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**Personal Business**

## WINES: THE SWEET SCIENCE OF DESSERT WINE

The end of the family's 27-course holiday feast is in sight, and--extra calories be damned--you're ready to partake of the final act: a smorgasbord of delightful desserts, topped off by a splendid postprandial brandy. So you're not thrilled when a relative starts pouring wine. "Who wants dessert wine?" you mutter to yourself. "It's too sweet and syrupy."

Anyone who reacts in that way has probably never tasted a really top-notch dessert wine, say the oenophiles. According to Daniel Johnnes, wine director at New York's Montrachet restaurant: "Some of the greatest and most expensive wines in the world are sweet."

The landscape is dominated by German wines of the Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese varieties, by Sauternes and Barsac from Bordeaux, and by Vouvray from France's Loire Valley. Connoisseurs often fancy fortified wines at the end of a meal, meaning a port, Madeira, or sherry. Chateau d'Yquem, a classic Sauternes, is widely considered the crown jewel of dessert wines and commands upward of \$250 a bottle.

The lofty prices are often justified. Premier dessert wines require a lot of labor and an assist from Mother Nature. A fine Sauternes, Beerenauslese, Trockenbeerenauslese, or Hungarian Tokay will benefit from a mold called botrytis cinerea or "noble rot." Grapes remain on the vine during the fall months and, given the right mix of fog and sunshine, are infected by botrytis. That makes them shrivel up as water evaporates through tiny holes in the skin, leaving behind a small amount of intensely sweet concentrated juice. "To get the right flavors, you need noble rot," says Robert Parker Jr., wine critic and publisher of *The Wine Advocate*. "But vintages are extremely important because it's the exception rather than the rule when you get it." Barsac, a township in the Sauternes district, for example, had three marvelous vintages from 1988 to 1990, says Parker, but since then, none that has quite measured up.

To make more sumptuous dessert wine, some winemakers may in addition let their grapes go through the deep freeze. Inniskillin, a vintner on Canada's Niagara Peninsula, produces a tasty variation known as icewine. Grapes that are left on the vine in December and January are dehydrated through constant freezing and thawing, thus concentrating sugars and acids. The frozen grapes are picked by hand and pressed in the cold. The result is a delicious wine not overpoweringly sweet. Inniskillin's icewine comes in half-bottles costing about \$45.

You don't always have to spend a lot of loot to uncork terrific dessert wine. Parker gives high marks to the sweetly perfumed Beaufort de Venise wines from the muscat grape that cost \$15 to \$30 a bottle. New York wine merchant Peter Morrell advises bargain seekers to try the Muscat de St. Jean de Minervois from southwestern France (\$9 for a half-bottle), a light, crisp wine with hints of coconut, apricot, and peach. If you're willing to splurge, Morrell raves about a 1965 Portuguese wine called Setubal Superior from Jose Maria da Fonseca. It costs \$50 in a 500-ml bottle, features the flavors of caramel, oranges, raisins, and prunes, and has a long, succulent aftertaste.

Although not of the best quality, look-alike Sauternes from nearby appellations such as Cerons, Loupiac, and Cadillac can also provide good value, says Johnnes. He also recommends semisweet wines from Alsace labeled vendange tardive (late harvest) and sweet wines from the Anjou area in the Loire, including Coteaux du Layon and Bonnezeaux.

**RECORKABLE.** While many sweet wines mix well with creme brulee or fruity desserts, chocoholics shouldn't feel discriminated against. You can pair chocolates

with port, Madeira, or Banyuls--a sweet red wine from the Languedoc-Roussillon area of southern France.

After a hearty meal, you probably wouldn't want more than a single glass of even the finest dessert wine. A half-bottle can satisfy four to six people, says Ed Lehrman, president of Passport Wine Club in Novoto, Calif. What's more, you can often keep opened dessert wines around much longer than table wines, provided you store them in the fridge. So if you give a good dessert wine as a gift, you know it can be appreciated throughout the holiday season.

*By Edward C. Baig*

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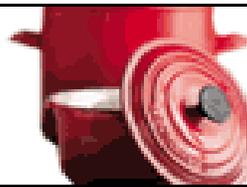
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### Mavrodaphne

**[mahv-rroh-DAHf-nee]**

Popular Greek red-wine grape grown along the Gulf of Corinth. It is generally made into a sweet, full-bodied, [aromatic](#), lightly [fortified](#) wine. The name, which translates to "black laurel," comes from the resemblance this grape has to the laurel berry. The celebrated Mavrodaphne wines spend their first summer in oak barrels outside, basking in the sunshine. This technique allows the wine to [soften](#) into a pleasant [dessert wine](#).

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## Mavrodaphne Cambas



According to the myth, the Greek God Apollo fell in love with the beautiful Daphne, who has been transformed into a bush named after her. The Mavrodaphne grape variety was named after the black (“Mavres”) fruits of this delicate bush (“Daphne”). The variety was introduced in the region of Patras by merchants and nobles through the Ionian Islands trade routes. Cambas Mavrodaphne of Patras is the perfect finish to any meal.

**CATEGORY:** Appellation of Controlled Origin Mavrodaphne of Patras.

**REGION:** Peloponnese

**VARIETY:** Mavrodaphne, the Greek red grape used for the production of sweet wines and suitable for ageing.

**TYPE:** Red sweet

**AGING:** 12 months in oak barrels.

**CHARACTERISTICS:** Deep ruby colour with brickish tints as a result of ageing. Aromas of dried fruits and cinnamon, rich body and long aftertaste.

**FOOD PAIRING:** Served as an aperitif between 8 - 10 o C or with desserts, especially chocolate ones.

Search:

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**Semillon**[See below for the wines](#)

The main grape for [Sauternes](#) and particularly successfully grown in [Australia's Hunter Valley](#). In [Bordeaux](#) it is the most widely planted white grape and is blended with [Sauvignon Blanc](#) to produce the great long-lived dry whites of Graves as well as the great sweet wines of Sauternes. It is high in alcohol and extract and relatively low in aroma and acidity. Its thin skin makes it very susceptible to botrytis which is prerequisite for the making of Sauternes. It responds well to oak ageing and, while having a lightly lemony aroma when young develops lanolin flavours which some describe as "waxy", as well as a rich, creamy, intense, texture and a deep golden colour.

It struggles in most **New World** countries, with its inherent low acidity often producing blowsy, overblown dilute wines. However in New South Wales's Hunter Valley it produces stunning wines which are fruit driven in youth but develop intense butterscotch and rich honeyed flavours when fully mature.

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[Print List \(pdf\)](#)**Quantity**[AUSTRALIA](#) [map](#)

**2002** [Elderton Golden Semillon](#) - - Australia H/Bottle £7.95  
 Medium Bodied, Sweet, Drink now, [Semillon](#), 12% alc. 37.5 cl  
**Special price (for orders of 24): £7.55**

**2001** [Goono Warra Semillon, Sunbury Victoria](#) - -  
 Australia Bottle £8.65  
 75 cl  
 Medium Bodied, Dry, Ready, but will keep, [Semillon](#),  
 13.5% alc.  
*A superlative example of classic Australian Semillon, but from Victoria rather than the more traditional Hunter Valley, this has a delightful honeyed nose, with a vegetal backdrop and a fresh citrus palate.*  
**Special price (for orders of 12): £8.21**

# Grande Maison

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## SOUTH-WEST FRANCE

Driving east from Bordeaux, after an hour you arrive in Bergerac. Turning south, after approximately ten minutes you will have an excellent view of the imposing Chateau Monbazillac high up on a hill. Driving up past the Chateau, into the undulating hills behind, you are immediately struck by the beauty of the region. Grande Maison is located here in the heart of the Monbazillac appellation.

Thierry Despres is the extremely funny, and slightly eccentric owner / wine-maker of Grande Maison. The sweet Monbazillac's are Thierry's pride and joy, although his dry whites and reds from the Bergerac appellation are equally outstanding.

The Monbazillac sweet wines are made from grapes grown on extremely low yielding vines. The individual botrytis affected grapes are hand selected from up to 7 picking runs through the vineyards. Thierry has also built dams amongst the vineyards to help induce the attack of botrytis.

The Bergerac Blanc 'Cuvée Sophie' is a blend of Semillon, Sauvignon blanc and Muscadelle. It is a rich, full-flavoured, dry wine with enormous appeal. The two Bergerac reds are from the highly acclaimed 2000 vintage. The 'Cuvée Antoinette' is a Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot blend. It is soft and supple with lovely fleshy berry fruit. The 'Tete de Cuvée' is 100% Merlot. It is extremely rich and concentrated, with masses of black-fruits, with well-integrated vanillin oak. This is simply an amazing wine that is more than a match to many of the Merlot wines from the neighbouring appellations of Pomerol and Saint Emilion.

We give the wines of Grande Maison our highest recommendations.

### Dry white Semillon, Sauvignon blanc & Muscadelle

#### 2000 Bergerac Blanc Cuvée Sophie' 750ml & 375ml

"This is a wooded Bordeaux white made from sauvignon blanc and semillon. It has subtly toasty complexities from wood aging, with herbal, hay/straw, honey and citrus flavours. The palate is fuller, richer and stronger than most sem-sav blends. It will also age well. Best now to 2007. Drink with: Smoked chicken salad." Huon Hooke SMH Good Living July 9, 2002

### Dessert wines Semillon, Sauvignon blanc & Muscadelle



### 1998 Monbazillac 'Cuvée des Anges' 375ml

"Monbazillac is a small appellation to the east of the Bordeaux region, where the focus is on dessert wines - using botrytis in the best years. The results are often variable, but not with this one. Don't expect a blockbuster sticky a la Griffith. This is medium weight, and only medium sweet. It is subtly honeyed, with a floral and beeswax nose, showing some influence of noble rot. The lovely acid balance on the palate gives a clean finish and defined citrus and honey flavours. Try it - as the French would - as an aperitif."

Stephen Charters MW Australia Gourmet Traveller WINE Magazine, issue Feb/March 2002

### 2001 Monbazillac 'Cuvée des Anges' 750ml

### 1998 Monbazillac 'Cuvée du Château' 375ml

"This is a powerful, oak-aged botrytis semillon from the Bordeaux region, quite similar to Sauternes. It's very rich and complex, smelling of toffee, honey, vanilla and marmalade. A superbly layered, lingering drop." 5 out of 5 stars SMH

Uncorked October 2001 Huon Hooke

### 1999 Monbazillac 'Cuvée du Château' 500ml Very Limited

### 1996 Monbazillac 'Cuvée du Château' 750ml

### 1998 Monbazillac 'Cuvée des Monstres' 375ml

### 1996 Monbazillac 'Cuvée des Monstres' 375ml

### Dry Reds

### 2000 Bergerac Rouge 'Cuvee Antoinette'

### 2000 Bergerac Rouge 'Tete de Cuvee' Merlot



Search:

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**Muscat**[See below for the wines](#)

**Muscat** refers to a family of grapes of which there are around 200 different branches. Muscat Blancs à Petits Grains is the most noble of the variety and makes the best and most distinctive wines. It is the only wine grape that produces wines that actually taste of grapes, and can produce a range of wines from pale, bone dry whites, through to golden yellow, rich, sweet wines.

In [Alsace](#) 2 types of Muscat are grown - **Muscat Blancs à Petits Grains** and **Muscat Ottonel**. They are usually blended to produce wines that tend to be light, and dry with a fruity, musky character and an intensely aromatic bouquet. Intensely sweet late harvest wines are also produced.

**Muscat de Beaumes de Venise** is one of the best Vin Doux Naturels in France. This is produced by adding grape spirit to the partly fermented must - the best producers, such as [Domaine De Durban](#), produce deliciously sweet wines with rich grapey aromas balanced by fruity acidity.

In [Australia](#) Muscat à Petit Grains is used to produce the fortified **Liqueur Muscats** of Victoria. These are extraordinary wines - dark and treacly with a sensational perfume of orange, raisins and honey with David Morris producing the finest examples.

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[Print List \(pdf\)](#)**Quantity**[LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON](#) [map](#)

2001 [Domaine de Coudoulet, Muscat Vin De Pays D'Oc](#) - - Bottle £5.95  
75 cl

France  
Medium Bodied, Dry, Ready, but will keep, [Muscat](#), 13.5% alc.

*This fresh, fragrant Muscat is hugely underrated, with dry, crisp, grapey flavours that are perfect for the summer and autumn.*

**Special price (for orders of 12): £5.65**

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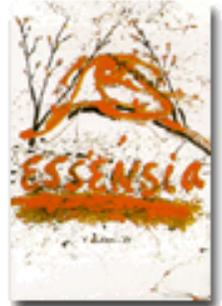
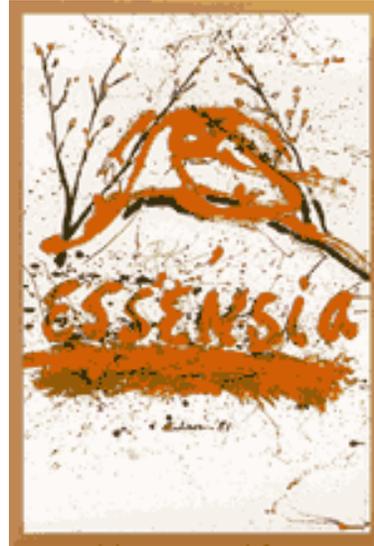
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## Essensia

From 100% Orange Muscat with an aroma reminiscent of Orange Blossom and Apricot, and a lingering refreshing aftertaste, Essensia is used as a dessert accompaniment or a dessert in itself. The Orange Muscat grape variety is little known. It was once grown in France and there are some small plantings in Italy and Australia. The wine is lightly fortified to about 15% alcohol and aged for 3 months in French Oak. Its relatively high acidity makes it taste balanced, even with its considerable sweetness, more like the taste of fresh fruit than an old fashioned sticky sweet muscat. Best of Class, 1999 California State Fair.



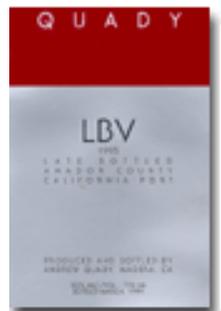
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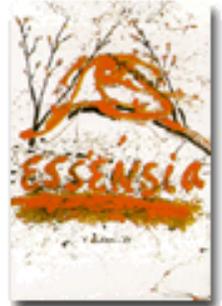
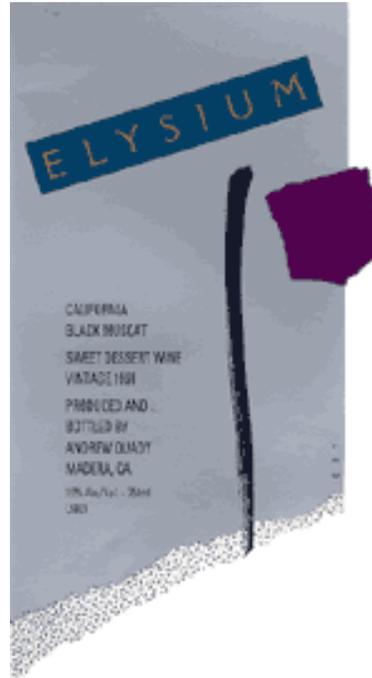
## Elysium

View the [Quady Winery 1999 Elysium Dessert Pairing Competition Results](#)

Black Muscat, another underappreciated muscat variety, is known in Europe as a table grape variety, Muscat Hamburg, one of the very few black skinned muscats. If ripened to about 25 brix, it attains a rose-like aroma and litchi like flavor. This rose-like aroma led us to name the wine Elysium, Greek for heaven. Drinking this, you can almost feel you have fallen into a rose garden and been transported to heaven. Made in the same manner as Essensia, it is used, like Essensia to either accompany or replace dessert. One favorite is to pour the wine onto vanilla ice cream. Serve Elysium Sundae with a glass of Elysium. Great with vanilla, dark chocolate, blue cheeses, and candlelight.

[Elysium Valentine Experience](#)

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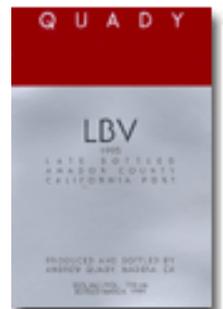
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Search:

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**Furmint**[See below for the wines](#)

A white grape variety grown in Hungary and Slovakia and the main ingredient of [Tokaji](#) Aszú. It is an early budding late ripening variety and is particularly susceptible to botrytis.

Its wines are characterised by their high alcohol levels (sometimes as much as 14%) and their high acidity - it is the latter which gives Tokaji wines their longevity. It is most commonly planted in the Tokaji-Hegyalja region and is usually blended with Harslevelu and sometimes [Muscat](#) to produce Tokaji Aszú. The grape is also grown widely to produce acidic but sturdy dry white wine.

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[Print List \(pdf\)](#)**Quantity****BERRYS' OWN SELECTION**

**[Berrys' Own Selection Tokaji Aszú \(4 Puttonyos\)](#)** - - Q/Bottle £7.95  
25 cl

Hungary

Medium-Full Bodied, Sweet, Drink now, [Furmint](#), 11% alc.

*Berrys was first to import this delicious, hedonistic delight into the UK in the 1920s, with tangy, apricot marmalade flavours and honey on the finish.*

**Special price (for orders of 36): £7.55**

**[Berrys' Tokaji Aszú \(4 Puttonyos\)](#)** - - Hungary H/Litre £14.95  
50 cl

Medium-Full Bodied, Sweet, Drink now, [Furmint](#), 11.5% alc.

*Berrys was first to import this delicious, hedonistic delight into the UK in the 1920s, with tangy, apricot marmalade flavours and honey on the finish.*

**Special price (for orders of 12): £14.20**



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## 1995 Tokaji Aszu Disznoko 6 Puttonyos Price: \$33.95

Wine Spectator: "Tastes incredibly youthful. Aromas of herbs and vanilla candy give way to caramel, smoke and mineral notes in this fresh, sweet white. Seems compact and reserved today, although the finish expands with tropical fruit accents. Drink now through 2010." (10/01)

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### Varietal: Other White Wines

**Region: Hungary** - Better known for its paprika than its wine, Hungary is nonetheless one of Eastern Europe's most significant wine-producing countries. Exerjo, Furmint, Hárslevelü and Mezesfeher are just some of the indigenous (and unpronounceable!) varieties most widely planted. And Tokaji is Hungary's biggest success story. Made since the sixteenth century, Tokaji is an extremely sweet wine that was adored by the Russian Tsars. It is made in a manner similar to Sherry, and is reputed to be the longest lived, non-fortified wine in existence (a few hundred years is not unheard of). Hungary's continental climate--predictably cold winters and hot summers--makes it an ideal location for Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon as well.

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We currently hold 18 Tokaji wines in stock. See them all [here](#).

## Aszu Classification

- 3 Puttonyos
- 4 Puttonyos
- 5 Puttonyos
- 6 Puttonyos
- Aszu Essencia
- Essencia

*Each classification indicates the level of sweetness, with Essencia being described as 'liquid gold'.*

***We stock wines of all classifications!***

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- [The Royal Tokaji Company](#)

## Region & Viticulture

The Tokaji region lies 200km north east of Budapest. It is on the same latitude as the Loire, however the climate is extreme due the country being land-locked.



The vineyards sit on gentle slopes with soil consisting of lava deposits and volcanic rocks. The main market town, Tokaj, lies at the meeting of two rivers, the Tisza and the Bodrog. The two rivers encourage noble rot to affect the Aszu grapes (dried berries), which are then handpicked and collected in a puttony - a wooden tub. Each puttony contains approx 20-25 kilos of Aszu grapes. The grapes are then crushed and added to the base wine. The more puttonyos added to the barrel of base wine the

more intense, rich and sweet the wine will be. Aszu wines must legally be matured for a minimum of three years.

## History

Tokaji Aszu was the world's first great sweet wine, and has a history steeped in mystery & legend, with a Royal connection.

The wines were reputed to have healing powers, and the rich, fragrant vintages be nurtured to almost magical potency. It was also believed that the gold rumoured to be in the subsoil was responsible for the alleged health-giving properties in the wine, and doctors would prescribe Tokaji Aszu to their favoured patients.



In 1700 Prince Rakoczi classified each slope into 1st, 2nd and 3rd class (or growth). 76 vineyards were classified at 1st class. 2 were raised to the heights of Great 1st Growth, Mezes Maly and Szarvas. The principal vineyards were located in a string of neighboring market towns. Two of these were Mad and Tarcal, and it was in Mad that the prices of Aszu wines were fixed for the whole region. It also boasted seven 1st class vineyards, including Nyulaszo, Szt Tamas and Betsek, which exist today. The Royal Tokaji Company is currently the only company using this single vineyard status.

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Tokaji became known as the 'wine of kings, king of wines', so termed by the Sun King, Louis XIV. It was soon to become a favourite among the royal households of Europe.

The Hungarian Royal Household owned most of the finest vineyards, and the Emperor Franz Joseph made the princely gesture of sending Queen Victoria a gift of Tokaji every year on her birthday.

The First World War destroyed the power of the Austro-Hungarian nobility, and this together with Soviet pressure to produce commercial wines for export within the iron curtain put an end to quality production (there goes my invite to Moscow!).

The revival came in 1989 with the creation of The **Royal Tokaji Company**, and the privatisation of the best wine estates (Megyer, Pajos, Disznoko, Oremus, Hetszolo), which had been administered by the Borkombinat. In 1994 the first vintages of private production reached the West.

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