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Drink a glass of dessert

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The Wine Curmudgeon has a deep, dark, guilty secret (and, no, it's not Yellow Tail). It's dessert wine -- sweet, rich, luscious, often pricey dessert wine.

Dessert wine almost always gets the benefit of my doubt, because it is that much fun to drink. Pour a glass after a dinner, sniff it, swirl it around in the glass and sip it. With dessert wine, you can cap off the evening without recourse to over-chocolated desserts, the chef's current fusion-fruit concoction or whatever form of creme brulee or cheesecake is making the rounds.

Dessert wines come in a variety of flavors and styles. Some are made with fruit other than grapes, some are sparkling, and some use grapes that have frozen on the vines.

What all have in common, regardless of style, is sweetness -- not sugary soft-drink sweet, but a fuller, more approachable sweetness. The sweetness is a flavor, not the wine's reason for being.

Can you pair dessert wines with food? Yes, but it's generally not worth the trouble. They stand on their own. Also, don't be discouraged by the prices, which are high. A dessert-wine serving is half or less than that of a dinner wine, and a glass or two is more than sufficient.

Serve slightly chilled, and enjoy:

Jackson-Triggs Proprietors' Reserve Vidal Icewine 2005

Icewine is made by letting the grapes freeze on the vine, which concentrates the sugar. This is a Canadian wine. The Vidal is more sweet than fruity, though there are some tropical flavors underneath. Available at World Market, Farpointe Cellar in Southlake and Frisco, Market Street in Colleyville and Central Market.

