
Château d'Yquem 1998

CSPC# 742354

375mlx3

13.0% alc./vol.

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.

Grape Variety
Appellation
General Info

80% *Sémillon*, 20% *Sauvignon Blanc*
Sauternes

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.

For centuries Yquem has been unchallenged as the finest example of Sauternes and the most famous sweet wine in the world. A dramatically rich wine of dizzying complexity and extravagant depth, it is capable of aging effortlessly for several decades. Vine yields are tiny, with perfectly botrytized grapes harvested in a number of labor-intensive passes through the vineyard, and the wine undergoes three years or more of aging in new oak barrels. The estate's history dates to 1593, and since 1855, Yquem has existed literally in a class of its own-- the only wine from Sauternes and Barsac labeled a *Premier Cru Supérieur*.

Vintage Above average temperatures. Wet September, harvest began on the 22nd. Then several weeks of rain before completion in October. Lots of botrytis in the second portion. A decent lemon-gold. Showing some botrytis on the nose. Greater complexity immediately apparent. More serious wine than the 1999, for certain. Rich, oily, very concentrated. Candied fruit again, the Noble rot not showing here as on the nose. Good depth and interest though, orange and apricot flavour, and well-balanced acidity. This will improve I am sure. A good wine from what is an under-rated vintage

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.

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 decent lemon-gold. Showing some botrytis on the nose. Greater complexity immediately apparent. More serious wine than the 1999, for certain. Rich, oily, very concentrated. Candied fruit again, the Noble rot not showing here as on the nose. Good depth and interest though, orange and apricot flavour, and well-balanced acidity. This will improve I am sure. A good wine from what is an under-rated vintage.

Cellaring Drink 2014-2030



Scores/Awards **89 points** - James Suckling, Wine Spectator - Web Only 2008
91 points - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #158 - April 2005
95 points - Robert Parker, Wine Advocate #149 - October 2003
94 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - September 2011
94-96 points - Neal Martin, Wine Journal - March 2004
18 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - June 24, 2011
18 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - January 26, 2010
16.5 points - Jancis Robinson, JancisRobinson.com - February 13, 2008
95 points - Stephen Tanzer, International Wine Cellar - July/August 1998
16+ points - Chris Kissack, The Wine Doctor - October 2004
92 points - Jean Marc Quarin
93 points - Jeff Leve, thewinecellarinsider.com - August 22, 2012
89 points - Joe Belmaati, winemega.com
Coup de couer/3 stars - Le guide Hachette des Vins - 2004

Reviews *"Cooked apple, with hints of honey, lemon and butter. Turns to dried apricots. Full and round, very sweet, with a candied character. Good enough, but a little cloying on the palate. I have had this many times: not what it should be. Lots of bottle variation. Drink now."*
- JS, Wine Spectator

"The 1998 Chateau Yquem was released several months ago. This estate does not allow tasting from cask (where the wine spends 42 months), and it is not released until five years after the vintage. The 1998 Yquem (95 points) is a great success. Made in an elegant style, it is not a blockbuster such as 1990, 1989, and 1988. It is well-delineated, with wonderfully sweet aromas of creme brulee, pineapples, apricots, and white flowers. Medium to full-bodied, it is not as sweet as the biggest/richest Yquem vintages, but it is gorgeously pure, precise, and strikingly complex. Already approachable, it should evolve for 30-50 years ... without a doubt."
- RP, Wine Advocate

"Tasted at Bordeaux Index's Christmas lunch. The '98 d'Yquem has a more extravagant nose than I remember, less minerality than it displayed in its youth and perhaps a little more alcoholic on the nose. There are touches of pineapple, mango, treacle and custard cremes, becoming peachier with time in the glass. The palate is viscous on the entry and very well balanced with honeycomb, white peach, apricot and wild honey that leads to a powerful, if not elegant finish. The '98 is a little "unruly" at present. Drink 2016-2030. Tasted December 2010."
- NM, Wine Journal

"A pale golden hue. A lovely mineral nose of almonds and custard creams. Very soft, plush and perfumed. Touch of chalk dust. The palate is unctuous with a lot of botrytis. Again, that custard creme note comes through mixed with peach, creme fraiche. Not quite as rich as the 1995 but the end is endless. Perhaps not as long-term as other vintages, but certainly a wine that is going to offer a lot of pleasure over the next quarter century."
- NM, Wine Journal

"Lift and richness and electrified raisins! There's a lot of energy here. Medicine? Sinewy. Not the sweetest."
- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"Firm copper colour. Open nose and tawny colour. Racy acidity. Just a little bit simple. Quite evolved - this even tastes quite coppery somehow. Strong notes of barley sugar. RS 134g/l, TA 4 g/l [6.1 g/l as tartaric]. The picking was interrupted by rain. There seems to be something slightly burnt about the flavour here."
- JR, JancisRobinson.com

"Some rain in the middle of the picking season so most wines are a blend of Sep and Nov pickings. Mid gold. Very volatile on the nose. Robust and quite rich."
- JR, JancisRobinson.com

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- CK, Wine Doctor

"Pale gold. Knockout aromas of creme brulee, coconut, vanilla bean, honey and orange peel. Lush and seductively silky in the mouth; its creamy, seamless texture makes it seem deceptively accessible today, but sound acid structure should keep it going for 20 years or more. Not hugely sweet or tropical but very complex and fine. Firm, hazelnutty finish offers great length, if not quite the grip of the '89."
- ST, International Wine Cellar

"Due to the lack of botrytis in the vintage, I was not expecting to like the 1998 d'Yquem as much as I did. I love it when a wine shows much better than expected! The nose was filled with vanilla, honeysuckle, apricot, pineapple and spice. Medium/full bodied, sweet, round and lush, the wine ends with a delicious mouthful of candied orange, apricot, spice, vanilla custard and sweet pineapple."
- JL, thewinecellarinsider.com

"Pale yellow color with a light green hue. Scents of tree bark and honey with added detergent fumes underneath. Sweet, like sugar cane and quite vulgar at that. Seems to lack a touch of refinement to the flavor. Good density and viscosity with ample freshness, but somewhat confused and unfocused in structure. Light bodied with floral notes on the aftertaste. Quite good yet falls short of the "excellent" mark."
- JB, winemega.com

"Tasted twice - last time in April 2005. Not consistent notes. Pale yellow. Nose was very elegant with well-shaped noble rot and had a lot of sweetness on the palate with mango, apricot and acacia honey. This was a wine with pure style, much finesse and long aftertaste, but at same time also "light-footed". Give it 15-25 years."
- I Litwar – Greatbordeauxwines.com
