

## *The Final Touch*

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### ***Christmas Pudding***

My dictionary lists the meaning of “the final touch” as “to make something complete” and that is what I hope to do with your Christmas dinner. Last week I suggested red and white wines to go with the meal, but pudding was not addressed.



***Always use the right glass!***

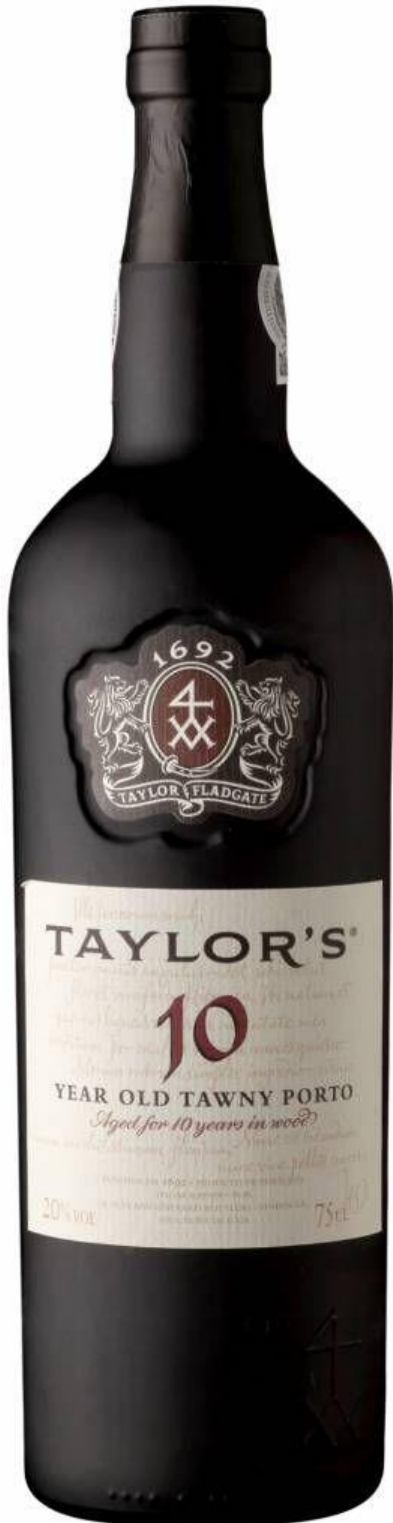
There is no better match with Christmas steamed pudding than a fine, aged tawny port. **Graham's 20-Year-Old Tawny** is from a leading producer who originally set up shop just over two hundred years ago, in 1820. Graham's was one of the first Port companies to invest in its own vineyards in Portugal's Douro Valley in 1890 and is now at the cutting edge of innovation in winemaking techniques. Their 20-Year-Old Tawny is a Port wine perfected over two decades to delight those in the pursuit of excellence. Matured in seasoned oak casks for an average of twenty years, this is the age when this style of wine reaches the peak of its life.

Master of Wine Andy Howard, writing for Decanter magazine, rates this Port 96/100 and comments, "Tawny Port is always exciting, but if you can afford to splash out, go for a 20-year-old. This (Graham's) is always one of the best. Ethereal and mellow on the palate, it boasts flavours of toffee and caramel, burnt orange and raisins, dried plums, hazelnuts and a savoury hint of mushroom on the finish. Wonderful stuff! \$77.50. Stock #3037.

I think that I need to emphasize this every year, but please, please do not ever, for any Port, use those old, out of date and totally inappropriate tiny "Port" glasses! A regular white wine glass will reveal so much more of these complex wines. And two other things; tawnies will have no sediment to worry about and they will not develop further – in other words you cannot keep a ten-year-old for ten years and then have a twenty. All development takes place in the cask.



***Graham's 20-Year-Old Tawny***



*Taylor's 10-Year-Old Tawny Port*

**Taylor's 10-Year-Old Tawny Port** is from one of the most respected producers that has been producing these majestic wines since 1692! They are known for their legendary Vintage Ports but are also one of the most respected producers of Tawny. This style of Port is fully matured in seasoned oak casks each holding about 630 litres of wine. Here, over many years of ageing, the wine gradually takes on its characteristic amber '*tawny*' colour, slowly developing the complex mellow flavours and the smooth luscious palate which are the hallmarks of Tawny Port. It is the best-selling 10-year-old tawny in the U.K. the country that many families immigrated from to produce this wonderful wine in Portugal. Hence the English names of so many of the early and historic producers.

Here is what Robert Parker's Wine Advocate has to say. "It is my opinion that Taylor's tawny ports are the best of their type. When tasted against other tawnies, they all exhibit more aromatic personalities, greater fruit and ripeness, and a wonderful sweetness and length". \$47.05. Stock #3180.



**“H” by Hine VSOP**

Of course, a lit match must be put to the pudding after a dousing of good brandy and for this I suggest **“H” by Hine VSOP Cognac**, and a miniature for \$9.95 would be just fine. In fact, another little bottle from this producer, established in 1763, would be ideal to mix in the hard sauce as you are making it. Did you know that the word “proof” originated from the test to see whether a whisky was fully ready to bottle? If it caught fire when tested with a match, this was “proof” that it was ready to go. I remember a very cold Christmas day, many years ago in Wisconsin, when I poured some local brandy on the pudding. It would not ignite. I found a small bottle of Cognac – added it - and poof went the flames.

Another quite wonderful accompaniment to the pudding would be a Sauternes, the great dessert wine from Bordeaux. A half bottle will go a long way and we have two of the finest, and well-aged, vintages.



**2009 Chateau Guiraud**

**2009 Chateau Guiraud** rates 97 points with Vinous and these remarks, “the 2009 Guiraud is one of the gems of Sauternes this vintage, one of the finest offerings in recent years. It has a wonderful, beautifully delineated bouquet with expressive scents of wild honey, orange pith, Seville orange marmalade and just a hint of pineapple. The palate is beautifully defined with pure botrytised fruit, supremely well balanced with a vivacious, ginger, and white peppering finish that lingers long in the mouth. Outstanding. (Reviewed in 3/2019) - (.375ml) \$50.35. Stock #9633.



**2010 Chateau Guiraud** gets 96/100 in a 2013 review by James Suckling. “Ripe lemon peel and orange. Some honey and vanilla with loads of new wood. Dense and very sweet on the palate with nice pure fruit and firm tannins from the oak that still needs time to soften. This Sauternes shows a wonderful fruit and excellent potential but needs time. Try in 2018.” (2/2013). Which would I pick? Maybe best to just flip a coin. (.375ml) \$50.35. Stock #9656.

***2010 Chateau Guiraud***

If you are of the “I want something off the beaten path” type of person, then let me repeat what I wrote almost a year ago. “Chances are that you have never tried Ratafia, so let me tell you about our **Fleurot-Larose Ratafaia de Bourgogne**. In the central part of Chassagne-Montrachet we find the 1st Cru monopole vineyard Clos de la Rocquemaure, which is owned by the Fleurot-Larose family. In addition to their white and red Chassagne-Montrachet wines, they also make the fortified wine Ratafaia de Bourgogne by adding grape brandy to unfermented Chardonnay grape must (juice). This is a wine, with a lot of sweetness and fullness, which in the glass appears almost completely orange-yellow. There are notes of orange, figs, dried apricot, apple or pear brandy, aged calvados and a distinctive herbal character. Drink the wine as an apéritif with an ice cube or for a sweet, full-bodied dessert such as tarte tatin with glazed apples. You could also go a step further and serve it with classic fried foie gras with figs”. Of course, I should now include Christmas pudding. \$55.00 a half bottle. Stock #7630.

I do hope that you all have a wonderful Christmas period.



*Fleurot-Larose Ratafaia de Bourgogne*

Michael Robinson writes exclusively for Burrows, Lightbourn Ltd. He can be contacted at [mrobinson@bll.bm](mailto:mrobinson@bll.bm). Burrows, Lightbourn have stores in Hamilton (Front Street East, 295-1554), Paget (Harbour Road, 236-0355). A selection of their wines, beers and spirits are available on line at

