

Wood aged ports

Most Port ages in oak casks or vats and is known as ‘wood aged Port’, or ‘wood Port’.

When a wine ages in wood, the contact with the air causes the wine to mature. Its colour changes from the deep red colour known as ‘ruby’ to the paler and browner colour known as ‘tawny’. At the same time the wine becomes smoother and the fruity aromas of youth are replaced by the more complex mellow aromas of age.

Therefore to make a Port with a ‘ruby’ colour, full body and fresh fruity character, the wine is aged in a large vat for a relatively short period. To make a Port with a ‘tawny’ colour, smooth character and complex mellow flavours, the wine is aged in a smaller cask (barrel) for a longer period. The chart below shows the main styles of ‘wood port’, how they age and suggests some ways in which each can be best enjoyed.

Grapes	White grapes		Red grapes				
	White Ports		Smooth mellow red Ports (‘Tawny’ colour)		Full bodied and fruity red Ports (‘Ruby’ colour)		
Method of ageing	Large oak vats		Oak casks (about 630 litres)		Large oak vats		
Type of Port	Sweeter white Ports	Drier white Ports	Young tawny	Aged tawny (10, 20, 30 and 40 year old)	Ruby Port	Reserve Port	Late Bottled Vintage
Ageing period	2-3 years	3-4 years	2-3 years	As indicated	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-6 years
Suggested occasions							
Aperitif	✓	✓					
With foie gras	✓			✓			
With chocolate				✓	✓	✓	✓
With cheese			✓	(✓)	✓	✓	✓
With desserts			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
After dinner			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
For relaxation			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
With cigars				✓			✓
Pairing with main dishes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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‘Wood Ports’ are very easy to handle and serve. They are sold when they are fully mature and ready to drink. They do not need to be decanted and will remain in good condition for 6-8 weeks after the bottle is first opened. They can be served by the glass and it is not necessary to finish the bottle on the day that it is uncorked. Most ‘wood ports’ have a stopper cork that can easily be replaced in the bottle.

‘Wood Ports’ should be served in a large good quality port glass, or alternatively in a white wine glass. White ports should be

served cold (8-10°C), aged tawnies cool (15-18°) and the younger red Ports at just below room temperature (18°-20°).

