

TOKAJI THROUGH THE AGES

Tokaji aszú wine was the world's first great sweet wine, created in the 1600s, perhaps by accident — a harvest delayed by threat of enemy invasion. In 1700, Tokaj became the first European wine region to have its vineyards classified, its uniquely varied terroirs and climates rated “primae classis, secundae classis, tertius classis,” or “first growth, second growth, third growth,” by Prince Rakoczi II of Transylvania. This classification system is still used in Hungary today.

“Vinum Regnum, Rex Vinorum,” or “The Wine of Kings, the King of Wines.” – ***KING LOUIS XIV*** (1638-1715), *Versailles*

“...invigorates every fiber of the brain.” – ***VOLTAIRE*** (1694-1778)

In the 18th century, ***CATHERINE THE GREAT*** stationed soldiers in Tokaj to protect her vineyards.

“The Tokay is much more superior to what you sent me last year under that name. It is very much esteemed by all who drink it and preferred to all others. It comes dearer than you imagined.” – ***PRESIDENT JEFFERSON***, in a letter to *Justus Erich Bollman*, December 6, 1804

“I can assure you that they are esteemed on the continent of Europe among the best wines of Europe, and Champagne, Burgundy, Tokay are used at the best tables there.” – ***PRESIDENT JEFFERSON***, in a letter to friend/tavern owner *Samuel J. Harrison*, September 18, 1817

“I received successfully the two bottles of the wine you were so kind as to send me. The first, called Tokay, is truly a fine wine, of high flavor, and, as you assure me there was not a drop of brandy or another spirit in it, I may say it is a wine of a good body of its own.” – ***PRESIDENT JEFFERSON***, in a letter to *John Adlum*, pioneer of American viticulture, April 11, 1823

“The tokay ... sent to ***QUEEN VICTORIA*** as a jubilee present was of the rare variety known as ‘***MEZESMALE***’ or ‘***HONEY BEAMS***.’ This is produced only in Tarczal, near Tokay ... the grapes are never gathered until fully ripe, and are put into a cask without any artificial pressure being applied; the juice extracted from sun-dried grapes is then added, and the mixture becomes really essence of tokay.” – *The Washington Post*, November 30, 1890

“Send immediately one case of the wine that removes screws from the coffin lid.” – *A satisfied Tokaji customer*, in a letter to *British wine importers Berry Bros & Rudd*, 1933

“Tokaji has long enjoyed a reputation for marvellous health effects. This fame rested partly upon ‘endorsements’ from personages such as ***NAPOLEON III’S WIFE, EUGÉNIE***, who lived to the age of 94 and attributed her health and well-preserved beauty to drinking two small glasses of aszú every morning.” – “*Keep young and beautiful*,” *Harpers*, January 23, 2004

“Whenever I drink Essencia, I feel ... imperial.” – ***SHARON STONE***, in a thank-you note to *Royal Tokaji* for a gift of ***ASZÚ ESSENCIA*** to celebrate one of her marriages

POPE BENEDICT XVI was given bottle first bottle of 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 VLADIMIR PUTIN*** was presented with a few bottles of the Royal Tokaji ***1999 ESSENCIA***. – *September 2006*

Hugh Johnson followed in Franz Joseph’s footsteps by giving ***QUEEN ELIZABETH II*** a few bottles of the still-rare and much sought-after Royal Tokaji ***1999 MÉZES MÁLY*** to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. The first of these bottles will be enjoyed at Balmoral. – *June 16, 2012*