét-nat so thrilling, the wine is wilder, untamed, more electric than its traditional cousins.



What does pét-nat taste like?

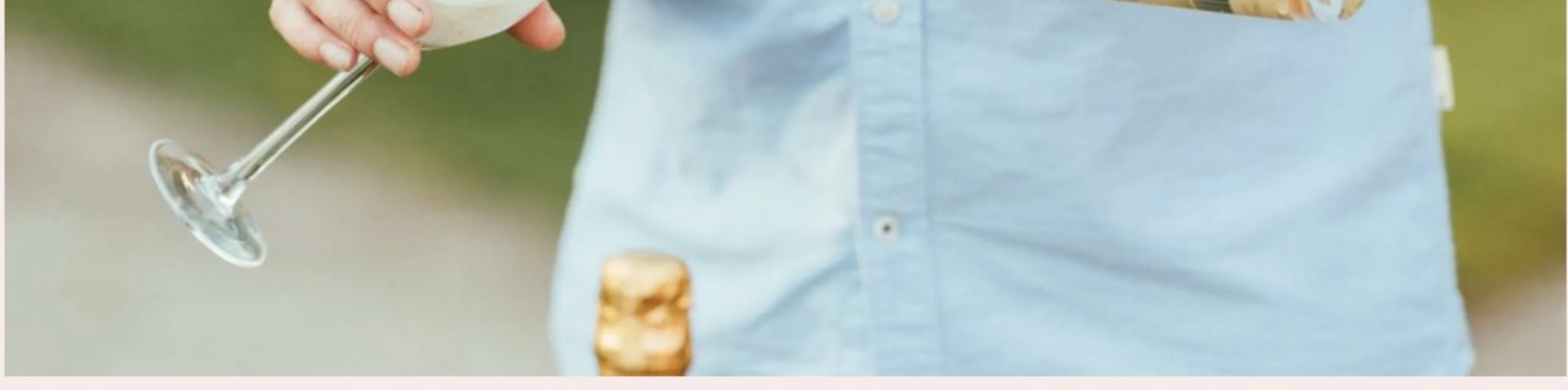
This is the fruity cousin of the sparkling family. With time, pét-nats can develop brioche, biscuit notes found in traditionally produced sparkling wine. The wine may still be fermenting in the bottle when you buy it and a young wine may be sweet, as the yeast may have not finished munching its way through the grapes' natural sugar. If you prefer your bubbles dry, wait a month or two, or put the wine in the sunshine for a few hours to expedite the fermentation – how fun is that? If you like your bubbles with brioche notes, leave the wine for a year or more and it should evolve.

Pét-nat is a wine that is naturally inconsistent, flavours resembling beer or cider can sometimes be found, whilst others can give off notes of earthiness. With minimal intervention the wine bares its terror for all to enjoy, these are wines with attitude and need to be approached with an open mind.

Pét-nats are also versatile when it comes to food pairing – they go surprisingly well with most food, especially lighter dishes, salads, fish, lightly spiced dishes and semi-sweet desserts such as a rhubarb tart.

*"Pét-nats are light, fresh and lightly sparkling. That would normally suggest an aperitif, paired with a seafood canapé such as prawns in herb butter or smoked salmon with a mild horseradish and crème fraîche dressing."*

Jo Smith



Finding a pét-nat at your local wine shop is not always easy, look out for Pét-Nat or pétillant naturel, bottle fermented or méthode ancestrale on the label to identify what you're looking for. They are usually adorned with a crown cap too!

Pét-nats are usually best drunk young, tend to be low in alcohol and usually won't break the bank, so it's all about having fun exploring what the pioneers of modern winemaking are creating, respecting the past whilst embracing the future, just as nature intended.

With thanks to Jo Smith, Wine Garden of England

OUR TASTING PANEL OF PÉT-NATS

We've chosen four local pét-nats for our tasting panel, each expressing a wonderful frothy homage to the innovative winemakers behind them, an array of grape varieties and terroirs that make the wine region of England and Wales so intriguing

Like most pét-nats, there's no (or very little) sulphur added and minimal if any additional yeast or sugar, this is vegan friendly and gluten free and like all English wines, you're buying local with a low carbon footprint to boot.

Be ready for a sparkling surprise, this is anticipation wrapped up in a bottle, crowned with a cap waiting to be discovered. Drink chilled and pour gently.



STYLISH SENSATION

LONDON CRU PINOT GRIS PÉT-NAT 2020 £18

As the first urban winery in London, London Cru has gained a reputation for creating innovative, stylish wines, sourced from a diversity of grapes and vineyards across England.

2020 was a good vintage with a warm, long summer ensuring ample ripening. The Pinot Gris for this pét-nat hails from West Sussex and helped by the sunshine produced its salmon pink blush colour through longer skin contact prior to fermentation.

This is a clear wine; disgorgement of the yeast took place before recapping. The result is a super stylish lightly fizzy wine that tickles the tongue and teases the palate with hints of tropical peach, nectarine and mango, warmed with a hug from its 12% alcohol.

[londoncru.co.uk](http://londoncru.co.uk)



FRESH & FUN

WOOLTON CHARDONNARY PÉT-NAT 2020 £22

Woolton Farm in Kent is family owned and run and has been for over 100 years. The love and passion the family have for the land and its produce shines through this innovative glass of fizz and worthy bronze winner at the 2021 WineGB Awards.

Putting your nose into the glass of this zingy glass of frothiness puts this style into perspective. It's unpretentious and yet will create conversation.

The cloudy lemonade colour lends a sherbet tang on the nose which lends a clean tartness to the semi-sweet notes on the palate. There are noticeable Chardonnay flavours, lemon, lime and green apples makes way for a tang of citrus and pear on the finish.

This is cloudy and frothy and all the more fun for it. For a clearer wine, chill it upright in the fridge for a day or two and pour slowly.

At 11.5% alcohol this is light and very quaffable.

[wooltonfarm.co.uk](http://wooltonfarm.co.uk)



SMILE IN A GLASS

WESTWELL NATURALLY PETULANT 2021 £22.50

Grown and produced on the North Downs of Kent, wines from Westwell are experimental and innovative. It's all about minimal intervention and working alongside nature, their motto: 'hands-on in the vineyard and hands-off in the winery.'

One of the best sounds in the world is a sparkling wine bottle opening. And this pét-nat is pop perfection, starting frothy almost like beer, settling into a rich salmon pink colour.

The nose is all candy floss and bubble gum, canned peaches and red cherries and just a hint of rose. This is a complex wine! The dry palate hits you with wild strawberries and sour cherry sherbet, which softens into a perfume of Wimbledon-worthy strawberries and cream.

Ripe Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay feature, the same traditional sparkling wine trio in Champagne. Here, the grapes are left for a weekend on their skins before pressing to gently release its wonderful pink hue.

The wine was relatively clear having been quickly disgorged, however yeast deposits on the side of the glass could not hide its natural production. This is a fresh, easy drinking glass of bubbles offering plenty to discover on each sip.

[westwellwines.com](http://westwellwines.com)



WELSH WONDER

ANCRE HILL ESTATE PÉT-NAT 2021 £19.95

This 12-hectare vineyard in the beautiful hills of Mommouthshire in Wales is biodynamic and organic, its aim to express the terroir of this unique location through the natural characteristics of the wine. A favourite of fine restaurants across the UK, small batch wines are produced with integrity and sustainability at the fore, with fermentation carried out by wild yeasts and filtration and fining avoided wherever possible.

Ancre Hill's pét-nat is no exception. This non-vintage wine displays the wonderful brick red colour of the unique Triomphe grape variety. Vibrantly fizzy on opening, its aromas play with your senses offering notes of strawberries and kirsch cherries opening to a zingy melody of tastes, from raspberry bubble gum and red cherry to hints of sweet rhubarb pie. There is a notable crunch of tannins which makes this feel like a fruity, bubbly rose, with decent body.

Triomphe is of Franco-German origin, now commonly grown in the UK (the grape likes our winery spring and wet summers), and with low acidity and high sugar, it provides an interesting base to develop simple, fruity wines.

At 9.5% alcohol this is an easy aperitif and being certified biodynamic and organic, it's as natural as it comes.

[ancrehillstates.co.uk](http://ancrehillstates.co.uk)

\*Information and prices correct at time of publication and may be subject to change.

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