

LEARN A BIT MORE ABOUT

NOBLE LATE HARVEST



Nectar of the Gods, heaven in a glass – that's the finest Noble Late Harvest wines in a nutshell. From the delightful golden hues and the hedonistic aromas to the richly-satisfying and lively palates – these are wines to be relished with far more than just desserts. Tricky and uncertain to make, this style of wine can cause much angst and anxiety to the winemaker but with every sip, you'll agree the rewards are worth it.

WHAT IS A NOBLE LATE HARVEST WINE?

Noble Late Harvest or NLH as you'll often see them abbreviated to, are wines made from grapes infected with noble rot. Officially known as *Botrytis Cinerea*, it's a fungus which attaches itself to the skins of grapes. Crucially, it doesn't cause the skins to split, it simply leeches out the water, making the sugars and acids in the grapes super-concentrated. When these grapes are carefully-harvested by hand and then crushed, the sweetness levels of the resulting grape juice are so high that it would be impossible for a yeast to ever ferment the wine to dry. Instead, it gives up, dies, is removed from the wine and the result is small quantities of luscious, sweet dessert wine.

WHAT DOES IT TASTE LIKE?

A lot depends on which grapes are being used to make the wine – top NLHs in SA are usually made from Chenin Blanc, Riesling and Semillon although other grapes such as Sauvignon Blanc and Viognier can also be used. The original flavours of the grape are then overlaid with the added extras of *botrytis* – classic flavours include orange marmalade, honey and rye bread. Younger versions often show pretty floral aromas and flavours whilst older versions carry layers of dried stone fruits, perfume and sometimes hints of spice as well.



NOBLE LATE HARVEST



WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE KNOW?

Botrytis is quite a tricky thing to achieve in the vineyards and sometimes, despite everyone's best efforts, it simply doesn't happen. You need two specific weather conditions to happen on the same day – misty mornings to encourage the fungus to grow, and then sunny afternoons which arrest that growth and stop the fungus turning into the unusable grey rot. Some vineyards are more prone to these conditions than others, but winemakers can never be certain from one year to the next whether they will be able to make this wine.

Famous wines of the world made using noble rot grapes include Sauternes in Bordeaux, Tokaj in Hungary and

most of the famous sweet wines of Germany such as Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese.

WHAT SHOULD WE EAT WITH IT?

Just because NLH's are classed as 'dessert wines' doesn't mean you can only enjoy them with pudding! There are two other classic matches for this style of wine, both of which play on the excellent balance between sweetness and acidity. One is foie gras or any kind of rich liver pate or parfait and the other is blue cheese where the sweetness calms the metallic umami flavours into an harmonious, delicious mouthful.

