

Imagine that you are preparing a project with your friend. You have found some interesting material for the presentation and you want to read this text to your friend. You have 1.5 minutes to read the text silently, then be ready to read it out aloud. You will not have more than 1.5 minutes to read it.

Champagne was not invented in France. It may come as surprise — even an outrage — to them but champagne is an English invention. As anyone who has made their own ginger beer knows, fermentation naturally produces bubbles. The problem has always been controlling it. The English developed a taste for fizzy wine in the sixteenth century, importing barrels of green, flat wine from Champagne and adding sugar and molasses to start it fermenting. They also developed the strong coal-fired glass bottles and corks to contain it.

A legal loophole uniquely allows Americans to call their sparkling wines champagne. The Treaty of Madrid decreed that only the Champagne region may use that name. This was reaffirmed by the Treaty of Versailles but the US signed a separate peace agreement with Germany. When prohibition was lifted, American wine-merchants took advantage of this loophole, freely selling their own Champagne, much to the annoyance of the French.