

# ROYAL TOKAJI 1995 ASZÚ ESSENCIA

<b>Winemaker:</b>	Károly Áts
<b>Varietal Composition:</b>	Furmint, Hárslevelű, Muscat
<b>Harvest Dates:</b>	Mid-October to late November
<b>Barrel Aging:</b>	3.5 years
<b>Bottled:</b>	Early August 2000
<b>Production:</b>	1,180 cases (6/500ml)
<b>Cases Imported:</b>	100
<b>Alcohol:</b>	9.0%
<b>Total Acidity:</b>	10.9g/L
<b>Residual Sugar:</b>	200g/L



## ASZÚ ESSENCIA IS THE ULTIMATE ROYAL TOKAJI WINE

Aszú Essencia is only produced in exceptional years and, next to Essencia, is the richest and sweetest of wines. Royal Tokaji chooses the best Furmint, Hárslevelű and Muscat grapes from its various vineyards that are infected with “Botrytis cinera,” or “noble rot,” to go into the Aszú Essencia. These berries, commonly referred to by the Hungarian term aszú, were traditionally harvested individually from bunches and collected in 20-liter wooden tubs called “puttonyos,” or “hods.” The number of puttonyos added to each barrel of base wine made the previous year from grapes unaffected by botrytis equaled the puttonyos level of the wine. On a scale of one to six, the more puttonyos, the sweeter, richer and rarer the Tokaji.

The process remains the same today, minus the clumsy, heavy hods. A wine’s puttonyos level is now based on the amount of residual sugar in the finished wine (180g/L or higher for Aszú Essencia), thus the key factor in the production of Tokaji Aszú wines is the proportion of aszú berries to base wine.

The Royal Tokaji Aszú Essencia is presented in a handmade bottle — a replica of the earliest Tokaji bottle dating back to the 18th century — and is wrapped in tissue paper to protect the label. Individual tasting notes from Hugh Johnson and Peter Vinding-Diers are included with each bottle, highlighting that “this is a wine for your children’s children ...,” a reminder of Essencia’s long history and its incredible ability to age.

## THE 1995 VINTAGE

Spring came very early this year, and both budbreak and bloom happened earlier than normal. The weather was warm and windy during bloom, which allowed the grapes to be easily pollinated. The warm weather continued through the summer, and the sugar-acid balance in the berries was ideal until mid-September. Morning fog caused the berries to become swollen and burst, and botrytis cinerea infiltrated them, but an Indian Summer allowed the berries to ripen perfectly overall. Owing to the outstanding vintage, the sugar-acid balance was perfect: each vineyard truly expressed its character with nice fruit, and especially tropical fruit, flavors.

## TASTING NOTES

What a pity to drink a wine with such a future as this has. People are going to have to learn to lay down great Tokajis like vintage ports. Its flavors — brilliant, sumptuous and crystal clear as they are — are in their primary stage of development. But closed as it still is, tense with youth, the nose is already pungent with lanolin and marmalade over deep notes of coffee and loam. The intense sweetness is cut through with apple/quince acidity, which seizes the palate, almost stings, then hangs on and on with a flavor like baked Bramley apples. Still to come, apricots, floral notes, butterscotch. Each sip reveals a world of flavors. — *Hugh Johnson*

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