

James The Sommelier - Dessert and Digestif Wines - Sauternes

'Wine honors the soul, so honor it with yours.'

The Ugly Grape-ling - Sauternes

Every one of us is familiar with the children's fairly tale. 'The Ugly Duckling' is a story of personal transformation encapsulated in the growth of beauty from something undesirable. A tale which is capable of touching people from all over the world; the story of the underdog, the unassuming, the unbelievable is one that is dramatized over and over again and never fails to encourage goose-bumps. In that spirit, let us recount the topsy-turvy tale of an ugly wine...

It was a typical autumn sunrise for the region of Graves. The cool air creeping over the warmer land from the Garonne and Ciron rivers creating the eerie dawn mist. Rows of vines stretched out along the flat land, enveloping the still quite sleepy town of Sauternes. Dawn was in its early stages and the sun was a long way from breaking the regularly heavy mist hugging everything around. A walker here, a dog there; the town was still, wisely, asleep.

All apart from a raisin sized, white pustule dangling from a dew-encrusted vine. It opened its congealed eyes. It could not see very far. Semy (Semillon) realized that, with regret, another day was to come. Semy carried out his ritual inspection for his friends Sav. (Sauvignon Blanc) and Muscadelle. He, unfortunately, found them resting all around. They were brothers, the three of them, brothers of misfortune- each reminding the other of their unsightly features.

Six months ago they had all been perfect round, plump, vibrant grapes basking in the sun. When they first developed the sunlight glinted off their taut skin transforming them into daylight stars, people flocked to them, touched them, admired or inspected them. They were this sleepy little town's pride and joy.

Then the mist had come. Regularly, morning after morning, unrelenting and persistent the mist had sucked the life out of them, deflating their perfect forms and wrinkling their smooth skin. Some sort of fungus, a grey mould, had started appearing on some and soon had touched Semy and his friends. They were infected and, to their unknowing minds, useless.

The sunlight would come but to offer no helping hand. As the mist spread the moldy fungus, the sun would continue to deflate and dry them further. It happened as expected and, as usual, Semy caught sight of people coming further down the line. But their progress was slower, they carried a tub and there were lots of them. Panic ensued, Semy made eye contact with his friends, a desperate attempt to say one last goodbye. This was the end. A shameful end at that.

Semy opened his eyes along with Muscadelle and Sav. They were different, combined. They stood tall and proud within a crystal clear glass bottle. Sunlight once again glinted off them. They were on top of a starched, white table cloth. In the reflection of a window, Semy caught sight of his new self. A clear, vibrant and golden liquid enjoyed, once again by all around. He tasted sumptuous- sweet, alcoholic and smooth. Exclamations. Smiles. Joyous laughter. Semy and his friends had become part of a legend, the sought after and much appreciated Sauternes dessert wine.

Tips: Try it with a sweet dessert or 'go French' and drink it with a portion of fïoe gras accompanied by a fruity coulis.

For more information about wine join our wine classes at That Little Wine Bar, 54 Chow Thye Road,
George Town, Penang

Email info@thatlittlewinebar.com for details