

ROYAL TOKAJI 2003 ESSENCIA

Winemaker:	Károly Áts
Varietal Composition:	Primarily Furmint with some Hárslevelü and a small percentage of Muscat
Aging:	7 years in glass demijohns
Production:	2,300 bottles (1/375ml)
Bottles Imported:	450
Alcohol:	2.23%
Total Acidity:	14.1g/L
Residual Sugar:	511g/L



Essencia is the world's most concentrated wine, made from the essence of the ripest aszú grapes. The third vintage of the true Royal Tokaji Essencia since the celebrated 1993, the 2003 Essencia is offered in a stately brass-hinged wooden box carved from Hungarian oak, lined with silk and containing the indulgent Royal Tokaji Hungarian crystal sipping spoon. The spoon was designed exclusively for Royal Tokaji, enabling 25 sips per bottle — or 50 if you share your spoonful with a loved one. The back label bears the number of each bottle produced.

ESSENCIA IS THE RICHEST AND RAREST OF ALL TOKAJI WINES

The methods and traditions of producing Tokaji wines have changed little since the 17th century. Two hundred pounds of Furmint, Hárslevelü and Muscat berries infected with “botrytis cinera,” or “noble rot,” are individually harvested from bunches with at least three trips through each vineyard. Essencia is produced using only the free-run juice that slowly oozes from the puttonyos as the “aszú,” the “botrytis-infected grapes,” await crushing — no base wine is added. This juice — produced from the gentle pressure of the grapes' own weight — is sticky and pours like honey. Because sugar levels can be as high as 85 percent, the juice ferments extremely slowly — it took the 2003 Essencia seven years in Royal Tokaji's cellars to reach only 2.23 percent alcohol. Essencia is an immortal wine and may last for 200 years or more.

ESSENCIA THROUGH THE AGES

Pope Benedict XVI was given bottle Number 1 of the Royal Tokaji 1993 Essencia, thus reviving the ancient tradition of each Pope keeping a bottle of Essencia by his bedside to see him through any illness. To renew the custom of Russian Czars enjoying Essencia, a practice that started with Peter the Great in the 1600s, President Putin was given a few bottles of the Royal Tokaji 1999 Essencia in September 2006.

THE 2003 VINTAGE

The winter of 2003 was very long. Cold nights in early April delayed budbreak, however, a sudden and remarkable shift in temperatures at the end of April and beginning of May assisted in getting the vineyards back on track. Despite above-average rainfall, the region was dry due to low humidity during the vineyards' vegetative cycle. This was not a serious problem in the vineyards with volcanic clay topsoil, but did cause some damage in a few of the vineyards with loess soil. All of these factors led to an early harvest in Tokaj.

TASTING NOTES

The 2003 Essencia combines the taut ample acidity of the 1999 and the charming balanced richness of the 2000. It has aromas of honeysuckle and summer lime blossom but also of raisins, of orange blossom and oranges, of dried apricots and lemon zest, of quince and fig and — can it be? — tobacco.

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