

BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

September 2015

Class G – After Dinner

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A FOCUS ON PORT

AFTER COMPLETING THIS SESSION, YOU SHOULD KNOW:

1. the five principal grapes used in making port
2. the different styles of port
3. what country is the largest importer of port wines
4. why Port is stored at Villa Nueva de Gaia and not Porto.
5. what country is responsible for making this fortified wine known around the world.

DESCRIPTION FROM THE BCAWA HANDBOOK

Eleventh Edition, March 2013

Class G - After Dinner

Wines in this class are for use after dinner, perhaps with nuts and cheese, or in place of a liqueur. Wines such as ports, sweet sherries, Madeiras, or other wines that are fortified, baked or otherwise made using port, sherry etc. type processes belong in this class. This does not however prevent a competitor from entering in this class an appropriate wine naturally fermented to high alcohol.

Technical Characteristics

Ingredients:	No restrictions
Alcohol:	15% - 20%
Colour:	No restrictions
Sugar:	15% - 20%
Specific Gravity:	1.017 - 1.040
Acid:	3.9 g/l - 5.5 g/l
pH:	3.2 - 3.9

HISTORY

- oldest demarked area (1756)
- Oporto is the British name for Porto.
- the wine industry was modernized after joining the EU in 1986.
- Portugal's DOC laws are similar to France's AOC regulations.
- Port only comes from a 70-mile-long demarcated region in the Douro Valley.
- vineyards border the Douro and stretch from near the coast to the Spanish border
- Portugal is a small country; 370 miles long and 125 miles wide
- Portugal remains steeped in tradition
- Over 225 varieties of grapes are grown. Over 80 in the Douro Valley.
- Britain is largely responsible for the popularity of Port.
- Most well-known Port Houses have British names – Cockburn, Croft, Dow, Graham, Sandeman, Warre, etc.

The Wine

- Port is luscious, sweet and fortified. A wine to savor and for quiet contemplation.
- Ten different styles are made.
- Vintage port is the most expensive style and only accounts for 1% of total production.
- Vintages are only declared in the best years when the quality of the fruit, the quantity available and market demand meet.
- Minimum bottle age for Vintage port is 15 years. Best ones show well for 50 years+.
- Like Champagne, each Port House aims for a particular house style.
- Taylor Fladgate acquired Fonseca (1948), Croft (2001)
- Croft was established in 1588
- Taylor dates back to 1692
- Fonseca's 10-year-old tawny, aged in neutral barrels (oak, mahogany, cherry)
- 'Quinta' is a family farm
- most all vineyards are organic
- four houses still foot press
- foot pressing is the gentlest method – skins break but not seeds, therefore, no harshness
- most workers 15 years' experience with company
- 2 hours to make the cut then refreshments. Then back at it for another 2 hours. Very hard work. Like being in the army (marching).
- 1692 George B – Taylor Fladgate
- A through F vineyard ratings
- Some vines are 100 years old
- with new plantings, vines are matched to the site
- on average, Taylor Fladgate vintages are declared 3X per decade
- up to each producer to declare a vintage. This is not odd as sites vary greatly – exposure, aspect, altitude, etc.
- if no vintage is declared, single vineyards are released
- stored at Villa Nueva de Gaia across the harbour from Porto.
- Villa Nueva de Gaia faces the north; therefore, it is cooler in summer. Gravel floors in the lodges. Better for wine storage.
- lagars (concrete / granite) about 1 meter in depth
- some vineyards are 900 feet above the river
- some 60° slopes – necessitates hand picking
- vertical vineyards and terraced vineyards if too steep
- After 30 – 36 hours, wine is half fermented. Spirits are then added.
- French organic spirits are used now. Traditionally it was Portuguese spirits
- 77% alcohol spirits
- 1/5 of port is alcohol
- In the spring, the wines are moved downriver.
- Late 1800's phylloxera. One small area north of Lisbon escaped invasion. Replanted with American rootstock.
- Small 600 L barrels used for tawny ports
- Barrels allow the tawny to breathe, slight oxidization, colour changes
- **A ten-year-old tawny is a blend of wines that average 10 years old. A 20-year-old will have some 50-year-old wine in it)**
- Blending is done just prior to bottling

- 3% is lost to evaporation, every year. 5 bottles = 1 bottle of 40-year-old
- tawnies get lighter in colour as they age until they are 80 years old, then they darken again.
- Irrigation only allowed in the first year for new vines to establish roots
- Erosion and weeds are the main problem
- Using 'friendly' ground cover such as oats, clover and peas, which do not compete with the vines.
- Weeds die off in the summer, or are mowed
- Laser guided bulldozers – 7° inside slope to retain water/reduce erosion. Natural gutter.
- Douro is a UNESCO world heritage designation
- Rainfall varies 300ml near the border with Spain, 500ml near Pinhau to 1100 in Porto.
- 2011 was a classic year in Douro
- 85% of a vintage is released to the public, the rest is held back
- about 1% becomes vintage port.

Typical Descriptors

Toffee, caramel, raisins, figs, almonds, walnuts, dried fruit, black fruits, red fruits, chocolate, spice

Port Pairings

Stilton, Roquefort, apple desserts, brownies, crème caramel, pecan pie, almond desserts, biscotti, chocolate, pavlova, shortbread, and toffee pudding.

The Flight

In this flight you will taste wines of different styles and colours, so you will need to judge each one on its own merits rather than comparing one to another. You will taste (in alphabetical order) a Late Bottle Vintage, a Ruby, a Tawny, a Vintage and a White port. The wines vary in sweetness from 5 – 10, based on the BCLDB ratings.

Got lots of money? In BC you can buy a 1863 Taylor Fladgate Single Harvest Port (predates Canadian Confederation) for only \$3988. It comes in a crystal decanter housed in a beautiful maple wooden box complete with a signed certificate. The tasting note for this wine is the lengthiest and most elaborate I have ever seen at over 120 words. Only 1600 bottles of this wine exist.

Appendix 1

The Grapes Used in Making Port

These are the top five grapes used in port production (since the 1970's) though there are many others (obscure names for most) that are used in lesser supporting roles. Sometimes the other varietals are known and sometimes they are just interspersed throughout the vineyards.

1. Touriga Nacional – robust and tannic. This grape is considered to be the most important varietal for making port. Its complex acids and tannins help to contribute structure to the wine. Its yields are small, and the berries are intensely flavoured.
2. Touriga Franca – its fruit and floral aromas help to contribute to the wine's aromas.
3. Tinta Barroca – jammy and potent – adds body and breadth. High sugar levels mean strong potential alcohol.
4. Tinta Roriz – aka Tempranillo (Spanish name). Adds depth of colour which is helpful give typical short maceration times.
5. Tinto Cao – adds spice and help with longevity.

Appendix 2

Styles of Port

The way a port is aged and the producer's house style are the main influences which determine the final style of port. There are two broad categories of port:

Cask aged– wood matured ports (often called wood ports) have been aged in wooden casks or sometimes, cement tanks and are ready to drink right after fining, filtration and bottling. Cask aged ports lose their flavour quickly.

Bottle aged – ports designed to mature in the bottle. They are generally aged for a short time in wood and are bottled without filtration. It may then take up to 20 or 30 years before such wine is ready to drink. These ports keep their colour and their fruitiness well into maturity.

The many other styles of port fall within or between these two fundamental types. That being said, a number of authorities contend that there are four types of port: ruby, tawny, vintage and white. The others are subsets, variants or creations between the pillars.

The following is a short description of the types produced:

- RUBY – the base for all vintage, vintage character and LBV Ports. If just labeled 'ruby' then a very simple, inexpensive version of a vintage port. It is aged for 2 – 3 years in wood, concrete or stainless. They do not improve much in the bottle.
- TAWNY – made from a blend of grapes from several different years; they can be aged in wood for as long as 40 years. They're tawny in colour and ready to drink when bottled. The labels on the best tawnies stipulate the time that they've matured (10 – 40 years). The older the tawny the deeper the colour and its nuances of caramel, raisin and nutty tones. Inexpensive tawny ports are created by blending white port and ruby port.

* Ruby and Tawny ports are sometimes called wood ports or wood-aged ports. Wood ports slowly oxidize and display aromas and flavours of roasted nuts, especially walnuts.

- VINTAGE – the ultimate in port, best of a producer and the most expensive. Accounts for less than 1% of total production. Only produced in exceptional years, usually 3 out of 10 with only the best grapes from the top vineyards and only after the IVDP has approved samples and declared the vintage. Bottled after 2 years in wood cask. Continues to age in the bottle. Made to age for at least 25 years. The accumulation of sediment in the bottle

necessitates decanting before serving. The aging process in the bottle is in the absence of oxygen. This reductive process is much slower than in a cask, hence the long period needed to age these wines.

- **SINGLE QUINTA PORTS** - are basically vintage ports produced from a single high-quality wine estate. They're usually made in years when a port firm doesn't declare a traditional vintage port.
- **SECOND LABEL VINTAGE PORTS** – are produced when the vintage is quite good, but not quite good enough to be declared. They are typically made from the better wines from various sites.
- **LATE BOTTLED VINTAGE PORTS (LBV)** – are made from grapes of a single vintage even though the quality of the grapes is not as high as that for vintage ports. LBVs are aged in wood from 4 – 6 years and are considered high quality ruby ports. Once released they are ready to drink and do not have to be decanted (unless the label refers to 'traditional' style).
- **COLHEITA** (also called single vintage or dated ports) –aged in wood for at least seven years. They fall into the tawny class. Made from a single vintage. Must have the date of bottling printed on the label.
- **CRUSTED PORTS** – are a blend of two or three wines from different vintages. They are aged for 3 or 4 years before being bottled. Like vintage ports, crusted ports improve with age in the bottle. It derives its name from the deposit or crust that is thrown during this aging process. Crusted port is not often made today and has been replaced primarily by late-bottled vintage port
- **VINTAGE CHARACTER PORTS** – are essentially high-quality ruby ports. They're blended from several vintages and wood-aged, but not nearly as long as tawny port. They're the lightest and fruitiest in flavour and are ready to drink when bottled.
- **WHITE PORTS** – are those made from white grapes (dry versions undergo a longer fermentation). They are aged for 18 months in concrete or stainless tanks. Most white ports are not aged in wood since that would add undesirable flavours. Usually drier and fruitier than any of the red ports plus slightly lower in alcohol.