



PORT

Overview

Port is the wine most people associate with Portugal. The wine is a result of British traders in the 17th century looking for ways to transport wine without it spoiling. Their answer was the addition of brandy. The name Port is derived from the the Portuguese city from which the wine is shipped, Oporto. True Port is called Porto.

Up to 48 grape varieties are permitted in making Port. The best quality grapes are Touriga Nacional, Toruiga Francesca and Tinta Roriz. Porto production begin the same as wine, except that partially through the fermentation process a dosage of distilled spirits high in alcohol is added which stops fermentation. The juice is then placed in a barrel and shipped to lodge, generally in the town of Vila Nova de Gaia, for aging.

Port is one of the most regulated wines made today. All Ports, except the “vintage ports”, are aged in oak casks Once in the lodge the Port matures for a year. In the second year a carefull process of blending begins. Port shippers evaluate and lend wines from hundreds of bottles and it is this process on which the shipper’s reputation rests. Within several months the final blend is completed and submitted to the Instituto doVihno do Porto for governmental approval. Once approved the IVP’s black and white seal of guarantee is attached to the neck of the bottle.

Styles of Porto

The two broad styles of Porto are defined by either bottle aging or cask aging.

Bottle aged Ports keep their color and generally their fruitiness into their maturity. They are aged for a short time in wood and are bottled without filtration where they are meant to mature.

Cask aged Ports lose much of their color and become *tawny* in color. These are aged in wood and then filtered and bottled. They are ready to drink right away.

Ruby is a blend of wines aged in bulk for two to three years and then bottled young. Ruby is sweet, fresh and fruity. It is ready to drink immediately and does not improve with age.

Tawny is a blend of wines slightly higher in quality than Ruby Port and it is aged in wood 5 or more years (some are aged 50 years) until it loses its color and acquires an amber-orange hue. Tawny Port is generally drier and has a nutty flavor.

Aged Tawny Port is aged in cask for a minimum of 6 years to achieve a smooth, creamy character. It is often a blend of wines from “declared” vintages. Aged Tawny Port are usually labeled 10, 20, 30 or 40 year-old indicating the average age of the wine blend.

Late Bottled Vintage Port (LBV) is a blend of good quality wine from a single vintage bottled between the fourth and sixth year after the harvest and ready to drink on release. The year of bottling is usually noted on the bottle and indicates the amount of time spent in wood.

Vintage Port is a blend of the highest quality wines of a single year and is bottled afte spending two years in woodIt is less than 2 percent of Port production and is the most expensive. During the maturation process in the bottle the raw tannic spirity quality of young vintage Port usually evolves into a smooth, mellow richness and, at its best, can be without a question one of the greatest of all dessert wines.