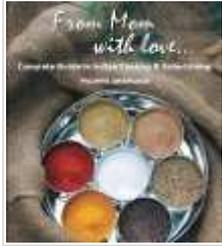


Enjoying the Sweet White Wines of Sauternes and Barsac - With An Indian Kick

Author: [Marisa DVari](#) — Published: [Sep 16, 2009 at 4:36 pm](#) [0 comments](#)



Article Author: [Marisa DVari](#)

Luscious, sweet white wines with exotic, upscale Indian cuisine – who would have imagined it? When I received the invitation to attend a Cru Classes tasting of Sauternes and Barsac (both sweet white wine appellations in Bordeaux, France) with a lunch to follow, I already knew what to expect to eat. We'd start with foie gras, I thought – many, many different types and styles of foie gras, as I experienced when I was a guest at Chateau Guiraud. Then, I thought, we'd have a salad, and perhaps duck a l'orange for an entrée. Now I have nothing against foie gras or duck a l'orange. French people have been enjoying this with sweet white wine for centuries, and they are “textbook pairings.” Yet wasn't there a less rich alternative, I wondered.

As it turned out, Rohini Dey, proprietor of the hot new Vermillion restaurant, and her executive chef Maneet Chauhan, studied and tasted the sweet wines to be showcased, and developed an exciting new pairing idea for the lunch with luxurious seafood as the star. Before I go into detail about the menu, I'd like to explain that the presentation was absolutely fabulous, and went well beyond what one would typically get at any upscale restaurant, even Indian restaurants. The plates, for the most part, were oversized, in unusual shapes (think long rectangles), and decorated with attractive garnish.

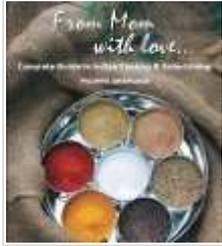
The first course consisted of “cool crab salad” with salmon caviar, watercress juice, and seasoned vermicelli. This was to be paired with Chateau Doisy Daene 2007, which I found to be one of the most “feminine” of the wines we had enjoyed minutes earlier in a formal tasting and seminar. The wine was very light and fresh, with good acidity that worked well with the crab. On the same first course plate was “pani puri” — street Indian chaat, flour shells, potato, and chili mint water. This dish was paired with Chateau Guiraud 2005. These two wines provided an interesting contrast, as the Chateau Guiraud is a heavier, richer style of wine with bright acidity redolent of apricot jam.

Next came the seafood course, which included a single, large, incredibly delicious scallop coated with blue corn, and a seasonal seafood stew with a self-described “Indian kick.” Chateau Sigalas-Rabaud 2001 was paired with the scallop. The rich sweet texture of the wine contrasted with the sweet, fresh white scallop. The seafood stew, with its shrimp and tilapia and sauce with its subtle, sumptuous exotic spices such as cardamom, went quite well with the 2001 Chateau de Myrat, which was one of the darkest of the wines with a deep gold color and palate of rich concentrated apricot.

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Enjoying the Sweet White Wines of Sauternes and Barsac - With An Indian Kick - Page 2

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For an entrée, we enjoyed “lobster Portuguese” which was stewed in a gravy and served with coconut rice and eggplant chip tomatillo chutney. This dish was paired with Chateau Coutet 1998, also a deep gold color with notes of honey and rich, concentrated apricot (apricot, if you haven't noticed, is a signature flavor of these wines.

Dessert consisted of several attractively arranged little treats such as mango sheets, fennel mango chutney, and Stilton cheese. Accompanying this were Chateau Climens 1986, and Chateau Suduiraut 1975, both concentrated, luscious wines with the kind of bright acidity and richness of fruit that will allow them to age for decades or more. An additional and unexpected “treat” at our table consisted of two vivacious, charming French hosts, Virginie Achou-Lepage of Chateau Climens, and Aline Baly, proprietor of Chateau Coutet.

Prior to the lunch, attendees had the opportunity to watch the producers, many of them the scions of families who have had the chateaux for generations, speak about their specific wines, the past several vintages, and the challenges of making sweet wine as conditions must be ideal. You can probably guess that workers have to make many trips through the vineyard in order to select only the healthiest botrytized grapes. Ideal weather conditions include rain – but not too much rain – and warm sunny afternoons. Though these wines are expensive, the expense is a reflection of the effort in the wine's production. Grapes are planted on the most valuable and expensive soil in Bordeaux, they young shoots are watched and fussed over, and once successfully picked, the tender loving care and expense continues in the winery with new oak barrels.

Americans, for the most part, consider sweet wines from Sauternes and Barsac as wines to be enjoyed at the end of a meal. Yet in France, it is common to enjoy these sweet wines as an aperitif. And illustrated in the above pairing, no need to pair these wines with traditional rich French dishes. In fact, I like them even better with the fragrantly spiced seafood. The richness and concentration of the wines really contrasts well with fresh seafood. And though I am not a respected chef like Maneet Chauhan, I think it is possible for a creative type to experiment with Indian spices and seafood. All in all, a fascinating look at the story of Bordeaux's sweet wine region, and an eye-opening wine and food pairing experience I am excited to replicate.

Exploring Sauternes & Barsac

by marisa on September 19, 2009



Sauternes ... yummy!

Luscious, sweet white wines with exotic, upscale Indian cuisine – who would have imagined it? When I received the invitation to attend a Cru Classes tasting of Sauternes and Barsac (both sweet white wine appellations in Bordeaux, France) with a lunch to follow, I already knew what to expect to eat. We'd start with foie gras, I thought – many, many different types and styles of foie gras, as I experienced when I was a guest at Chateau Guiraud. Then, I thought, we'd have a salad, and perhaps duck a l'orange for an entrée. Now I have nothing against foie gras or duck a l'orange. French people have been enjoying this with sweet white wine for centuries, and they are “textbook pairings.” Yet wasn't there a less rich alternative, I wondered.

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Wine Week, Part Two

BY MEGAN KRIGBAUM, ASSISTANT WINE EDITOR

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After [a morning spent with New Zealand wines](#), I hustled off in the afternoon to a Sauternes-Barsac tasting. Sauternes and Barsac, located in the southwestern corner of Bordeaux, are known for producing sweet wines made with the Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and (sometimes) Muscadelle grape varieties. These wines develop their sweetness due to botrytis, or "noble rot," a fungus that pierces the skin of the grapes, letting some water out and as a result concentrating all the good sugar inside. The best of these wines have a terrific honeyed quality, but also brightness and acidity so as not to be cloying.

At this particular tasting, the producers were pouring one recent vintage wine and one older one and, remarkably, in some cases the older vintages had more freshness than the more recently released ones.

The two I tasted from Château Doisy Daëne were strikingly different. The 2005 was upfront with fresh grapefruit and grapefruit zest aromas. The flavors tended more to bitter citrus than sweet. The 1991 bottling, however, oozed with honey and butter and orange marmalade flavors alongside a lovely citrus acidity.

Both wines from Château Guiraud were standouts, too. The 2005 vintage was lighter and more mellow, with orange blossom flavor and a long finish, whereas the 2002 was lively and crisp with orange notes.

The contrast between the two wines from Château Suduiraut was just as stark. The 2003 vintage, which was a very hot year, was big and brawny with rich ripe fruit that suggested nectarines and tangelos. The 1999, on the other hand, was a bit more restrained with a perfumed nose and citrus peel notes.

Overall, it was an interesting investigation into wines that I don't normally have access to, and by the end of the tasting, my palate was surprisingly not overwhelmed, thanks to the accompanying acidity—a great thing, because I was headed back to the office to taste yet more wines, this time from Tuscany. More on that on Monday.

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