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Don't Necessarily Say No to Beaujolais Nouveau

2007 was a challenging vintage for producers of the light, lively French red, but they managed to make some quality quaffers

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Posted: Thursday, November 15, 2007

For more than 50 years, the third Thursday in November has marked the arrival of Beaujolais Nouveau. With it, wine drinkers receive a first glimpse of the potential of the vintage for wines from Europe. From *Wine Spectator's* tasting of this year's wines, there are some Nouveau bottlings worth seeking out.

The first country where Nouveau went on sale this year was telling. Japan, thanks to its proximity to the International Date Line, popped the first corks. After the French, the Japanese have become the world's biggest Nouveau consumers, but sales there are declining. Last year, the Japanese ordered 11.7 million bottles, but that's predicted to drop by 10 to 20 percent this year, according to importers. In an effort to stop the slide, Nouveau producers made 400,000 bottles of Nouveau Rosé, created to help spark excitement for Beaujolais Nouveau anew.

And here in the United States, which drank almost 3 million bottles last year, sales have been slowing as well. But retailers are still enthusiastically putting out their displays. "So far, sales are looking good," said Michael Aaron, chairman of Sherry-Lehmann Wine and Spirits. "Our air shipment sales are up 10 percent over last year. We ordered 300 cases this year by air delivery."

The style of the 2007 wines can be attributed to the growing season, which was jump-started by a hot April. But the warmth slipped into a more moderate summer, primarily made up of sunny—but not hot—days and cool nights, which hindered ripeness and the development of fruit flavors. Franck Duboeuf, general director at Les Vins Georges Duboeuf, the region's largest producer, called 2007 a "demanding vintage." He explained that to achieve the final blend of their 2007 Beaujolais Nouveau they tasted more extensively than in other years. "We tasted more than 14,000 samples this year, much more than a traditional year—probably 10 to 15 percent more."

The wine, about one-third of the region's annual production, is made only from Gamay grapes in two appellations: Beaujolais and Beaujolais-Villages (the latter produces slightly weightier wines). The winemakers use a technique called carbonic maceration, in which whole grape clusters are thrown into a tank. The tank is then sealed, trapping the carbon dioxide from the fermentation process inside. After three weeks in the tank, the free-run juice is collected, filtered and bottled. The resulting red wine is light-bodied, with fresh cherry and berry flavors and a distinctive banana aroma.



Among the highest-scoring wines were the Prosper-Maufoux, the Georges Duboeuf Village bottling and the Pascal Chatelus.

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The 2007s show two distinct styles; the best bottlings are marked by a red raspberry fruit character, along with notes of spice or sandalwood. For the most part, Beaujolais Nouveau's typical tangy acidity is more balanced in these wines, and occasionally some light tannins are present, providing a bit of structure. In comparison, the lesser wines are tart and attenuated, displaying simple flavors of red fruits. The top-scoring wine this year was the Georges Duboeuf Beaujolais-Villages Nouveau 2007, though we did not taste the more widely available AOC wine, the Georges Duboeuf Beaujolais Nouveau 2007, which retails for about \$1 less.

Although it's easy to get caught up in the excitement that retailers and restaurants create around Beaujolais Nouveau, consumers may have more consistent offerings from the still-available 2006 *cru* Beaujolais and late-release *cru* bottlings from the excellent 2005 vintage (see our recent [report on the top 2005 and 2006 Beaujolais wines](#)).

Wine	Score	Price
GEORGES DUBOEUF Beaujolais-Villages Nouveau 2007	85	\$12
A juicy red, with kirsch and strawberry flavors backed by light spice and sandalwood notes. There's enough structure to match with food. Drink now. 16,000 cases imported. — <i>A.N.</i>		
MIONETTO Marca Trevigiana Novello 2007	85	\$10
This is spicy and floral, with hints of tobacco and earth to the currant and candied cherry flavors. Slightly rustic finish. Merlot and Corvina. Drink now. 11,500 cases made. — <i>A.N.</i>		
PROSPER-MAUFOUX Beaujolais-Villages Nouveau 2007	85	\$13
A spicy red, with hints of black pepper accenting the cherry and strawberry flavors. The bright acidity enlivens a moderate finish. Drink now. 2,500 cases made. — <i>A.N.</i>		
LABOURÉ-ROI Beaujolais Nouveau 70-Year-Old Vines 2007	84	\$18
This is light and tangy, with red raspberry and spice flavors. Juicy, with a pretty floral note on the finish. Drink now. 500 cases imported. — <i>A.N.</i>		
JEAN BERERD & FILS Beaujolais-Villages Nouveau Le Perréon Domaine de la Madone 2007	83	\$17
Light raspberry and black cherry flavors mix in this juicy red. Modest structure, with a hint of banana on the finish. Drink now. — <i>A.N.</i>		
PASCAL CHATELUS Beaujolais Nouveau 2007	83	\$12
A strong banana note on the nose, with spice, sandalwood and kirsch flavors on the palate. Lightly tart finish. Drink now. 770 cases imported. — <i>A.N.</i>		
DOMAINE DE BEL-AIR Beaujolais-Villages Nouveau 2007	82	\$17
A simple red with a hint of bubble gum to the candied cherry and spice notes. Light structure. Drink now. — <i>A.N.</i>		
JOËL ROCHETTE Beaujolais-Villages Nouveau 2007	81	\$13
This modest red offers light flavors of raspberry and earth. Drink now. 250 cases imported. — <i>A.N.</i>		
LABOURÉ-ROI Beaujolais Nouveau 2007	79	\$13
This has some concentration, but earthy notes mingle with the sour cherry fruit and give it a rustic character. 5,000 cases imported. — <i>A.N.</i>		