

Sip of the Iceberg

ALL HANDS ON DECK. ICE WINE AHEAD.



There was a huge controversy several years ago in the science world when an endocrinologist discovered that exposure to a common weedkiller, atrazine, caused male frogs to develop female sex organs. Men who want to explore the rarefied milieu of ice wines, those richly textured, frozen-on-the-vine nectars, take heart: your sex organs won't budge merely by drinking wines associated with the gentler gender — women and non-soccer-playing Britons. Ice wines are for anyone well connected enough to find them, well heeled enough to afford them and savvy enough to appreciate that they're not just dessert wines; they're dessert. Made from grapes harvested and quickly pressed while frozen (producing an incredibly sweet and concentrated elixir), they provide men with a golden opportunity to practice their sipping skills; guzzling is frowned upon by most everyone with ovaries.

In fact, the Samurai Sipper would bet her kimono that the objects of your affection loathe that most male postprandial tradition of Cohibas and Cognacs; it's so last-dinner-on-the-Titanic. Ice wines offer pleasing alternatives to the clubhouse reek, which, face it, is as sexy as a barrel of hermaphroditic frogs. But serve some chilled ice wine from, say, Canada's Okanagan Valley, and I promise you'll evolve instantly from croaker to crown prince. Ice wines have macho stamina, too, and legs; in 50 years they'll still be players. What about you?

Maybe a connoisseur's grasp of ice wines doesn't guarantee a boudoir tryst, but after a 375-milliliter bottle, you won't care about coupling as much as who drives your Porsche 911 Carrera S home. Take **Neige**, for example, a luscious apple ice wine by **La Face Cachée de la Pomme**, just over the border in

Quebec. Neige is 12 percent alcohol, and liquid velvet, too. With foie gras for starters, or lusty cheeses and crusty breads as a midnight snack, it has a silky finish and a woody, lumberjack aroma, leaving a mellifluous buzz in its wake. Each 375-milliliter bottle requires 11 pounds of apples to make, but it isn't cloying or gluey; it's dreamy. Sherry-Lehmann Wine and Spirits has the 2002, a bargain at \$25 (www.sherry-lehmann.com).

I satisfied my sweet tooth at Vintage New York, 482 Broome Street. Owned by the aptly named Susan Wine and Robert Ransom, it sells wines only from New York State, and none for a king's ransom. For \$5, five gulp-size glasses from the tasting menu are yours, deductible from any purchase of \$50 or more. The Samurai Sipper not only talked a Frenchwoman into buying a New York bubbly, but she also bought herself two Finger Lakes beauties: **Casa Larga's 2004 Fiori delle Stelle** (\$40) and **Standing Stone's bracing 2004 Vidal Ice** (\$27).

Ice wines are made in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana too, where subzero winters make hospitable climates for frozen grapes, if not for humans. But world-class ice wines really come

from Germany, where they morph into jammy, aromatic poetry. German eisweins are mostly rieslings, but other grapes work. Chambers Street Wines, at No. 160, sells primarily Old World wines like **2003 Zeltinger Himmelreich Eiswein** from **Selbach-Oster** (\$85). The word "himmelreich" means kingdom of heaven; after you savor it, you know why. Marc Hanes, a knowledgeable sort at Chambers, can guide you through the impressive choice of German dessert wines and help you master the hierarchy in which eiswein occupies the highest rung.

You can start with kabinet, an all-around sporting beverage, sweet or dry, that is generally low in alcohol. Spätlese is a late-harvest wine, sweet or dry, very underrated in the United States and deserving better; ausleses are more concentrated and usually sweet. Beerenausleses are botrytized wines, meaning they've got "noble rot," which shrivels up the grapes and concentrates their sweetness and acidity. The penultimates are trockenbeerenausleses, or TBA's, deliciously honeyed, massively concentrated. Finally, the crown jewels: eisweins. Some celebrated vineyards producing winners of every type year in, year out are **J. J. Prüm, Dr. Loosen, Hermann Dönnhoff** and **Markus Molitor**. Check out www.wine-searcher.com and see what's in your neck of the woods, or pay for shipping, big shot.

The Samurai found a pluperfect eiswein through Chris Fleming at PJ Wine, 4898 Broadway: **J. & H. A. Strub's 2001 Niersteiner Paterberg Riesling** (\$100 for 500 milliliters). Described as "liquid Cap'n Crunch," it packs a tropical fruit punch and the great round, fulsome mouth feel that unctuous wines have. I'd try this with fruit tarts or soft-rind cheeses — anything but frogs' legs. ■