

Tokaj with Botrytis

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1783, 1788, 1793, 1794, 1806, 1811, 1812, 1822, 1823, 1827, 1841, 1845, 1846, 1848, 1852, 1855, 1856, 1858, 1862, 1863, 1866, 1868, 1870, 1871, 1874, 1876, 1880, 1884, 1886, 1888, 1895, 1900, 1901, 1904, 1906, 1912, 1915, 1916, 1919, 1920, 1923, 1924, 1927, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1936, 1937, 1942, 1947, 1949, 1950, 1952, 1956, 1957, 1959, 1963, 1964, 1968, 1972, 1975, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008

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Szamorodni / Samorodné

This type of wine was once known as 'főbor' (main wine), but gained its current name around 1800 from the Polish samorodno as it was previously popular with the Polish royal court, meaning literally 'self-grown'. It is made from partially botrytised bunches of grapes, which are picked and vinified together without selecting the 'aszú' berries following an initial soaking of 6-12 hours with the skins and stems. It can be made in two styles, sweet (édes/sladké) and dry (száraz/suché), depending on the sugar content in the bunch.

Dry szamorodni is fermented to dryness under a layer of flor (yeast) and requires extensive ageing. This is far less common than the sweet version and may be phased out. Sweet szamorodni must be aged for 2 years, one of which must be in barrel. Sweet szamorodni typically contains 50-100g of residual sugar.

Recent developments in Hungary

- Aszúeszencia was phased out in 2012. / Máslás ceased to exist as a category in 2013
- As of 2013, Aszú must contain at least 120g/l of residual sugar, thus 3 and 4 puttonyos were phased out. Moreover, due to the discontinuation of Aszúeszencia, it may also exceed its former ceiling of 180g/l residual sugar
- As of 2013, only 2.2l of Aszú may be made together with Fordítás from 1kg of aszú berries, so Fordítás may also cease to exist.
- As of 2013, Aszú must spend minimum 18 months in barrel before it may be released for sale.



Aszú / Výber

This luscious, amber wine is known throughout the English-speaking world as Tokay. Originally the word 'aszú' meant dried, but is now synonymous with this type of wine made from grapes with 'noble rot' (botrytis). It is generally produced mostly from Furmint, but other permitted varieties, such as Hárslevelű may also be included in the blend.

The aszú berries are picked individually in several tries through the vineyard, collected in vats and trod to the consistency of paste (aszú dough). Must or wine from the same vintage is poured on the dough and it is left to macerate for 24-48 with occasional stirring. Then the wine is racked off into 136l barrels known as 'Gönci hordók' where the fermentation is completed and the Aszú wine will age. The casks are not sealed completely, so the wine will continue to ferment slowly in the cask over several years. It must spend 2 years in barrel and a further in bottle before it may be released for sale.



Fordítás / Forditáš

This literally means 'turning over' in Hungarian. It is essentially a by-product of Aszú production and is made from the second pressing of botrytised grapes, whereby wine or must is poured (turned) over the aszú dough (or marc) of a previously made Aszú wine, left to soak for 4-8 hours, trodden again and then pressed. In the past, the marc of Szamorodni wines could also be used in a particularly good botrytis vintage. It yields a wine with strong botrytis character but less elegance than an Aszú.



Máslás / Mášláš

Máslás, meaning duplicate, is also a by-product of Aszú production. It is made by pouring non-botrytis wine over the lees of Aszú (or Szamorodni), left to soak to extract remaining sugar and aromatic material, then fermented.



Eszencia / Esencia

Although not technically a wine as its massive sugar concentration means that it never achieves an alcohol content of more than 5-6%, this 'wine' is considered to be one of the most exclusive in the world. Also known as nectar, most likely because that what it tastes like, its sugar content typically ranges between 500 and 700g/l of residual sugar, although it has been known to exceed 800g. Eszencia is made from the free-run juice of the aszú berries. Traditionally it is added to Aszú wines, but may be fermented in glass carboys for a period of at least 4 years and bottled pure.

The resulting 'nectar' yields incredibly concentrated and intense flavours which can only be drunk in small quantities. It is often served on a spoon rather than in a glass. It is an extremely long-lived wine, maintaining its quality and freshness for as long as 200 years or more.



A brief explanation of puttony/putňový

The number of puttony on the label is an indication of the residual sugar content of the wine. **3p** from 60g/l (no longer permitted) **4p** from 90g/l (no longer permitted) **5p** from 120g/l **6p** from 150g/l. **Above 180g/l** Aszúeszencia / Výberová esencia