

## Title:

Frost Bite? Ice Wine Is More Than Just Frozen Grapes

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714

## Summary:

One of the most rapidly growing trends in the world of wine seems to be with the rise in popularity of ice wines (or eiswein in German). This is interesting because these wines have been around for almost 200 years yet have not had much time in the spotlight until recent history. The most famous ice wines are from Germany, however many other countries such as Canada, Austria, and even Australia have been known to produce ice wines of their own. Because Canada is much colder a...

## Keywords:

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## Article Body:

One of the most rapidly growing trends in the world of wine seems to be with the rise in popularity of ice wines (or eiswein in German). This is interesting because these wines have been around for almost 200 years yet have not had much time in the spotlight until recent history. The most famous ice wines are from Germany, however many other countries such as Canada, Austria, and even Australia have been known to produce ice wines of their own. Because Canada is much colder and is capable of more consistent freezing temperatures has actually surpassed Germany in the production of ice wine.

Ice wine is a dessert wine that is made from frozen grapes. Only the water freezes in the grapes, so when they are pressed frozen, the juice that is extracted is very concentrated and very sweet. This freezing must happen before fermentation, and the grapes need to be pressed frozen, otherwise the water will melt in the grapes and you will not have the concentrated juice required for ice wines.

Natural ice wines require a hard freeze to occur after the grapes have ripened. In Canada, this temperature is a minimum of 17 degrees Fahrenheit while in Germany this temperature is 19 degrees. This means that the grapes must remain on the vines for several months after a normal harvest and risk being lost to rot if there is no freeze. At the other extreme, if the freeze is too severe the grapes can not be harvested and pressed. Because the fruit must be pressed while

it is still frozen, pickers must work late in the night or early in the morning and work while the cellar workers must work in unheated spaces to ensure the grapes do not thaw.

Sometimes wine makers prefer to use cryoextraction. Cryoextraction is a mechanical freezing that is used to simulate the effect of the natural frost that occurs so that grapes can be picked sooner and made into wine. In Germany and Canada, wine created this way can not be called ice wine, only wines which have been frozen naturally are allowed to be called as such.

Whereas regular wines might take days or weeks to ferment, ice wines can take months due to the higher sugar content. Even though it is normal for the sugar content in ice wine to run from 180 g/L up to as high as 320 g/L ice wine remains very refreshing because of the high acidity. Ice wine usually has a medium to full body, with a lingering finish while the nose is oftentimes reminiscent of peach, pear, honey, caramel, and green apples depending on the varietal grape. Pineapple, mango, and even lychee are quite common aromas with white varietals however this list is by far not exhaustive.

Because the juice from the grapes is more concentrated than regular wine, there is a much smaller yield. It is for this reason as well as the methods used that make ice wines more expensive than table wines. Ice wines can cost as much as \$300 a bottle, which is why it is often sold in half bottles for as little as \$50. Grapes that have insufficient brix (sugar) content can not be made into ice wine and are therefore usually sold under the label "special select late harvest" or "select late harvest" at a fraction of the price of true ice wines.

When to drink ice wine is a matter of personal taste. Some people believe that ice wine improve with age and supporters claim that the very high sugar level and high acidity preserve the content for years after bottling. There are then others who believe that with age the wine loses its distinctive acidity, fruitiness, aroma, and freshness. Being that ice wines are very versatile in this, when you decide to drink your ice wine depends on when you feel it tastes best.

Ice wines are becoming the latest trend in the wine world and it is easy to see why. Delicious and refreshing, ice wines are a delicacy and a testament to the skills of the wineries. More expensive than a traditional wine, it is not something that the average person can afford to purchase on a regular basis, but are an essential addition to a special occasion or meal.