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Odd Pair: A Favorite Wine for Breakfast

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published: Fri., Nov. 18 2011 @ 11:28AM



Photos by Jeremy Parzen.

Serve gently sparkling Moscato d'Asti in a larger glass and you will be rewarded by its fresh stone fruit aromas. Moscato d'Asti, it's what's for breakfast.

In one of my favorite novels of all time, a character in Kurt Vonnegut's 1973 masterpiece calls the martini the [*Breakfast of Champions*](#).

And while "morning drinks" like a Tom Collins, a Bloody Mary, or a [Tequila Sunrise](#) (my personal favorite) are perfectly acceptable in polite society, a martini as morning collation seems a bit excessive (hence the irony).

When it comes to wine, however, we only need to look back a generation to find that in Europe, drinking wine for breakfast was relatively common.

Keep in mind: In a time when potable water could be hard to come by, wine was an ideal, hygienic resource for hydration. The famous Italian winemaker Angelo Gaja loves to remind the people who can afford his wines that by the time running water arrived in the village of Barbaresco where he grew up in the mid-1960s, he had already graduated from enology school and had been working in his family's winery for more than three years (he was in his mid-twenties).

Wine was also a reliable source of nutrients in cold winter months when fresh fruit and vegetables could be hard to come by. Remember: We're accustomed to eating beefsteak tomatoes, Valencia oranges, and New Zealand raspberries all year round; a generation ago, you could only find fresh fruit when in season.

Our favorite breakfast wine is gently sparkling Moscato d'Asti, from Piedmont, Italy. In part, we love it because it is so refreshing and so wonderfully low in alcohol (usually between 5-7 percent). And in part, because of a breakfast recipe taught to us by one of our favorite producers, Aldo Vajra: Add ½ cup of Moscato d'Asti to 1 cup whole milk; steam and then pour over ladyfingers (*savoiardì*) in a deep soup bowl. The residual sugar and stone fruit flavors (think apricot) of the wine work brilliantly with the texture of the sopped biscuits and the mouthfeel of the steamed milk.

Moscato d'Asti is also the only wine that Italians will serve with fresh fruit: It's the perfect accompaniment for your Sunday morning brunch fruit salad.

There are a number of fantastic bottlings of Moscato d'Asti available in the Houston market, and they cost around \$15 a bottle: Vietti, Marchesi di Gresy, Batasiolo, Oddero, Saracco, Chiarlo, Albino Rocca, etc. ([Spec's](#) has the largest selection, thanks to its Italian buyer [Joseph "Grappa Joe" Kemble](#).)

There are other wines that we occasionally serve at breakfast... but you might be surprised at the reason why. Stay tuned...



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