



## Discovering the Mystique of **Port**

**W**ith the settling in that follows the post-holidays fervor, we look for ways to warm up and chill out, trading merry mayhem for restorative relaxation. Imagine a crackling fire; a room of solitude or company; some English stilton and walnuts; and one, two, four, or more glasses of Ruby, Tawny, or White Port – hypnotic in scent and color.

But where does Port come from, how is it made, and how did its pervading image come to be?

Port is a fortified wine from the Douro region, 60 miles east of the city of Porto in northwest Portugal and covering 617,000 acres – of which 96,000 are vineyards. The wine is shipped from the bar of Oporto. Without conforming to this exact description, no wine can be sold as *Port*.

Port's beginnings date back to the late 1600s and arose from Europe's sometimes turbulent relations.



*Cellar at the House of Calem in Vila Nova de Gaia in the Douro region of Portugal.*

When war erupted between England and France in 1678 and French ports were blockaded, severing the British demand and French supply of wine, the Brits turned to Portugal.

In an effort to mellow the astringent Portuguese wine and stabilize it for shipping, the wine was fortified with brandy after fermentation – drinkable but not revered. After many years of careful experimentation, brandy was added at an earlier stage while the wine was

young and fruity, yielding far more favorable results. This transition was the beginning of Port as we know it today.

After harvesting and crushing, the grape juice is left to ferment just like other wines but only until partial fermentation has occurred, at which point brandy is added to the wine to stop fermentation and allow for fine-tuning the wine's taste and complexity.

Lighter wines are selected for future aging as Tawny

Port; and heavy, full-bodied wines for Ruby, Late Bottled, and Vintage Ports. White grapes are used for White Port – *Porto Branco*.

At this point, the wine is stored in casks to mature. The length and method of cask-aging depends on the wine variety. Ruby Port goes on to age in the bottle, while Tawny and White Ports continue the aging process in oak barrels.

Steeped in history, Port is often served with a nod to tradition – as in being served from right to left, beginning with the host, until the bottle is fully circulated around the table. Depending on the type of Port, it can be served before, during, or after dinner, alone or with food.

Whether or not you adhere to customs or serving suggestions, experimenting without inhibition until you find where on the Port spectrum your preferences lay is a well-deserved treat for any wine lover. ■

**"Do You Know the Bishop of Norwich?"**

Of the many customs surrounding serving Port, there is perhaps one that is best well-known:



Once the host serves the person to his right and then himself, he passes the bottle to the left. This continues around the table until the bottle has come back around to the host. Those not familiar with this custom who do not pass along the bottle are not told directly to do so. Instead, they are politely asked whether they know the Bishop of Norwich who, according to legend, was stingy with the Port. If the offender does not catch on and simply answers 'No,' they are told that "the Bishop was an awfully good fellow, but he never passes the Port."

**Port: Bottle-matured (Ruby) and Cask-matured (Tawny)**

**Bottle-Aged (Ruby Port varieties)**

*Ruby* – A blend of several harvests, Ruby Port is aged for two to three years in wood before being bottled. It is deep red in color with a young, fruity taste.

*Ruby Reserve* – Younger wines are blended together to create a ruby color with a strong, fruity taste.

*Late Bottled Vintage (LBV)* – Produced from a single year's harvest – but not one officially declared exceptional – LBV Port is aged four to six years before bottling.

*Vintage* – Made from a single, exceptional harvest with official declaration as a Vintage Port, it ages for many years in the bottle and should be decanted before serving. Current excellent vintages are 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2003.

**Cask-Aged (Tawny and White Port varieties)**

*Tawny* – Made from a variety of wines that are aged for at least six years in wood casks before being bottled, the wine's red color leeches out and it takes on the amber color of the barrel and the flavors of wood, nuts, and dried fruit.

*Tawny Reserve* – Aged for a minimum of seven years in wood casks, Tawny Reserves are light brown in color and have smooth flavors of toasted wood and hints of fruit.

*Aged Tawny* – Produced by combining different, high quality wines to achieve precise flavors and levels of complexity, the blended wines' average age – 10, 20, 30, or 40+ years old – is indicated on the label.

*Colheita* – Made from a variety of grapes from a single year's harvest, Colheita is then aged for at least seven years in wood – and often longer.

*White* – a lighter style, Porto Branco can range from dry to sweet, depending on the length of aging. Made from white grapes, it is ready to drink when bottled.

**Serving and Enjoying Port**

An excellent aperitif, White Port is best chilled, while Ruby and Tawny Ports should be enjoyed slightly below or at room temperature. Vintage Ports need to be decanted prior to serving.

White Port can be enjoyed alone or with light fare. Tawny Ports go well with cheeses, olives, pâté, and smoked ham. Ruby Ports are well-paired with nuts, dried fruit, and blue cheeses; and the traditional pairing of Vintage Port and Stilton is a blessed union. May we recommend...

**Warre's Late Bottled Vintage Porto (1999) \$29.99**

*This LBV is aged in oak casks for four years before being bottled without any fining or filtration. Once in the bottle, it is aged for four more years. An excellent introduction to Port.*

**Fonseca Vintage Porto (1997) \$92.99** *The palate is smooth with hints of tobacco and cedar and has a long finish. According to the Wine Spectator, this is a "young Port, with good, dark color and mineral and raspberry character. Medium- to full-bodied, with a solid core of fruit and a firm, silky finish."*

**Taylor Fladgate Vintage Porto (1997) \$89.99** *This ruby gem possesses a stunning balance of elegance and power. According to the Wine Spectator, it is a "young Port, with very pretty blackberry, violet and cherry character. Full-bodied, with velvety tannins and a long finish."*

**Taylor Fladgate 20-Year Old Tawny Porto \$56.99** *This rich old Tawny Port owes its intense complex notes to twenty years of aging in oak casks. The nutty, toffee notes make it a delicious dessert wine and the perfect*

*finish to any meal. It is ready for drinking now.*

**Fonseca Porto Vintage Port (2003) \$99.99** *Bottled in 2005 and aged for two years in oak, this exceptional Port is marked by a style of great fruit richness, voluptuousness and firm tannic backbone. The initial flavors of opulently concentrated black fruit and jammy spice evolve to reveal complex, silky impressions of dried currants, rose petal and dark chocolate, ending in a long and seductive finish.*

**Warre's Fine White Porto \$12.99** *Produced on Warre's main vineyard, the Quinta da Cavadinha estate's cool climate produces elegant, aromatic wines. This wine is pale straw in color; it has a fine, delicate nose, a fruity palate, and long, crisp finish. Serve chilled, alone or with tonic and lemon.*

*Vintage Port* comes from a single harvest of recognized, exceptional quality – color, body, aroma, and flavor. To obtain the necessary approval of the Port Wine Institute to "declare" a Vintage Port, the producer must submit a sample bottle for evaluation by the Institute between Jan. 1 and Sept. 30 of the 2nd year from harvest. If the port is approved, the wine must be taken from the cask and bottled between July 1 of the 2nd year and June 1 of the 3rd year from harvest. The approval is given only if an expert, blind-tasting panel agrees that the Port is of such high quality as to be declared a Vintage Port.

**Look for  
Valentine's Day  
Wine and Dining in  
the February 2009  
issue of  
Grapevine**

## Sale Prices & Everyday Pink Pricing

**Toasted Head** Chardonnay (2007) CA **\$10.99** Vanilla, spiced pear, nectarine, toasty oak; rich, creamy, soft finish.

**Rodney Strong** Chardonnay (2007) Sonoma **\$9.99** (reg 12.99) Lemon and apple aromas; pear, pineapple flavors.

**7 Deadly Zins** Zinfandel (2006) Lodi, CA **\$12.99** Raspberry jam, cinnamon toast, silken tannins. Vibrant, indulgent.

**Centine Banfi** Sangiovese blend (2006) Tuscany **\$8.99** (reg 10.99) Fresh berries, soft tannins. Excellent w/ pasta or veal.

**St. Francis** Cab Sauv (2004) Sonoma **\$16.99** (reg 21.99) Rich, full body. Complements grilled meat and hearty pasta.

**Louis Martini** Cabernet Sauvignon (2006) Sonoma **\$9.99** Black cherry and spice. Pair w/ beef, lamb, rich cheeses.

**Hob Nob** Pinot Noir (2007) France **3/\$24.99** (reg 9.99 ea) Bing cherry flavors, refined, elegant body. Excellent sipper.

**Ecco Domani** Pinot Grigio (2007) Venice **\$8.99** Crisp, floral, tropical fruit. A simple and accessible, clean white.

**Korbel** Brut California Champagne (NV) CA **\$10.99** Light and crisp with spicy fruit. A toast to all of life's great moments."

**Geyser Peak** Winery Block Collection Walking Tree Vineyard Cab Sauv (2005) Alexander Valley, CA **\$19.99** (reg 44.99) Cassis, vanilla, dark berry, leather.

## W&SS' Top Ten Wines

**Beaulieu Vineyard** Cabernet Sauvignon (2005) Napa Valley **\$13.99** (reg 16.99) Black cherry, ripe plum, hints of chocolate.

**Owen Roe Sharecropper's** Cabernet Sauvignon (2007) Columbia Valley, WA **\$24.49** Cedar, blackberry, and plum.

**Rodney Strong Knotty Vines** Zinfandel (2006) Sonoma, **\$18.99** Bright berry fruit, jammy, peppery spice.

**Lan Reserva** Tempranillo (2004) Rioja, SP, **\$18.99** Silky texture; plum, violet and licorice flavors. 90 rating (WS/Top 100)

**Prunotto** Barbera d'Asti (2006) Piedmont, Italy **\$15.99** Spice, coffee, and dried figs; clean tannins, velvety texture.

**Mettler** Petite Sirah (2005) Lodi, CA **\$21.99** Tantalizing and luscious, this wine is bursting with deep fruit and complex oak.

**Knights Valley** Chardonnay (2006) Sonoma **\$29.99** Aged in French oak, this wine exudes warm toast and vanilla.

**St. Supéry** Sauvignon Blanc (2007) Napa Valley **\$19.99** Aromas of ruby grapefruit and lime; herbal; a long, zingy finish.

**Nobilo** Sauv Blanc (2008) NZ **\$9.99** . Tropical bouquet; ripe melon, passion fruit, and citrus flavors; crisp and zesty.

**Vincent Marie-Antoinette** Chardonnay (2006) Pouilly-Fuissé **\$17.99** Generous fruit, refreshing acidity.

Port is not for the very young, the vain and the active. It is the comfort of age and the companion of the scholar and the philosopher. — Evelyn Waugh

## January Staff Wine Picks

**Sheila** - Vincent Marie-Antoinette Pouilly-Fuissé (2006) France **\$17.99** Voted New York Times' Best Value Pouilly-Fuissé, this sophisticated, beautiful Burgundy is "weighty yet focused with smoky fruit and mineral flavors." Ethereal with creamy camembert, grilled salmon, or poached scallops. An excellent buy.

**Damian** - Two Hands Angel's Share Shiraz (2007) Australia **\$27.99** (reg 29.99) Licorice, mint, and mocha aromas captivate; cola, plum, and currant flavors continue long after the first sip. Rated 92 by the Wine Spectator, the "Asian spice aromas and flavors linger on the open-textured finish. The aftertaste just keeps coming."

**Seaborn** - Marques de Casa Concha Syrah (2006) Chile **\$16.99** (reg 19.99). Aged in French oak for 16 months, this wine's concentrated union of lush blackberries, smooth mocha, and dark chocolate demands adequate opening time and a rich roast and segues to a powerful but elegant finish.

**Denise** - Justino's Rainwater Madeira (NV) Portugal **\$13.99** A popular wine varietal in Early America, this Madeira is lighter than Tawny Port but with the reminiscent toffee flavors. Perfect with gorgonzola and walnuts.

**Ian** - Atrea Old Soul Red Wine (2004) Mendocino, CA **\$27.99** Raisins, chocolate, and tar migrate slowly across the palate. For the contemplative among us, this thinking-drinker's wine calls for a long evening and hearty fare.

**Hunter** - Earthquake Syrah (2003) Lodi, CA **\$19.99** (reg 24.99) Teasing the nose with cranberry and tea notes, this Syrah's explosive plum and bing cherry soften and round out the bold tannins. A must for barbecued ribs.

**Graham** - Murphy-Goode Liar's Dice Zinfandel (2005) Sonoma **\$20.99** "Dark fruit flavors of black raspberry and black cherry. Oak aging adds structure and notes of vanilla and toast." Enjoy with red meat and true friends.

## Wine Tastings Fri, 4-8 & Sat, 2-6

**Fri (1/2, 1/9, 1/16, 1/23, 1/30): Friday Sojourns:** Taste wines from every pocket of the globe and every grapevine on Exploratory Fridays. Join us every Friday to indulge our desire for whim and spontaneity, and discover new wines in the store. **Note: Friday, 1/9 will be our Port wine tasting.**

**Sat 1/3: Surely, You Jest:** Experience the differences between Syrah and Shiraz with wines from Australia to France to CA – with a stop or two in between – including our 90 rated Mitolo Jester Shiraz. We're not joking, it's that good.

**Sat 1/10: Old World Meets New World:** Sauvignon Blanc can be grassy and herbal from NZ, tropical from South America, citrusy from CA. The list goes on and on.

**Sat 1/17: Pinot Anyone?** Pinot Noir, that is. We'll pour Pinot Noir wines from Oregon, California, and France. Come in and see what all the fuss is about.

**Sat 1/23: What's a Meritage?** Meritage blends are wines made from the five grapes grown in Bordeaux – Cab Sauv, Merlot, Cab Franc, Petit Verdot, and Malbec. The differences in taste are a reflection of the amount of each grape varietal used. Stop by and find your favorite Meritage.

**Sat 1/30: Is Love Blind?** As one of those grapes that reaps as much loathing as love – justified or not – we invite you to experience the range of Chardonnay styles from Australia, France, CA, and South America. Taste and test your biases; you just might be surprised.

### A Warming Dinner: Pork Braised in Red Wine

2 pounds boneless pork shoulder, cut into large chunks  
Salt and pepper to taste  
2 cups fruity red wine (*Suggest: Sebastiani Pinot Noir 2006 Sonoma: cinnamon, earth, and cherry flavors balance pork's richness and carrots' sweetness.* \$14.49 (reg 17.99))  
1 cup good stock or water  
1 pound fat carrots, peeled and cut into large chunks  
10 cloves garlic, peeled  
2 tablespoons butter  
Cooked egg noodles for serving  
Chopped fresh parsley leaves for garnish

1. Combine pork, salt and pepper, wine, stock, carrots, and garlic in a Dutch oven. Bring to a boil, then adjust heat so that mixture simmers steadily. 2. Cook, stirring every half-hour, until meat is very tender, an hour or longer. 3. With a slotted spoon, remove solids to a bowl, then turn heat to high. Reduce to about a cup. Taste and adjust seasoning; lower heat, stir in butter. 4. Add solids to sauce and reheat. Serve over egg noodles, garnish with parsley. Serves 4-6.

### Check out Our Ongoing Store Specials

**Case discounts** — 12 bottles: 15%; six bottles: 10%  
**Pink pricing** — 15% discount on select bottles  
**Two for Tuesday** — 25% off  
**Mix & Match** — Three for \$24.99 on select bottles  
**The 90s Club** — Wines rated 90+ Pts for under \$20  
*Wine & Spirits offers year-round custom made gift baskets and a variety of wine bar gifts and accessories: Riedel glasses, foil cutters, corkscrews, decanters, wine stoppers, and wine bags.*

## 90s Club (90+ points, under \$20)

**Earth Works Shiraz (2006) Australia \$9.99** Medium-bodied with dark berry, light mint, and a hint of oak. 90 (RP)

**Las Rocas Garnacha (2006) Spain \$12.99** Spice box and black cherry on the nose; smooth with no hard edges. 91 (RP)

**Mitolo Jester Shiraz (2006) Australia \$19.99** Dark chocolate on the nose; black cherry and espresso on the palate. 90 (WE)

**Nipozzano Riserva Chianti Rufina Sangiovese (2005) Tuscany \$18.99** Plum, citrus, light chocolate. 90 (WS/Top100)

**Kim Crawford Sauv Blanc (2007) NZ \$16.99** Tropical fruit, stone fruit and herbs. A beautiful wine. 91 (WS/Top 100)

## In Support of Wine & Spirits Shops...

So much is said about the importance of supporting small, local businesses, and yet Governor Patterson has included in his 2009-10 budget proposal a plan to allow grocery stores to sell wine as a way of boosting NYS revenue. But what will happen to the State's economy when wine & spirits shops start folding because grocery stores take business away from them? Gone will be personalized customer service; well-informed opinions; and access to specialized, less trendy, and frequently more affordable wines from countries like Spain, Portugal, and Chile. In addition, there will be an increased risk of sales to minors and the further dwindling of the sense of community that can only be had by the presence of privately owned shops. In defense of your own small town and those throughout the state, please sign a petition to block this proposal from becoming a bleak reality. Wine & Spirits of Slingerlands — W&SS — has a petition at the counter that we encourage everyone to come in and sign in order to protect the future of communities and the businesses that give them the unique character they so richly deserve and need to thrive.



*Informed opinions and quality customer support are something you will only get by shopping at your local wine store.*

**\*Free local delivery for \$50+ within 5-mile radius of W&SS.**

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