

Port authority

Your E-ZPass to navigating vintage, LBV and tawny ports

Portugal's most favored son is its port wine. Ports begin as sweet red wines to which un-aged (clear) brandy is added to stop fermentation. Vintage port, the finest variety, is from a harvest year that has been declared a vintage year. Aged for two years in wood barrels before bottling, it requires a good deal of aging to mature fully. Late-bottled vintage (LBV) is a budget vintage port. LBV is aged a few more years in a barrel to approximate a well-aged vintage port's character. Tawny port, a blend of vintages, is designated in years – 10, 20, 30 and 40 – rather than vintages. The years represent the wine's resting time in oak barrels. Tawny port features nut, caramel and spice flavors rather than the fruit, herb, and roasted notes of vintage and LBV ports. We've rated the 750 mL bottles on a 10-point scale.

SELECTIONS BY BRANDON WARNEKE & TOM CIOCCO PHOTO COURTESY PORT AUTHORITY OF NY & NJ

NEW YORK

NEW JERSEY

Cockburn's 10-Year Tawny Port
For the price, this is one of our favorite 10-year tawny ports on the market. This port has an excellent concentration, a beautiful structure and a bold finish. Dark cherry characteristics.
Price: \$30
Rating: 8.5

Taylor Fladgate 20-Year Tawny Port
An impressive bouquet with a long, smooth finish. Good, strong acidity helps balance the wealth of fruit and tannins. Always a huge favorite with connoisseurs and critics alike.
Price: \$40
Rating: 8.5

Fonseca 40-Year Tawny Port
If you are searching for a vintage port but just can't find one you think is ready to go, then this is the bottle for you. Great with dessert tonight. Big, bold and smooth... a perfect 40-year-old!
Price: \$120
Rating: 9.0

Dow's 2000 Vintage Port
2000 port was a hot item when it hit the market – and it still is. Unapproachable now because of its immense character, but a perfect candidate for the cellar. This port is best enjoyed after 2010!
Price: \$60
Rating: 9.5

Smith Woodhouse 2003 Vintage Port
This is by far one of the most sought-after offerings each year. A monster of a port – full-bodied with sweet tannins and raspberry and cherry notes. If you buy only one port from 2003, make it this one.
Price: \$48
Rating: 10

Graham's 2003 Vintage Port
Easily one of the top efforts from Graham's in years. This is a medium-to full-bodied offering that features a vibrant structure. Tannins are here in force. The 2003 is a must for any collector of vintage ports.
Price: \$70
Rating: 9.0

Quinta Do Roriz 2003 Vintage Port
This is a full-bodied powerhouse of a port with a massive structure. Perhaps the biggest 2003 we have tasted. Collectors and port lovers worldwide will be racing to pick up this one. Could be the highlight of 2003.
Price: \$48
Rating: 10

Dow's 1985 Vintage Port
It's never easy finding a great vintage port that is still available on the market at a good price, but this bottle is the exception. The 1985 is drinking exceptionally well today and will continue that way through 2009.
Price: \$85
Rating: 9.5



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