



Basic Juice Article
Romance under \$20 - guaranteed

by: *Beau Jarvis*

Are you going through one of those, ahem “*dry*” spells? Is watching “The Bachelor” on TV your significant other’s idea of a romantic evening? Do you want to add some spice to your relationship, but can’t afford to spend last week’s paycheck on a night out? I’ve found just the thing for you. Call it, “romance in a bottle.” You can even choose between a Spanish version and an Italian version. What is this mysterious elixir? Some call it ‘bubbly’ others call it sparkling wine. I call it just what the Love Doctor ordered. Actually it’s known as Cava in Spain and Prosecco in Italy. Both wines are made in much the same way as Champagne; they taste great and are a real bargain (read: under 15 bucks). But back to romance; imagine greeting Honey/Shnook-ums/Pookie at the door with a bottle of bubbly, as soft music plays in the background. Perfect.

Of course, there is the small matter of an empty stomach. Let’s say your name isn’t Martha or Emiril. What to do? Well, lucky for you, Cava and Prosecco go with a whole lot of inexpensive, zero-effort foods. The crisp, lively character of these bubblies makes both a perfect match for salty foods like potato chips and popcorn. I can hear the wine snobs gasping at this suggestion (I did say zero-effort). So splurge a little and buy some gourmet chips. My favorites are the oh-so-addictive salt and vinegar potato chips. Bubbly brings out the malted, sweetness of vinegar in the chips, and it is delicious. If you are more partial to popcorn then try a dry (i.e. *Brut*) Cava or Prosecco. It will cut through the popcorn’s saltiness and let a hint of sweet corn flavor through. Want something classier? Try some bubbly with slices of fresh baked baguette and goat cheese. Hungrier? Add a small smoked salmon fillet (pre-cooked, pre-packaged and available in the deli case) to the mix. Sparkling wine is almost always a homerun with any combination of bread, cheese and light meat such as fish or poultry. I did promise this would all be under \$20, so let’s break it down. Two great bubbly choices are *Freixenet Cordon Negro Cava, Extra Dry* from Spain or the Italian *Zardetto Prosecco, Brut*. Both are around \$12. The Extra Dry Cava will be slightly sweeter than the Brut Prosecco. So we have \$8 left to spend at the grocery store. A bag of gourmet popcorn or

potato chips will run you \$2-\$4. Fresh bread and goat cheese will cost about \$5. A small package of smoked salmon will set you back about \$3. So mix and match any of the aforementioned items and for less than twenty bucks you can surprise your significant other with a nice bottle of bubbly and something to nosh that won't "slow you down" (wink, wink). This is the perfect set-up for a low-effort, highly romantic evening. I've helped you set the mood. Now all you need to do is practice making eyes at your lover and come up with that perfect sweet-nothing to whisper at an opportune moment.

Cheers!

© *Basic Juice, 2004*

For reprint permission contact: beau@basicjuice.com