

ALANA-TOKAJ VINTAGES

There are no two vintages exactly alike in Tokaj. Review of the last 250 years – with winery records from the 600 years prior to 1760 destroyed by numerous wars waging through the region – reveals that each great Tokaji vintage has the following virtues:

- a long growing season with summer heat and autumn sunshine to ripen the grapes (Indian summers, thanks to the sheltering Zemplen mountains to the north, more common in Tokaj than in other wine regions of Europe, are essential to quality),
- brief October rain with morning mist which encourages the spread of “noble rot”,
- sunny, breezy afternoons in early November fostering water loss from these botrytized berries,
- and finally, during the November and December harvest, the meticulous process of combing through the vineyards several times, handpicking only the few perfect berries each time.

This is by far the costliest and most laborious method to make the most exquisite sweet late harvest wines in the world.

These ideal botrytized berries are crucial for Essencia and are also destined later to make Aszú wines. The remaining overripe but only mildly botrytized or non-botrytized berries produce dry wines. Therefore, by definition, **all harvest is late harvest in Tokaj!**

Also unique to the region is the degree of freedom local winemakers have in influencing the concentration (and sweetness) of the wine: they are able to vary the ratio of botrytized to “healthy” berries at the wine's conception. This allows them to create any wine from dry (0 to 7 g of residual grape sugar) to ultra-sweet (up to 900 g/L).

Winemakers elsewhere around the world can freeze or dry, cook or fortify their wines or even add cane sugar to increase the wines' sweetness. **But only Tokaj, and no other wine region in the world, can achieve such concentration PURELY and NATURALLY.**

This is, in large part, the reason **why Tokaj was the first ever appellation in history to be classified, giving the world the concept of "first growth" vineyards.**

Technically speaking, **IT IS THE FIRST TERROIR.**

To bring the best out of this exceptional vineyard, Attila's approach is as simple and humble as you can get. He prunes short, thins the crop throughout the summer, delays harvest for all dry and sweet wines (sometimes to as late as January), presses the grapes gently, ferments and ages every wine in barrel, and bottles it all by hand only when the wines are ready. Then, he releases the finished wines to the trade only years after bottling to ensure proper bottle age, and for the wine lover, maximum pleasure.

Recent Vintages

2004

0/10 for sweet, 0/10 for dry wines

"We declined the option to take over our new Betsek and Veresek vineyards after witnessing the unripe berries and high yields in September. Our Tolcsva vineyard was only recently replanted. Therefore we did not make any wine in this subpar vintage. A great inaugural vintage should be worth the sacrifice."

2005

7/10 for sweet, 6/10 for dry wines

"The season began late, and August was cool, yet the perfect Indian summer ending in November made up for the lack of summer heat. The star grape of the year was Muscat – producing our 2005 Muscat and the base wine for our showstopper Aszú 6 puttonyos.

Hárslevelű berries attracted some botrytis - the complex and delicious wine fermented dry only after more than two years in barrel and was released only in 2009."

2006

9/10 for sweet, 6/10 for dry wines

"A sunny growing season and gorgeous Indian summer led to ideal botrytis development, yet cold November mornings prevented its further spread. This year is remembered for yielding high quality but small quantity. The vines first offered classically botrytized berries for a gorgeous Aszúeszencia, followed by wonderfully perfumed softer botrytis berries later in November which produced our three sophisticated '06 late harvest sweet wines: Furmint, "Autumn in Tokaj" cuvee and Muscat. Unique to the year was the birth of a dry Furmint, with ripe acidity, elegance and purity of the grape's character."

2007

8/10 for sweet, no dry wine released

"A near perfect vintage for sweet wine. An early bud break with a dry, hot, sunny growing season, with just the right amount of autumnal rain to encourage the development of widespread, classic botrytis. The grapes were overripe, exceptionally flavorful. The wines, creamy and sultry, required a bit more time to develop in barrel. For one, the unctuous 316 g/L RS Aszúeszencia aged over 50 months (!) prior to bottling. If there is such a thing as a California vintage in Tokaj, then this year certainly would qualify."

2008

9/10 for sweet, no dry wine released

"A classic botrytized sweet wine vintage, despite a late start, warm and humid summer, and mildly wet September. We were able to take advantage of several waves of botrytis in the vineyards, and with this selection, the wines, including the splendid late harvest Muscat from Betsek and a similarly successful late harvest sweet Furmint from Betsek and Kiraly, offer everything a classic ALANA-TOKAJ late harvest release can offer: beautiful fragrance and spice, with purity of flavor, ripeness of fruit, generous complexity on the palate and a terrific length. The balance is effortless even at such high level of concentration. "

2009

sweet wines not yet released, 8/10 for dry wines

"A spectacular early season with a sad ending. A promising early start in the spring, followed by a warm and sunny summer, ensured textbook ripening. This allowed us to harvest from our first growth Kiraly vineyard a few barrels of Furmint - for base wine - during the second week of November, in anticipation of a nice aszu crop developing later in the month. The following week however, a historic, never before seen, year-long rain began, and multicolored, undesirable mold species overwhelmed the emerging, precious noble rot in every vineyard in the region. This is a rare vintage for lack of sweet wine - and an overall loss of 80% of our crop. The consolation prize - and a fantastic one at that - is the birth of a luscious, mouth coating dry Furmint from the early pass, a dry wine unlike anything we have ever seen before."

2010

No sweet or dry wines released

"Very difficult. We watched, depressed, how the continuous, incessant rain throughout the entire year destroyed all hope for quality in the entire region. But in the end, the decision to sell all of our grapes was, alas, a very easy one to make. We already knew that nature is bound to make up for the loss sooner rather than later! 2011 kindly proved us correct."

2011

Notes to follow after fermentation is completed

TOKAJ'S RISING STAR

The proof is in and the word is out.

The legend of Tokaji is reborn!

Just take a look at some of the praise received by Attila Gabor Nemeth and his wine, **ALANA-TOKAJ**:

- *ALANA-TOKAJ received the highest overall inaugural release Wine Spectator score of any Tokaj winery in history.*
- *First Tokaji Aszú* (2005 Tokaji Aszú 6 puttonyos) - **95 pts in Wine Spectator, in the Top 100 highest scoring wines in 2010.**
- *First late harvest Tokaji* (2005 Muscat "Betsek") - **94 pts, best late harvest Tokaji of the last 20 years** by Peter Moser, **Falstaff.**
- *First dry wine* (2006 dry Furmint) chosen by Stephen Brooks of **Decanter to show the potential of dry Furmint** to the UK trade.
- *First late harvest blend* (2006 "Autumn in Tokaj") - **92 pts, best LH Tokaji in 2010 by Wine Spectator. 91 pts Wine Advocate.**
- *First two late harvest varietal sweet wines* ('06 Furmint and '05 Muscat "Betsek") - **90 and 92 pts by Wine Spectator.**

Just exactly how did he do that?

He took a legendary jewel, a first growth Tokaj vineyard, (which he purchased from none other than the royal Habsburg family), pushed the yield below 2 barrels an acre (below even that of Yquem), added nothing and took away even less.

With his ancestral traditions, and by shunning all shortcuts, Attila produced just what you would expect from such dedication: a range of beautiful wines, from dry to sweet and from sweet to ultra sweet. Recognition was sure to follow.

Recent quotes about Tokaji and Attila's wines:

"A mouthwatering wine, liquid gold, with flavors of apricot and orange peel ... honey melted into caramel and butterscotch, and accented with lemon zest, peaches, apricots and white currants." **Jacqueline Friedrich, Wall Street Journal**

"... display the luscious, concentrated, honeyed character of this exceptional wine, which is also noted for its balancing acidity and more often than not, intriguing notes of apricot and peach." **Alexis Bepaloff, Wine Enthusiast**

"I hasten to add that given the uncanny balance of sugar against acidity and extract and the consequent food-friendliness of these wines, they would no doubt come as a delicious revelation to many ... who don't think they are interested in noble rot." **David Schildknecht, International Wine Cellar**

"Of all essences of grape it is the most velvety, oily, peach-like and penetrating. Its fragrance lingers in the mouth like incense." **Hugh Johnson, World Atlas of Wine**

From fans of ALANA-TOKAJ:

"This is as close as wine comes to seduction."

"The ultimate indulgence."

"Pure, elegant and feminine with a silky, oily and velvety mouthfeel ... the perfume soars from the glass with honeyed peaches and apricots, acacia and lime blossoms, quinces and tangerines."

"Luscious liquid gold, the most luxurious sweet wine on Earth. Stunning."

Attila suggests:

"Our wines open up best in white wine glasses, a few minutes after taken out of the cellar or cooler. I love them with great cheeses (Stilton or Epoisses!), dried apricots, almonds or enjoy them by themselves, to celebrate family and friends! My sommelier friends and chefs have found phenomenal matches as well, with foie gras, bacon wrapped scallops, lobster tails and sea urchin, spicy thai and chinese, and a variety of desserts, like fruit tarts, sabayon or creme brûlée."