

## Inside Trader Joe's Podcast Transcript — TJ's Wine Club: Champagne for New Year's Eve (and Beyond)

*[Upbeat country version of Auld Lang Syne.]*

Tara: Happy New Year, Matt.

Matt: And Happy New Year to you, Tara. Hey, are you going to be hanging an onion on your door?

Tara: Excuse me?

Matt: Well, in Greece, that's what they do on New Year's to bring love and luck.

Tara: Oh, I'll hang an onion on my door if I can smash dishes on yours.

Matt: Excuse me?

Tara: That's what they do on New Year's in Denmark.

Matt: Or we could just celebrate New Year's by popping open a bottle of champagne from Trader Joe's.

Tara: That too. Hey, we have a recommendation to share on this special Wine Club edition of *Inside Trader Joe's*.

*[Theme music begins with no two bells at a neighborhood Trader Joe's.]*

Matt: All right, then let's call this meeting of the Trader Joe's Wine Club to order.

*[Gavel banging.]*

Tara: I'm Tara Miller.

Matt: And I'm Matt Sloan.

Tara: New Year's Eve is Tuesday night. Hey, are you going to stay awake till midnight?

Matt: Yes, I am, but not Pacific Time.

Tara: Central? Eastern?

Matt: NST. That's Newfoundland Standard Time.

Tara: Whenever you celebrate, Trader Joe's has the bubbly to make it really fun and exceptionally delicious. I think there are people here at Trader Joe's who know more about the bubbly than either you or I.

Matt: And I'm so glad to have just such a person here.

Tara: Linda, welcome back.

Linda: Thank you for having me.

*[Theme music ends. Light upbeat music begins.]*

Tara: You are a champagne aficionado.

Linda: I am. Anything bubbly goes anytime.

Tara: Okay. How did you become a lover of sparkling wine?

Linda: Well, it started long, long ago. Actually, I worked at a restaurant, and they were serving champagne at New Year's Eve, and I fell in love, (harp strumming) head over heels, love at first sight. Champagne is always thought of as a luxury item. Only reserved for special occasions when actually it's great enjoyed whenever you want. When you're in a good mood, champagne. When you're in a bad mood, champagne. When you don't know what to give somebody, a bottle of champagne.

Tara: Okay. Is there a big difference between champagne and other sparkling wines?

Linda: There is a difference. However, I'm a fan of almost all of them. I do prefer the French products and the American, but I love to dabble in the Spanish Cava and the Italian Proseccos. I just like the effervescence of it.

Tara: You're an equal opportunity effervescent.

Linda: Yes. French at the top, but equal opportunity for everybody.

*[Music transition.]*

Matt: I love that if it was love at first sip, it was in a restaurant. Of course it was with food, and so many people think of sparkling wine or champagne in particular as only being reserved for a toast. But it's great with food.

Linda: It is absolutely exquisite with food, which I wish more people knew about. It's a wonderful aperitif. You can have it with fried food, you can have it with cocktails, you could have it for toast. It really fills almost everything. Minus steak, you could probably have it with most everything.

Tara: Not with steak.

Linda: Not with steak, but at the same time, rules are meant to be broken. If that what floats your boat, steak and bubbly.

Tara: I think when we spoke with you previously, you mentioned popcorn.

Linda: Buttered popcorn.

Tara: Yeah, that one stuck.

Linda: I went to go see *Ratatouille* when it came out in the theaters and had movie popcorn and champagne.

Tara: So rules are meant to be broken, apparently.

Linda: Played with, experimented with.

Tara: (laughs) We're headed into New Year's Eve. You said champagne is not just for celebrations, but it is pretty common for celebrations.

*[Music transition.]*

Linda: It is very common because the kings of France were crowned in champagne, and so the effervescence of the wine was thought to be uplifting and reserved for special occasions.

Tara: That didn't work out so well for them.

Linda: Not necessarily.

Tara: And it doesn't just have to be a luxury item, right? There are very expensive champagnes, but there are also champagnes that are much more affordable.

Linda: Yes, it runs the gamut.

Tara: So, we're looking for something to have for our own party, to bring to someone else's party, to gift to a friend, to celebrate at their house. What's on offer right now at Trader Joe's that you would recommend?

Linda: We have a fantastic new offering that should be on shelves everywhere right now. It's the Henri Laffard Champagne from France, and it is \$24.99. It is an actual champagne made by the Bernard Rémy champagne house.

Tara: When you say champagne house, they call it a house and not a winery.

Linda: They call them houses.

Tara: That price may be different in some regions due to local regulations, and I think it's interesting that this particular champagne comes from a producer that makes about a quarter of a million bottles of champagne a year. And when you think about it, that's not a lot of bottles. There is a scarcity built into the idea of champagne because it's a very small region.

Matt: It is small. I mean, you're talking about a place, what, it's 100 miles or so east of Paris. It might be 130 square miles in total, the region producing champagne. Within that little space, there are 312 villages making champagne. It's small relative to the global production of sparkling wines, and that's what makes champagne so special. It's about wine made in a very specific place.

Tara: And so that, Linda, I'm guessing informs why champagne has a slightly different flavor profile than another sparkling wine from a different region.

Linda: Correct. Champagne has lots of notes of toastedness, the brioche biscuits. You also get a lot of stone fruit, and you'll get a touch of citrus to go with it.

Tara: So maybe we should try it.

Matt: We need to determine once, if not for all, how do you open a bottle of sparkling wine? Is there a way to open champagne? Is there a way you should never open champagne?

Linda: Never shake it unless you've won the World Series.

Matt: Or you're launching a ship.

Tara: (laughs)

Linda: Also true.

Tara: But then you just smash it.

*[Music transition.]*

Matt: That's true.

Linda: There are two ways you could open champagne. First of all, always be careful with the cage. There are seven atmospheres of pressure in this thing. If you really want to, you could shake it, and you'll see that cork go flying.

Tara: So the cage is not just decorative.

Linda: It's there to keep the pressure in.

Matt: It's holding that cork.

Tara: Wow.

Linda: It's holding on for dear life. Always make sure your champagne is cold.

Tara: Okay.

Linda: If it is warm and you shake it, it could pop off.

Tara: Okay, so then when it comes to actually opening it up?

Linda: You're going to take the foil off. You're going to twist the little handle on the cage until it completely separates. You're going to keep your hand on the cork at all times. There have been some holes in my ceiling.

Tara: Interesting.

Matt: Wow.

Linda: And then what you're supposed to do is you're supposed to hold it at a 45 degree angle. Put your finger inside and you're going to twist

Tara: Your finger inside the punt at the bottom of the bottle?

Linda: Yes. All right. If you want to pop it, you're just going to let it go. You want to have a little more reserve, you're going to hear a little fizz, but because it's champagne...

Tara: Let's pop it.

Linda: Let's pop it.

*[Loud cork popping.]*

Tara: Woooo. That was, I would say picture perfect, but it sounded perfect.

Matt: And not a drop wasted. Thank you for it. I think that's the challenge when people want the celebratory pop, don't waste any champagne.

Tara: No.

Linda: That's sacrilege.

Tara: You said cold. Would you take it right out of the fridge cold and drink it like that?

Linda: No. You don't want it too warm, but you don't want it too cold. If it's too cold, you don't get to taste all the nuanced flavors inside.

Tara: Yeah.

Linda: If it's too warm, all that hard work, years in the making goes by the wayside.

Tara: Make sure you refrigerate it, but take it out maybe 20 minutes or 30 minutes?

Linda: 20 to 30 minutes before, so it's still cool, but you don't want it too cold, not too hot.

Tara: Okay.

Linda: It's just like Goldilocks.

Tara: This is better be just right then let's go.

Matt: It'll be just right.

Tara: Let's try it. We don't have flutes.

Linda: So actually you shouldn't drink champagne out of flutes.

Tara: Oh, wait, why?

Linda: Flutes are great for toasts. You see the bubbles coming up. You do your little toast, have a sip, and you're done. If you really want to enjoy champagne, you drink out of a white wine cup, tumbler, anything of the sort, because you have all the same nose aromas as you do in wine and you want to taste them in champagne as well.

Tara: And in a flute, there's no room for them to really develop.

Linda: Yes.

Matt: I like a good tulip-shaped coupe or something.

Linda: See now you're onto something.

Tara: So a tulip-shaped coupe. Am I picturing like a martini glass kind of situation?

Matt: Well, similar.

Tara: Rounded?

Matt: It's what you'd probably serve like a Gibson or a Gimlet in. It's not as tall. It's much wider. It's not as deep.

Tara: Okay.

Matt: Maybe it looks like a little tiny margarita glass.

Tara: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Linda: So if you also think when you do the champagne towers, you usually use those now.

Tara: Now I got you.

*[Champagne pouring into glass.]*

Matt: That sounds like you're pouring a root beer float.

Tara: Kinda looks like it.

Linda: Actually the proper way when you're pouring your champagne, is you want to pour slowly, deliberately, and through the bubbles.

*[Continues pouring champagne into another glass.]*

Tara: So not to the side like you would a bottle of beer?

Linda: Correct.

*[Pouring champagne into another glass.]*

Tara: And the bubbles, there's a nice foamy head when you pour it, but it dissipates very quickly into the glass.

Linda: So every champagne is different. Some stay around longer. It's the mousse and it also depends on the cup that you use.

Tara: Okay, I think it's time for a New Year's toast. We've borrowed some ideas from the Trader Joe's Values Guide.

Matt: Those relentless themes of our business put to good purpose here.

Tara: You want to start, Matt?

Matt: Sure.

*[Auld Lang Syne.]*

Matt: Here's to a year that's driven by purpose. Where integrity guides us steady and earnest. To our crew and our products, such a welcoming sight. Inviting good cheer each day and each night.

Tara: Let's experience the wow in every small deed with kindness and care in the moments we need. May our days be rich, both heartfelt and kind. Unique tasty treasures, that's what we'll find.

Linda: Like Kaizen, let's grow one day at a time. At the ready to answer every bell's chime. (two bells) Though we're many stores may we act as one, a neighborhood place where good work gets done.

Matt: So here's to the future. May it sparkle and shine like a Trader Joe's label on a Platinum Reserve wine. Let's lift up our glasses and give a big cheer to a brand new adventure.

Group: Happy New Year!

*[Crowd cheering, bells ringing.]*

Tara: And once again, the Trader Joe's Wine Club recommendation for champagne for New Year's Eve (cork pops) Henri Laffard Grand Reserve Brut.

*[Transition to closing.]*

Matt: Hats off, Henry.

Tara: Until next year, thanks for listening

Matt: And thanks for listening.