

Dessert Grapes—Selection of Varieties with Exceptional Quality (Part II)

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Vinifera Varieties

Black Monukka (parentage unknown; origin probably in Afghanistan or present day Pakistan): This is an authentic grape for the connoisseur. Monukka has an ensemble of attributes that are difficult to excel in desert grapes; and if the writer were restricted to a single choice this variety would probably be it. The flesh characters are nearly faultless with a tender but firm, meaty, crisp consistency, and a tender, tightly adherent skin free of astringency or other undesirable traits. The quality is exquisite with a luscious richness, an exotic fruity flavor and aroma and of course, seedless. The berries are reddish-black, cylindroidal, below medium in size and borne on magnificent, fairly loose, large, long tapering clusters.

Muscat Hamburg (parentage in doubt—some author's say derived from a cross of Muscat Alexandria and Black Hamburg—origin England.) This variety is the connoisseur's choice of the muscat varieties. Its richly aromatic muscat flavor is extremely refreshing and exceeds even the famed Muscat Alexandria, in the opinion of many who have studied the muscat flavored varieties. To the writer's taste, the Muscat Hamburg is not so intensely muscat, less cloying and with an extra measure of refined richness that places it just ahead of the Muscat Alexandria. The large, reddish-black to black ovate berries are borne on medium large, tapering, moderately loose clusters.

Dattier de Beyrouth (parentage un-

known—origin thought to be in southwestern Asia) A lovely dessert grape, with very large, elongate-ovate, yellow berries borne on large, tapering, moderately loose clusters. The flesh consistency is crisp, tender and meaty, with a flavor that has a slight "brown sugar" aspect which recalls a relationship to the true muscats. A variety of imposing appearance and exquisite quality when well grown, the Dattier is one of the finest dessert varieties.

Black Rose (Damas Rose x Black Monukka) x Alphonse Lavallee—origin USDA Horticultural Field Station at Fresno, California) This is a strikingly beautiful variety with very large, jet black, elongate-ovate berries borne on large, tapering clusters. Black Rose has very near the same flesh and skin consistency as Monukka, but it is not seedless, and does not have the characteristic Monukka flavor. It has very high dessert quality, and is one of the finest dessert varieties, far exceeding its parent, Alphonse Lavallee, in this respect.

Muscat Alexandria (parentage unknown—a very ancient variety thought to have probably originated with the Arabs in northern Africa) Worldwide, the Muscat Alexandria, under various synonyms, is the most widely known and grown muscat flavored variety, and enjoyed a great popularity for centuries. The richly aromatic flavor of the berries is the definitive standard for the muscat flavor and aroma, and is always recognizable once tasted. The greenish-yellow, rather obovoid berries are large and meaty,

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but tender and crisp, and are borne in large, loose clusters. If Muscat Alexandria has a quality fault, the writer would say that it is too rich, and somewhat cloying; but to someone with a "sweet tooth" this may not be objectionable at all. This famous grape is the source of most of the world's muscat raisins.

Sultanina (parentage unknown—origin believed to be probably in the region of ancient Persia) This variety is more familiar to North Americans as Thompson Seedless, and to Australians as Sultana. Because of its wide availability, and at times indifferent handling in commercial markets, Sultanina may be somewhat disdained by the seeker of choice fruits; but if well matured and golden yellow in color, it can be a very fine dessert variety. In the writer's opinion, some of the present day cultural practices which have enabled growers to greatly augment size and attractiveness of the berries have unfortunately decreased the quality capabilities of Sultanina. In warm, humid areas such as Urbana the Sultanina is a rather light bearer and the berries do not attain the size or quality that they do in hot, dry regions. Sultanina is the source of most of the world's seedless raisins.

Cardinal (Flame Tokay x Alphonse Lavallee—origin USDA Horticultural Field Station at Fresno, California) Cardinal has several attributes that make this variety rather unusual and valuable for both commercial and home fruit growing—large size, earliness and high dessert quality. At Urbana, Cardinal is the earliest, largest and best in eating quality for its maturity season of any vinifera variety thus far grown. It far surpasses both of its parents in quality, and at full maturity the nearly round dark red, very large berries have a firm, crisp consistency with a delicate flavor that

is reminiscent of some nuance of muscat.

American Type Varieties

Buffalo (Herbert x Watkins—origin New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, New York) For those who like the American type varieties, Buffalo is the grape par excellence. Very few early grape varieties are more than ephemeral things, and are of only fair quality at their best; but Buffalo is both early in maturity and of excellent quality. The flavor is unmistakably characteristic with a rich, sweet, juiciness that lingers in the mouth and is never cloying. Buffalo has that most unusual and rare attribute of hanging long on the vine with a very slow loss of its distinctive quality features. At Urbana, Buffalo matures just before mid-August, and there is little of loss in flavor for several weeks, whereas other varieties nearly of its maturity season such as Fredonia, Portland, etc., seldom can retain acceptable dessert quality on the vine much beyond two weeks after maturity. In the writer's opinion, Buffalo produces a juice and jelly which surpasses Concord, long the standard for these products in American type grape varieties.

Urbana (Ross x Mills—origin New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, New York) This late variety, when properly matured, is of superb quality, and has the ability to retain high quality without shrivelling for a prolonged period. The large, light red, short-ovate berries in medium large, moderately compact clusters, have a rich, sweet, aromatic flavor combined with a firm, juicy, meaty and tender flesh consistency that places Urbana in the company of those few varieties worthy of the epicure. Although the skin is rather thick and tough and not particularly pleasant to eat, one has only to compare the flesh quality with the

common vinifera shipping varieties such as Tokay or Emperor to become aware of how inferior they are to Urbana in eating quality.

Mills (Muscat Hamburg x Creveling—origin Hamilton, Ontario, Canada by W. H. Mills) A little known or rare variety with an exotic flavor that the writer finds particularly appealing, but difficult to describe. One would almost have to leave the genus *Vitis* and taste a crisp, meaty, black sweet cherry to find a flavor similar to Mills. The jet black, ovate berries are very firm, meaty, tender in consistency and, like those of its offspring Urbana, have the ability to retain high quality for a long period of time without shrivelling or losing their delicious, rich flavor.

Delago (Delaware x Goethe—origin Dennison, Texas by T. V. Munson) Another rare or little known variety that has a firm, meaty, tender consistency and a rich, sweet, refreshing flavor somewhat on the order of Urbana. Delago is a bit more sprightly in flavor than Urbana, and the seeds are not so easily freed from the flesh in eating. The red, ovate, medium-large berries in below medium clusters, are late maturing and keep well without shrivelling.

Captivator (Herbert x Meladel—origin Dennison, Texas by T. V. Munson) Although a half-sister of Buffalo, this variety is translucent red, with an entirely different flavor. For those who have a "sweet tooth," Captivator will rate very high with its luscious sweetness, coupled with a rich, fruity flavor. The flesh is very juicy, moderately firm, and slightly stringy in consistency. The large, spherical berries are borne in medium compact clusters, and mature in early midseason.

Seneca (Lignan blanc x Ontario—origin New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, New York) Modern grape breeding has

produced in Seneca an American type grape that comes nearest to a vinifera table variety than any yet introduced. Seneca has a distinctive delicious, sweet, rich flavor, and a meaty, tender flesh consistency, plus a tender edible skin. The medium, golden, ovate berries mature very early, but retain their excellent quality on the vine until late in the season.

New York Muscat (Muscat Hamburg x Ontario—origin New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, New York) The muscat flavor and aroma in grapes has been highly prized since ancient times, and, until modern grape breeding created them, no muscat flavored varieties adapted to the climatic conditions of the eastern North American grape growing areas existed. New York Muscat is the finest muscat variety available to eastern growers, and its rich, characteristic flavor is most appealing. The medium-sized clusters are loose to moderately compact, and the berries are reddish-black, and early maturing.

Delaware (parentage unknown—origin thought to have been in the garden of Paul H. Provost of Frenchtown, New Jersey) Delaware has had the distinction of being the standard of quality among American type grapes for over a century, and although small in berry size, this sort still remains worthy as an excellent quality dessert variety. The berries are small, short-ovate, red, and borne in well filled, rather compact, below medium clusters. The flavor of Delaware is especially delightful with its rich, vinous tang and juicy sweetness. To the writer's taste, the fruit quality and characteristics of the Delaware bear many similarities with the Gewurztraminer, that renowned wine variety of Germany.

French Hybrid Varieties

Seibel 5813 (Seibel 3012 x Seibel

175)—origin Aubenas (Ardeche), France by Albert Seibel) A very late, dark red variety with large, ovate, very crisp, meaty berries of tender consistency, borne on very large, usually loose, pendant clusters. Properly grown and well matured, Seibel 5813 can produce delicious table grapes with a rich, fruity, characteristic flavor. This variety is prone to overbear, and should be heavily cluster thinned, otherwise the quality will be lowered, and the berries will be "flat" in flavor and lacking in character. Needs a long, warm growing season and good soil moisture for best results.

Seibel 14664 (Seibel 5813 x Seibel 12482—origin Aubenas (Ardeche), France by Albert Seibel) Grown under optimum conditions, Seibel 14664 can produce magnificent dessert grapes of arresting beauty with large, very compact, pyramidal clusters of very large, yellow, elongate-ellipsoidal berries. Like its mother, Seibel 5813, heavy cluster thinning to restrict the crop is necessary to produce high quality. At its best, this variety has berries with a tender, meaty, crisp consistency and a slight "brown sugar" like flavor reminiscent of Dattier de Beyrouth, one of its vinifera ancestors.

Aurelia (Chaouch x Seyve-Villard 12-375—origin Greensboro, North Carolina by Dr. Robert T. Dunstan) The "Golden One" is a fitting title for this lovely dessert variety with its large, ovate, golden yellow berries. The berry consistency is firm, crisp, meaty and similar to Chaouch, but the quality is superior to that well known Turkish table variety, as grown at Urbana.

Seibel 9110 (Seibel 5455 x Seibel 4938—origin Aubenas (Ardeche), France by Albert Seibel) This variety also requires heavy cluster thinning for optimum quality. Stikingly beautiful in conformation, Seibel 9110 has handsome, large, tapering clusters

with beautiful yellow, pointed ellipsoidal berries with a frost-like bloom. The tender skin has a slight twinge of astringency until fully mature, but it is a fine dessert grape nonetheless.

Seyve-Villard 20-365 (Panse x Seyve-Villard 12-375—origin St. Vallier (Drome), France by Victor Villard) The very large, elongate-ellipsoidal yellow berries in large, pyramidal clusters make this variety a very attractive dessert grape. The flavor is sweet, neutral but refreshing, with a crisp, meaty, tender consistency. Like Seibel 9110, the skin has a twinge of astringency until complete maturity. Must not be allowed to overbear, or the quality will be indifferent.

The writer has arbitrarily limited the list of exceptional quality varieties to twenty sorts. The list could just as easily have been longer—or shorter, depending upon the particular year that one evaluates the varieties for quality. Many varieties that might be included on a list of high quality sorts lack an overall ensemble of qualities, though they may rank very high in one or two characteristics that are very desirable. For example, one might have listed the vinifera varieties *Perlette* and *Khalili*, for their crisp, tender consistency and earliness; *Trieste*, for its extremely firm, meaty consistency and tremendous winged clusters of golden ovate berries of impressive appearance. The French hybrids list might have included *Seyve-Villard 20-473*, for its early, golden muscat flavored fruit, or *Galibert 133-6*, for its very large clusters of reddish-black berries of crisp, tender consistency. Among the American varieties, one might have included *Iona*, for its rich, vinous flavor; *Keuka*, for its perfumed flavor of roses; *Yates*, for its meaty, tender consistency and rich flavor, similar to Urbana; *Steuben*, for its spicy, rich flavor and juiciness; or *Sweet Blue*, for its un-

usual sweetness and fruity flavor that was a favorite of the writer since he first remembers eating grapes. The writer is also very fond of muscadine grape varieties such as Thomas and Topsail, but his experience in growing these types has been too limited to offer comments.

Hardiness

The minimum temperatures that varieties derived from the *vinifera* and muscadine species will withstand is not precisely known because of inherent differences in hardiness among varieties and/or environmental conditions, wood maturity, etc., which influence the degree of hardiness of a given vine. It has been suggested that under favorable conditions, 0°F is about the minimum they will endure without serious injury; but injury has been noted at a few degrees above 0°F under some conditions. This would mean that winter protection should be provided in areas north of northern Alabama and Georgia. Some varieties of *vinifera* have been known to succeed fairly well in particularly favorable areas further north, but most of these were relatively

hardy, early-maturing wine sorts.

Of the French hybrid and American type varieties, Seibel 14664, Seyve-Villard 20-365, Mills, and Seneca are less hardy than the others in their respective groups. Temperatures lower than -10°F have injured these varieties at Urbana often enough so that winter protection must be provided, unless very favorable sites and optimum cultural practices can be provided. Other sorts mentioned, such as Seyve-Villard 20-473, Galibert 133-6, Iona and Keuka, should be included in the same hardiness category.

The other French hybrid and American type varieties seldom experience winter injury at Urbana, but growers who live in regions where winter temperatures lower than -15°F can be expected regularly, should be prepared to give their vines winter protection.

In closing the writer would like to emphasize that the list of twenty varieties plus the comments on several others is strictly a personal choice based upon a single criterion for selection—dessert quality as fresh fruit—nothing more.

The Chehalis Apple

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The late Lloyd Lonborg of Oakville, Washington chose the name Chehalis for a new apple variety that he discovered. It resembles Golden Delicious in appearance, but ripens earlier, and is affected much less by apple scab. The original tree was a chance seedling on the Lonborg property near Oakville, a small town situated near the Chehalis river, and about seventeen miles northwest of the city of the same name. The

Chehalis ripens at Oakville in early October, three or four weeks ahead of Golden Delicious.

Mr. Lonborg wrote on November 9, 1965: "The original tree came up about a quarter of a mile east of our present location. I don't know how old this tree was when it bore two fruits in the fall of 1955. In the spring of 1956 we sold that part of our property and moved to our present location. The following winter I moved

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