

21 DAYS TO WINE: DAY 19

Definition of Dessert Wine

WINE: Bonotto delle Tezze Raboso Passito 2011

SCENTS: Raisins, Dried fruit, Jam

SUPPLIES: A white napkin or piece of white paper (to observe)

21 DAYS TO
WINE

REVIEW

Reread and watch DAY 5 on sparkling wines in which we discuss the residual sugar levels and labeling of wine bottles.

THE ORDER OF DINING

In traditional western dining, you have: appetizers, first and second courses, and dessert. Wine has developed in the same way. There is a whole spectrum of wine to accompany different kinds of food, with characteristics to match, from delicate and aromatic whites to big, robust reds with a long finish.

WHAT WINE TO PAIR WITH DESSERT?

There's a good chance you're not even hungry by the time you get to dessert, which might explain why there is such a vast array of dessert wines out there, ranging from super light, crisp, and bubbly to intense, rich, and aromatic.

WHAT IS DESSERT WINE?

Dessert wine is sweet wine. It has a higher percentage of residual sugar. **That does not mean it cannot be balanced, have crisp acidity, tight tannins, or a long mineral finish.**

TYPES OF DESSERT WINE

You can add sugar or a blend of sugar and wine back in, as they do in Champagne and sparkling wines to create a demi sec, or off-dry or very sweet style. This sweet little trick is called **Liqueur d'expédition**. These wines have all of the effervescence and a lot of the original acidity for balance.

Make sparkling wine without fermenting the wine all the way to Brut. This happens a lot with sparkling wines. In this case fermentation stops early and a few bubbles are present. Alcohol is low and the sugar and aromas can be quite intense. Examples

include: Spumante d'Asti, Demi Sec Vouvray, Demi Sec Champagne. These wines can also have quite a bit of freshness despite their sugar content, like Moscato D'Asti.

STILL DESSERT WINES

Like the above, the winemaker stops fermentation when the desired sweetness is achieved. These wines can range in sweetness, acidity, tannin and minerality. Like dry wines, plenty depends on the grape variety, climate, ripeness, and techniques in the winery. Examples of these include a number of off-dry versions of wines we all know, like Riesling. The USA produces plenty of these. Seyval, Vignoles, and Vidal all come in off-dry versions.

EISWEIN OR ICE WINE

These are made from grapes that ripen and freeze on the vines. They are very rare and thus quite expensive. In this case, the moment the grapes freeze, they are rushed to the winery and crushed in a temperature-controlled environment to preserve intense aromas. Most ice wines come from cool climate wine regions like Germany and Canada, but they are experimenting in our country in New York, Michigan and Pennsylvania, and several other states.

BONOTTO
DELLE
TEZZE RABOSO
PASSITO
2011

LATE HARVEST WINES

Late harvest wines are made from grapes that ripen on the vine until they are oozing with sugar and on their way to being raisins. They are naturally sweeter and there is a concentration of aroma in the skins. Literally, eat a raisin. I brought some today as part of this episode. Raisin notes are pervasive in both dessert wines and fortified wines.

STRAW WINES

Straw wines, like the one I brought today, are harvested and then dried – using a number of techniques – until they are almost raisins. In much of the Mediterranean and throughout Europe the grapes are laid out on straw mats or stored in crates in a drafty room until they start to dry.

Also known as *Passito* or *Passiti*, in Italian, *Vin de Paille* in French, and *Strohwein* in German. They have intense aromas of dried fruit – obviously – they are dried fruit – and a rich, satiny, viscosity thanks to all the sugar.

The aromas in straw wines are generally quite intense and complex. They include: dried fruit, vanilla and baking spices (especially if the wines were aged in oak barrels), Mediterranean herbs, etc. Often times, the grapes utilized have a thick skins and that comes through on the palate with acidity and tannin – along with some tannin from the oak aging, which can make these wines a circle of sweet and tart! Very balanced.

NOBLE ROT

Would you believe that the world's most expensive white wine is in this category? According the Guinness book of World Records, a bottle of Château d'Yquem 1811 Sauternes sold for over \$100,000.

A lot can go wrong in the vineyard, damp conditions and crowded grape clusters are the perfect place for mold to grow.

Growers do everything in their power to prevent this, but there is one exception. *Botrytis cinerea* looks disgusting but imparts a unique spicy sweetness to the wine.

Sauternes is one example of dessert wines affected by noble rot. Sauternes is made from Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc Grapes, in the Bordeaux region of France. It's often referred to as *liquid gold* for its striking brightness, yellow color and amazing aromas of honeysuckle and a piquant, somewhat ginger quality. It is sweet and utterly busting with crispness at the same time.

PAIRING DESSERT WINES

Always remember that balance is key. We'll get to this more on DAY 21, but as a little look forward, while you might be tempted to pair dry wines with sweet things, there are exceptions to the rule. Dessert wines work especially well with a cheese plate. Just think of those accoutrements that come on a cheese plate: honey, nuts, dried fruit, jam. Those are all common scent notes in dessert wines, but you might feel drinking something drier. This style of serving cheese allows you to make the most of every flavor.

RABOSO

PRONUNCIATION: **Rah-Bozo**

*The Raboso grape variety grows indigenously in northeastern Italy, specifically in the area surrounding the Piave River in the province of Treviso (region, Venice). It has a thick, dark skin and ripens late, and is known to be quite tannic and acidic when young. The name Raboso, likely stems from *rabioso*, which means 'angry' in Venetian dialect.*

Over time and with the micro-oxidation in oak barrels, Raboso produces deep color and intense black cherry notes.



APPASSIMENTO AND RIPASSO

The region of Venice is known for this technique. *Appassimento* is a method of drying ripe grapes in racks or on straw mats in drafty rooms. The wines range from completely dry to semi-sweet and very sweet, depending the ratio of dried grapes to fresh grapes. **Amarone** is a dry wine made in this method. It has intense and complex notes of dried fruit, leather, coffee, chocolate, sweet spices and jam, but it vinified to be dry. The high sugar content in raisins also means a silky palate and a very high ABV. Some Amarone reaches 18% alcohol by volume.

RIPASSO

This is a style of winemaking in which the normal grapes are fermented along with the raisins, most often used for Amarone. Ripasso della Valpolicella, AKA 'Baby Amarone' has subtler dried fruit notes and a velvety palate but is lighter in weight and body.

WINE NOTES

WINERY

The Bonotto family has lived in and around the small town of Tezze, for more than 600 years. The winery is located an area between the left bank of the Piave River and the Conigliano Valley, which is also known for superior quality Prosecco.

Generations of farmers and later winemakers, they feel an incredible attachment to the history of their land and consider winemaking a sacred contribution a rich historical tapestry. In addition to wines made from Raboso, they also make several styles of Prosecco Treviso DOC.

WINEMAKING

The grapes are hand harvested and selected. They are dried for about 120 days at which point they are crushed and fermented, part in stainless steel and part in barrels at low temperature to preserve aroma and acidity. The wine then ages for years in barrique (small barrels).

TASTING NOTES

LOOK: Inky, opaque purple red

SMELL: Dried prune, intense maraschino cherry, sweet spices

TASTE: Prickly yet sweet, the wine is velvety on the palate with still evolving, yet elegant tannins with a long fruit and spice finish.

DISCUSS

Think of this wine as the jam to your cheese plate. Aged salty cheese, including local Piave, is a great match. Try it with bittersweet chocolate desserts or a ricotta and cherry tart.

Cheers!
ANNIE

my notes

