



The *sweet* spot

Dessert wines and fortifieds make great food partners

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Not just
for after
dinner



FROM DUSTY flagons of port to the bottles of cream sherry lurking in your nanna's liquor cabinet, sweet wines used to get a bad rap. Far from setting your teeth on edge, today's dessert wines and fortifieds strike a balance between acid, sugar and alcohol, providing the perfect partner for puddings, cheese or an evening by the fire.

Rich and rewarding fortifieds

Fortified wines are no longer the domain of old blokes in smoking jackets. These alcohol-enhanced wines, made by adding a distilled spirit, such as brandy, to a selected wine, are making a comeback. The process increases the alcohol content and

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creates a rich, viscous liquid with flavours of caramel, raisin and toasted nuts. Notable fortifieds include Spanish sherries and Portuguese port, but Australia also has a long, proud history with fortified wines, most notably in the Victorian region of Rutherglen. As naming restrictions now apply, keep an eye out for local versions labelled tawny (for port-style wines), topaque (previously tokay) and apera (for sherry).

Food match: Chocolate, caramel and toasted-nut desserts or a hunk of sharp, crumbly cheddar.

Late-harvest stickies

Sauternes, the world's most prized dessert wine, is made from semillon and sauvignon blanc grapes that have been affected by *botrytis cinerea*, also known as 'noble rot'. This fungus shrivels the grapes, concentrating the flavour, sugar and acidity to produce a luscious, golden wine with notes of honey, citrus and stone fruits.

Food match: Crème brulee or a wedge of blue cheese drizzled with honey.

Light and bright moscato

For a lighter take on dessert wines, look to Italy's moscato, a perfumed *frizzante* (spritz) wine with a palate of rose petal, green apple and musk.

Food match: Pavlova with rosewater cream

THREE TO TRY



Splurge on the All Saints Estate Museum Muscadelle, at an indulgent \$1000.



De Bortoli's Noble One sets the benchmark for botrytis semillon in Australia. \$29/375ml.



Innocent Bystander Pink Moscato is sweet without being cloying. \$12.50/375ml.

and berries, fruit salad, pastries and pancakes. And yes, at around five per cent alcohol, we give you permission to drink before midday. ✈