
Château d'Yquem 1997

CSPC# 742355

375mlx3

13.9% alc./vol.

Grape Variety

80% *Sémillon*, 20% *Sauvignon Blanc*

Appellation

Sauternes

General Info

1er Cru Supérieur. Admired in the whole world since the 18th Century, Château d'Yquem remains the greatest of the great sweet Bordeaux wines. Centuries after centuries, the Château has always kept faithful to an ideal of perfection, even at the darkest hours of the 20th century when people came to a disaffection for this kind of wine. In 1999, people feared that this constant solidity would collapse due to divisions in the Lur Saluces' family and the sale of the Alexandre de Lur Saluces's shares to the luxury group LVMH, but it did not. Today, the tandem Alexandre de Lur Saluces - Bernard Arnault seems to work wonderfully and the working methods have not been called into question. Yquem remains the Bordeaux symbol of perfection and tradition. Exceptional fact in Bordeaux, the wine stays in general three years and a half in new wood barrels for maturing, before being proposed on the market. Its refinement, the exquisite perfection of its balance and its power do not have an equivalent. The great vintages (1937, 1950, 1995...) offer the plenitude whose any wine amateur dreams of.

The great sweet wines of Bordeaux, Sauternes, are among the most decadent, complex and simply enjoyable wines. Based on a blend of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc that has been infected with the "noble rot", *Botrytis Cinerea*, Sauternes are rich, honied wines bursting with notes of vanilla, coconut, dried apricots and subtle spice tones. They are usually very sweet and rich with a soft quality to them that makes them appealing in their youth, yet they can age and improve for decades. The neighboring village of Barsac frequently makes wines comparable to those of Sauternes.

Vintage

Temperatures were above average throughout the growing season. This, combined with average rainfall, provided excellent growing conditions for vine development. The major storms in late July which hit other vineyards in Bordeaux, causing premature and very detrimental rot, bypassed Yquem entirely.

Vineyards

This property is beautifully placed at hilltop in Sauternes commune, with its 103-ha big vineyard (clay and gravel on the surface and lime stones in the subsoil), planted with 80% Semillon and 20% Sauvignon Blanc. The average age of vines is 27 years and the yield does not exceed 10 hl/ha.

Harvest

Started picking very early on 4 Sep right through to 4 Nov. No rain and the botrytis were very slow. Only morning mist rather than rain, 32 days of picking made for a complex blend. Seven waves of picking. 200 pickers over 32 days to show the right concentration of grapes was a very complex operation.

Maturation

The wine matures for 3.5 years in new barrels. Neither chaptalisation nor other techniques, which increase sugar content in grape must, are allowed. D'Yquem is one of the very few properties in the district, to use both semi-botrytised and fully botrytised grapes for the wine, in order to have enough acidity to balance sweetness.

Tasting Notes

A sensational Yquem, 1997 may be this estate's finest effort since 1990 (although I would not discount the 1996 turning out to be nearly as good). The 1997's light gold color is accompanied a gorgeous perfume of caramel, honeysuckle, peach, apricot, and smoky wood. Full-bodied and unctuously textured, with good underlying acidity as well as loads of sweetness and glycerin, it looks to be a great vintage for this renowned Sauternes estate. Anticipated maturity: 2005-2055.

Cellaring

Drink 2014-2030

Scores/Awards **96 points** - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #146 - April 2003
95 points - James Suckling, Wine Spectator - October 15, 2002
94 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - March 2008
18 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - April 27, 2010
18 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - February 13, 2008
19.5+ points - Chris Kissack, The Wine Doctor - June 2008
18+ points - Chris Kissack, The Wine Doctor - November 2004
97 points - Anthony Gismondi, gismondionwine.com - May 15, 2008
95 points - Jean Marc Quarin
95 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - August 6, 2007
91 points - Joe Belmaati, winemega.com
Coup de couer/3 stars - Le guide Hachette des Vins - 2003

Reviews *"Extremely concentrated, yet subtle. Aromas of honey and spices, with an intense botrytis nose. Full-bodied, thick and fruity, with orange peel and lemon rind character. Medium sweetness. Balanced, yet thick and backward. Reminds me of the harmonious 1990--certainly the best since then. Best after 2008. 14,000 cases made."*

- JS, Wine Spectator

"A sensational Yquem, 1997 may be this estate's finest effort since 1990 (although I would not discount the 1996 turning out to be nearly as good). The 1997's light gold color is accompanied a gorgeous perfume of caramel, honeysuckle, peach, apricot, and smoky wood. Full-bodied and unctuously textured, with good underlying acidity as well as loads of sweetness and glycerin, it looks to be a great vintage for this renowned Sauternes estate. Anticipated maturity: 2005-2055. Note: Yquem spends 42 months in 100% new oak. No cask tasting is permitted, and the wine is not released until 5 years after the vintage. For example, the 1998 will be released some time in 2003; the 2001 will not be released until 2006. Drink 2005-2055"

- RP, Wine Advocate

"I must admit to being rather underwhelmed by this feted Yquem. A slightly deeper colour compared to the -96 and like that wine, the nose is reluctant to show its colours at first but after 20-30 minutes becoming very honeyed with touches of clementine, almond and acacia honey. The palate is full-bodied and unctuous in texture, perhaps just lacking a little definition? Dare I say a tad cloying on the finish. I prefer the tension displayed on the 1996 but this does settle down in the glass. Drink 2020-2040+."

- NM, Wine Journal

"Pungent, rich and very fine. Exciting. Great stuff. Long and rich. Drink 2006-2028."

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"Darkening coppery gold. Some mushrooms on the nose. An element of something almost metallic on the palate. Real grace in terms of structure but the flavour is not quite as pure as I would have expected. Very chewy on the finish, not quite as clean as the others. Drink 2012-2030"

- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"This wine has a rich, golden hue, as might be expected! The nose is just fabulous; there is evident richness here, in the shape of some smoky botrytis, but what really sets the wine apart is the beautiful, crystal-like clarity it possesses. This characteristic carries through on the palate, which has a fine, cool purity and freshness, presented in a seemingly paradoxical fashion, as it is intertwined with great richness and a creamy vanilla seam which opens out, broadening across the palate. Wow! An amazing texture, with bright botrytis flavour and high-quality candied fruits. I think this is an exquisite wine, and the lingering flavour affords plenty of time to reflect on this. And it will go for years yet. I find this much more impressive than my previous tasting in November 2004."

- CK, Wine Doctor

Reviews *"A hot vintage, with slow onset of botrytis. Earliest recorded harvest, on September 4th. Six tries, with better botrytis later on. Showing a good, more golden hue. This is more like it; and expressive and impressive nose, with ripe, crystalline honey fruit and loads of botrytis character. Pure, impressive, balanced. This has lovely poise and is quite delicious. Creamy-oily texture but not over-the-top, tremendously rich finish and a great length. Correct acidity. A big, structured, yet seductive wine; this will go for decades. 18+/20 (November 2004)"*
- CK, Wine Doctor

"One of the fabulous "7" years as in '97, '67, '47, '27 and now, as suggested by winemaker Pierre Lurton, the upcoming 2007. Amazingly, this wine spent 42 months in new oak something Lurton says will not happen with the '07. The '97 is rich to the level of unctuous, but as usual, with the required acidity to balance the package. Slightly closed nose but with time in the glass you taste and smell the honey, mandarin and sensational fruit flecked with orange bits. There is extravagant texture and body here that is destined to live a long time in bottle. Bottled with 120 g/l of sugar and an acidity of 4.8 g/l. Picking began in 4, September finished 4, November."
- AG, gismondionwine.com

"Medium rich with honeyed, tropical fruit notes and vanilla. This is a very well made Yquem, perfectly balancing acidity and sweetness. But it lacks the concentration, depth and level of botrytis found in the best years. For my palate, this is probably what a vintage like 70 or 71 tasted like young."
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Medium yellow color. Scents of white flowers. Delightfully restrained and detailed in flavor on the palate with a good oily flow and velvety texture. Quite packed, yet very restrained and light on its feet with great purity and textbook balance. I particularly liked the light non-cloying facets of this wine, and the aftertaste was smooth and harmonious. "
- JB, winemega.com

"Tasted five times - last time in April 2012. Consistent notes. This vintage is one of the most classic ones in the district since 1988. Straw yellow. This wine reminded a lot of 1996 (served in same flight) but showed though extra turbo on the concentration and botrytis. Truly speaking – it is nectar of the Gods. Keep it for 20-40 years. In April 2012, this beauty was in full blossom with creme brulée and pineapple confit, stunning cooperation of botrytized flavours and corresponding acidity, extremely rich and lot of sweetness."
- I Litwar – Greatbordeauxwines.com
