



TAYLOR'S PORT

TASTE & AROMA

You don't need to be an expert to enjoy a glass of port - but it may increase your pleasure if you understand what your eyes, nose and mouth are telling you.



AROMA

When a smell enters the nose it stimulates the olfactory cells in the lining of the upper nose. These are connected to the brain via the olfactory nerves. It is the brain that interprets the information it receives. Inevitably, someone who has experienced more smells, like a professional taster, will recognise a wider range of smells - the benefit of experience.

However, most people will be able to detect enough from the first sniff to make some conclusions about the wine. Smelling the same thing for a long time dulls the brain's ability to receive the messages, so it is best to take an initial sniff and then go back to the wine, rather than keeping one's nose in the glass.



TASTE

Here it is the taste buds that are stimulated and carrying the message to the brain. Sensibly, the part of the brain that deals with taste is near that which deals with smell. The taste buds are located primarily on the tongue, although other soft areas of the mouth contain taste buds. What is extraordinary is that certain parts of the mouth detect certain tastes better than others. The front or tip of the tongue detects sweetness, the sides saltiness, the back bitterness and the top of the tongue sourness. Astringency and spirit can be felt as a sharpness on the gums, while tannins produce a "furry" feeling on the teeth. Clearly it is important to take a reasonable mouthful of wine to evaluate it properly. Tasters often draw in some air to ensure that the wine stimulates all the taste buds as well as the olfactory cells.

SIGHT

Finally, using our eyes can help in evaluating the type of wine. This is important with port as the color can indicate the age of the wine. But sight is only one element in the evaluation, with taste and smell all important.

The color of a wine can say much about its type, age and condition. The tasting glass should be filled about a third full, then tilted to a 45° angle above a white background in a well lit position. The best tasting rooms face north so that they do not receive direct sunlight.



TAYLOR'S® PORT

The 45° angle varies to the depth of the wine from the bowl to the meniscus edge or rim. At the rim the wine is at its thinnest and the color can easily be judged for hue and intensity.

If the glass is then held upright, the general appearance can be observed, along with clarity and brightness..

JUDGING A PORT'S AGE

YOUNG VINTAGE

Purple and intense right up to the rim. The shade of purple then darkens until it appears almost inky black in the center. The wines are almost opaque.

MATURE VINTAGE

As vintage port ages so it's color changes. Very old vintages fade completely and can be mistaken for tawny ports - only the taste gives it away. Wines 10 to 15 years old, and over 30, are dealt with separately below.



10-15 YEAR OLD VINTAGE PORT

Color fades from deep purple to red/brown - the older the more brown. At the meniscus the color fades and the shades of brown are lighter and more evident. The body of the wine is often described as 'brick red'. The wine is clear and bright.

OLDER VINTAGE PORT

As vintage port matures further the brown tones soften to become orange. The overall effect is of a warm tawny color. The color is even so that the shades between the meniscus and the body are less obvious. The degree to which red tones remain is often a guide to the year. A 'big' wine - like a classic vintage - will display red tones into old age; lesser years fade faster.

OLD TAWNY PORTS

Again the age of the wine is important as the dated tawnies vary in age from 10 to 40 years. (Legally port shippers are not able to produce blended tawnies older than 40 years). As a general rule tawnies become lighter the older they become because the color is 'lost' into the storage vessels. However with tawny wines color can often mislead the taster.



TAYLOR'S® PORT



10 YEAR OLD TAWNIES

The youngest style of dated old tawnies. The wine retains much of the original fruit and this is evident in the color which has an overall reddy/brown appearance. The wine is bright and clear. The color will graduate to a darker tone in the body of the wine.

20 YEAR OLD TAWNIES

The change in color from 10 to 20 years is perhaps the most marked between any of the tawnies but can be most confusing in judging the age of the wine. Fuller styles, such as Taylor Fladgate and Fonseca retain some of the rich red color that is found in the 10 year olds. Thinner styles often appear very orange in color by the time they are 20 years old. This can in part be due to storage as the amount of evaporation becomes a key factor in old tawnies - hot cellars that increase the evaporation will also reduce the color. This can normally be detected in the taste with the wines appearing slightly spirity, sometimes with a 'burnt honey' aftertaste. The color should be thin at the meniscus, a pale amber rim, with a gradual increase in the tone to a tawny - red/orange in the body. The wine will appear more viscous and the surface can sometimes appear slightly 'oil'.

30 AND 40 YEAR OLD TAWNIES

Again these wines can show anomalies in that old tawnies only become pale to a certain point before they start to darken again. Indeed it is not so widely known that tawnies of 50 or 60 years have olive green tones that can easily be detected at the rim of the wine. In general the color will be tawny - orange with most of the red tones having disappeared. The wine is again more viscous the older it is, but it is the taste where the greater changes can be detected. The older the wine becomes the more obvious the spirit, but in a smooth and nutty way.



LATE BOTTLED VINTAGE PORT

These wines display many of the characteristics of young vintage port. However, little of the purple highlights can be found; instead this is most often seen as a blood red. At the rim the wine appears plum colored with the wine darkening rapidly. Whilst LBV is not opaque in the way that young vintage ports are, the body is nevertheless dark.



TAYLOR'S PORT

HOW TO DECANT PORT

1. TO DECANT OR NOT TO DECANT?

Not every type of port will need decanting. Vintage Ports, being matured in the bottle, should be decanted to remove the natural sediment deposited by the wine. But Late Bottled Vintage Ports and Tawny Ports do not need decanting as they mature in the cask, and should be bright, clear and ready to drink, as the sediment was removed before bottling.



2. THE TOOLS FOR THE JOB

There is no mystery to decanting. Stand the bottle upright for a few hours, to allow all sediment to fall to the bottom. Have a perfectly clean decanter ready, or failing that, a clean wine bottle or jug. With the port bottle still vertical, remove the seal and wipe the top of the bottle clean. Ease the cork gently out.

3. SLOWLY DOES IT

Slowly and steadily, pour the port into the decanter. The splash of white paint on the bottle tells you which way up it was cellared; this mark should be uppermost during decanting. A small funnel, ideally with a strainer, may be helpful.

4. HOW TO LOSE YOUR DEPOSIT

A table lamp, candle flame or torch behind the bottle will help you see if any sediment is approaching the neck - when you should stop pouring. If the port has thrown a very heavy deposit, it may benefit from filtering through some clean muslin held in a funnel.

Good cooks will not waste this deposit which, being the residue of old grape skins, is a natural substance rich in flavor. The last drops in the bottle will much enhance a soup or stew.

5. THE IDEAL GLASS

Glasses should always be spotlessly clean, free of any residual detergent. A thin, colorless glass is best for displaying the deep rich color of port to its best advantage. Half filled, a deep bowl allows the wine to be swirled around, focusing all the complex, fruity aromas into the in-curving top of the glass. Watch for the 'tears' falling back inside the glass - one sure sign of a fine and fully matured port.

6. HOW LONG A BOTTLE KEEPS ONCE OPENED

Vintage port should be consumed within 24 hours of opening. This is to ensure that it is enjoyed at its best. Having spent its 'life' in bottle with little contact with the air it quickly oxidates.

Other styles, like the Late Bottled Vintage and the Aged Tawny ports, can be consumed .



TAYLOR'S® PORT

MATCHING PORT AND FOOD

Port and Cheese Pairings

Although port is typically consumed as a dessert wine, there are some savory foods that go extremely well with it, one of which is cheese. With these few guidelines in mind, choosing the right cheese for your port or the occasion becomes a much easier task.

- Consider the assertiveness of the cheese and the weight of the port
- Is the cheese pungent, salty, or sweet?
- Look at the texture of the cheese



Port & Cheese Pairing Guide

Port	Cheese	Examples
White	Hard, crumbly cheeses	Wensleydale, Cheshire, Caerphilly
Ruby	Full flavored goat's cheeses	Ticklemore, Crottin de Chavignol
10 Year Old Tawny	Hard sheep's milk cheeses	Berkswell, Pyrenean
Vintage Character	Full flavored cheeses both hard & soft	Mature Cheddar, Pont L'Eveque
Late Bottled Vintage	Soft, creamy cheeses	Brie de Meaux, Waterloo
Vintage	Blue cow's milk cheeses	Stilton, Dorset Blue Vinny



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Port & Desserts

Les dix meilleurs desserts à servir avec les portos Taylor:

Dessert	Vin de Porto
1. Apple Tart	20 Year Old Tawny
2. Dark Chocolate Almond Tart	Taylor LBV 1994
3. Crème brûlée	10 Year Old Tawny
4. Flourless Chocolate Cake	Taylor Vintage Port 1985
5. Pecan Pie	10 Year Old Tawny
6. Almond Biscotti	20 Year Old Tawny
7. Fig and Pistachio Tart	20 Year Old Tawny
8. Dark Chocolate Mousse	Taylor First Estate
9. Fruitcake	10 Year Old Tawny
10. Hazelnut Chocolate Tart	Taylor Vintage Port 1985