

Don't turn up your nose — give moscatos a chance

The mere mention of moscato, considered a cloyingly sweet afterthought in the cheap-wine category, makes noses everywhere turn up.

But it's not true that all moscatos are only one step up from a Riesling. Moscato, and Moscato d'Asti in particular, has a well-earned spot in the pantheon of great wine experiences. It just needs a specific time, place and complementary food choice to shine.

And at just 5.5 percent alcohol, that time to shine is now. You can trust these wines to make your friends smile. All prices listed are for a 375-milliliter bottle.

Don't look too far for an inexpensive start on your Moscato journey. St. Supery in Napa has made a nice one for years.

2009 St. Supéry Moscato, North Coast, California (\$10-\$13) — This wine is beautiful, a light and pure sun gold. It smells of pretty, ripe stone fruits and golden apples. And

the taste is clean and bright, slightly sweet and very refreshing. 87 points.

I like the Mionetto winery. It is well known for making a value Prosecco and for always using the crown cap closure instead of a cork. It's funky, but the goods are in the bottle.

Mionetto Moscato, Italy (\$7) — This one is a light silver yellow, with a fruity and simple aroma. The clean, slightly effervescent taste is pleasant and fun. 84 points.

Michele Chiarlo is one of my favorite Piedmont producers of Barbera and Barolo. His Moscato d'Asti is a perennial favorite that I've recommended for years. And the label wins every time.

2009 Michele Chiarlo "Nivole" Moscato d'Asti, Asti, Piedmont, Italy (\$13) — The color is white gold and straw yellow. The aroma has a complex nuanced tone with ripe white peach and light apple. The taste is well balanced, slightly sweet with good tartness and bubbles to give a wonderful finish. 90 points.

This wine is in a cool bottle, from one of the most notable wineries in the region and is always slammin' good.

2008 Ceretto Moscato d'Asti, Asti, Piedmont, Italy (\$15) — It's straw yellow in color, and the aroma is bright with sweet fruit; nice. The taste is elegant, with sweetness balanced by a nice acidity. 90 points.

This final winery has so much integrity. It's one of the only moscatos in Asti that is still made in the artisanal old way of hand-crafted moscato. It's stunning and hard to find. Keep the name in mind.

2006 Vietti Moscato d'Asti, Asti, Piedmont, Italy (\$11-15) — This wine is golden straw yellow. The aroma is super complex, with

some nuttiness and ripe soft fruit. The taste is complex, both light and nuanced. A great, great glass. 95 points

Reach Tarbell, owner of Tarbell's Restaurant in Phoenix, at wine@tarbells.com.

KEY TO THE RATINGS

- 100:** A perfect wine.
- 95-99:** Excellent. Worth looking for.
- 90-94:** Extremely good. A standout in its class.
- 85-89:** Very good. A solid, well-made wine and a good value.
- 80-84:** Good. Fine for everyday entertaining and large parties.
- 75-79:** A soundly made wine for everyday drinking.



On Wine

MARK TARBELL
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