

BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

2013

CLASS F – DESSERT WINES

Presented by Wayne Crossen and Axel Kroitsch (Mainland Chapter)

These notes are basically the same as the notes Sam Hauck produced for the 2009 tasting.

Class F - Dessert

Wines to be drunk with the dessert course of the meal. Should be sweet and luscious, but with sufficient acid to prevent them from being cloying. Alcohol must have been developed by fermentation of the wine. These are NOT fortified wines.

Wines such as ports, sweet Sherries, Madeira types, and other wines that are fortified, baked or otherwise made using port, sherry, Madeira etc. processes do NOT belong in this class.

The Dessert Class has three style sub-categories: Botrytis Affected, Ice wine Style and Other Dessert Styles (such as Late Harvest, etc.). The style of the wine should be indicated on the Registration Form and/or Bottle Tag.

Technical Characteristics:

	Botrytis affected	Ice wine style	Other
Ingredients	No restrictions		
Alcohol	12% - 14%	8.5% - 13.5%	8.5% - 14%
Colour	No restrictions		
Sugar	7.5% - 10%	Min. 8.5%	5.5% - 8.5%
Specific Gravity	1.024 – 1.034	1.028 – 1.048	1.028 – 1.048
Acid	Min. 8 g/l	9 g/l – 14 g/l	Min. 8 g/l
pH	3.1 – 3.9	3.1 – 3.9	3.1 – 3.9

All entries in this class will be considered for the AWC National Competition as AWC Class F - Dessert.

Note: *"Technically, in the US a wine is classified as a dessert wine if it has an alcohol by volume (ABV) level of 14%-24%"* regardless of what the BCAWA Class rules state. France, Australia and other countries also make some of these Muscat type wines in the same manner, i.e. stopping fermentation and fortifying.

While sweet wines can be expensive, many of them are remarkably good buys. They can offer great depth and complexity for a fraction of the price of a good quality, complex dry wine, especially a Burgundy or Bordeaux, which would command a far higher price. In addition, for a variety of reasons, dessert wines are difficult to make and often have painfully low yields, so give these underappreciated wines a try.

Since dessert wines are very rich, they are usually bottled in half (375 ml) bottles. Likewise, they should be served in smaller glasses than you would usually serve wine in

and never filled more than 2/3 full. A serving temperature of between 43° and 53° F (6° to 11° C) will allow you to enjoy them at their best.

Sweet wines are made everywhere wine is made and have a long history. The ancient Egyptian and Greek wines were very likely sweet wines. Sugar acts as a preservative, so sweet wines are good for storing and can last a long time. Sweet wines were popular during the 1700's. They got a bad reputation shortly after the repeal of prohibition in the United States during the early 1930s. Little table wine was produced at this time. Most wines were sweet, fortified and poorly made from poor quality grapes and sported nonsensical generic names such as "Hearty Burgundy", "Mountain Chablis", "Muscatel", "Sherry," "Port", etc. The time has come to forget the torrid past and look at sweet wines, the well-made ones, in a new, appreciative light. Here is a brief list of examples of sweet wines and the countries where they are produced. There are other countries that produce dessert wines that are not listed here.

France - makes many different styles of sweet wines from many different regions:

- Sauternes
- Barsac
- Muscat Beaumes-de-Venise
- Vouvray
- Vin de Paille
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Italy

- Asti Spumati
- Moscato d' Asti
- Vin Santo
- Recioto
- Vin Passito
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Germany

- Auslese
- Beerenauslese
- Trockenbeerenauslese
- Eiswein

Hungary

- Tokaji (Tokay)

Canada

- Ice wine
- Late-harvest wines

THERE ARE SEVERAL BASIC METHODS FOR MAKING SWEET WINES:

1. Fermentation can be stopped before all the sugar is consumed by yeast. This is done with SO₂ and filtration.
2. Grapes that are very high in sugar will stop fermenting when alcohol levels reach about 14%.
3. Grapes can be left out in the sun to dry and raisin, thus concentrating sugars.

4. Grapes can be left to hang on the vine to concentrate sugar levels.
5. Wines can be affected by botrytis cinerea, which concentrates sugars.
6. . Grapes can be left on the vine until they freeze. When the grapes are crushed, the solid water crystals are removed; the remaining juice is high in sugar. The temperature at harvest is colder than -8°C .
7. Freeze the juice and extract the ice to have higher residual sugar.
8. Add sweet reserve or for many home winemakers add sugar solution.

The last two methods are generally not permitted in commercial wine making. Even in ancient Rome wine was often sweetened by adding lead pellets [lead oxide is much sweeter tasting than sugar]. An argument has been made that this practice is partially to blame for the fall of the Roman Empire and the mental results of lead poisoning.

Please enjoy some of these fine wines!

Axel Kroitsch
Wayne Crossen