

FROM
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NOW SERVING | **BOUTIQUE BUBBLY**

Dom who? Discriminating Champagne lovers are eschewing highly hyped houses in favor of small-batch bubbly from family-owned estates. And for once, rare doesn't require a Centurion Card: some top-notch sparklers are less than \$50. Terry Theise is one of a handful of wine merchants backing the trend. "You can drink a superior wine for the same or even a fraction of the price of a bottle from one of the big guys," he says. He touts H. Billiot Fils and Larmandier-Bernier for their nonvintage bottlings: "They both make

the liquid equivalent of a Brooks Brothers suit: effortlessly impeccable and incredibly well priced." (H. Billiot Fils Brut Réserve and Larmandier-Bernier Premier Cru Blanc de Blancs, \$37 each at Astor Wines and Spirits, 12 Astor Place.) For a party splurge, there's the 1997 Coeur de Cuvée Brut from Vilmart & Cie (\$85 at Astor). It's riveting, he says: "The only problem is that it's a conversation stopper. Everyone at the party will be asking, 'What in God's name is this?'" **SANDRA BALLENTINE**



M I C H A E L S K U R N I K W I N E S
575 UNDERHILL BLVD SUITE 216
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