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Consumer Countries/Markets

UK: Making boxed wine premium

Ask the average Brit what they think of boxed wine, and there’s a good chance they’ll look at you as if you’ve asked them to lick the floor. “Cheap” Australian wine, which was boxed up and shipped to the UK in the 1980s, has left a nasty taste in consumers’ mouths. And the amount of quality boxed wine on offer hasn’t improved since then.

Comment: South African Bag-in-Box 2016 exports to the UK totaled 4.6 million litres (8% less than in 2015) in 3 litre and smaller container sizes.

Global Trends - Beverages

The Complete Guide to Ice Wine

At this time of year winemaking in the Northern Hemisphere is usually finished, but for ice wine producers, things are just getting started.

1. History: The earliest clear documentation dates from the 1829 vintage at Dromersheim in Rheinhessen, Germany.
2. Varieties: In Germany Riesling, in Canada the hybrid grape variety Vidal (Ugni Blanc x Seibel) is the mainstay of ice wine. Cabernet Franc is also popular and occasionally Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer and even Cabernet Sauvignon. Other varieties are the subjects of experiments, particularly in New World Wine regions.
3. Climate and wine regions: The climate conditions suitable for natural ice wine production are limited to a narrow range of latitude. The two countries most associated with ice wine production – Germany and Canada – have rules for minimum temperatures required, -8°C (17°F) in Canada, and a degree warmer in Austria and Germany.
4. In the vineyard: Canadian ice wines tend to have a higher Brix level (sugars in the grape) going
into the freezing process than European counterparts. However, this tends to lead to higher alcohol levels, not sweeter wines. Harvests tend to happen at night when temperatures are lowest. Most vineyards, especially smaller and medium sized ones, still harvest manually. Machine harvesting is now practised in some larger vineyards in Canada and elsewhere, in part due to the speedy reaction to conditions required, and to save on labor costs. It is also claimed to produce less debris, resulting in cleaner juice with less insoluble particles.

5. In the winery: Grapes are typically transported as fast as possible to the winery to be pressed. Pressing is a slow process, and grapes must often be pressed four or five times. Harvesting grapes at temperatures well below -8°C can give some insurance against a subsequent rise in temperature, though may prolong press time. It takes about 3 kilograms of grapes to produce enough juice for a 375ml half-bottle of wine. The concentrated juice is likely to exceed 35° Brix (against 25° for a typical dry wine).

6. Man-made ice wines: Some ice wine is also made in much warmer climes such as Paso Robles in California, Texas and even Florida. Ice wines made in warmer climates, usually use mechanically frozen the grapes. These wines cannot be labelled as ice wine in the US, so terms such as Vin de Glace are used.

7. Tasting and food matching: Most ice wines do not have a major component of fully botrytized fruit. Flavors and aromas are more reminiscent of canned mandarins (including the syrup) and tropical fruit. Usually described as dessert wines, ice wines can be poured at the start of the meal as a sweet aperitif.

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