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## Muscat Love

MOVE OVER, WINE  
SNOBBERY—  
CONSUMERS WANT  
SWEET!

Muscat, the sweet grape once used mostly for raisins and table grapes, is one of the hottest wine grapes in the world right now. Often referred to by its Italian name, Moscato, this white wine increased 156.3 percent in volume during 2010, according to A. C. Nielson Data.

With its honey, peach and other variations of sweet flavors, the typical Moscato is drawing young and curious new wine drinkers. But Moscato's versatility might be what is really driving this trend, says Lou Capitao, Managing Partner of Touchstone Wines, importer of Ricossa wines from Italy's Piedmont region.

Capitao says this trend challenges the stereotype that Moscato is just an after-dinner drink. "People shy away from the after-dinner drinks," Capitao says. "[Consumers] have a couple glasses of wine, and the last thing they want to do is to have even more alcohol."

The recession has helped Moscato, too, he says. "It's cheaper than Cristal. It still has bubbles and it's sweet. All of a sudden Moscato became an option for price-conscious consumers. It wasn't just the lower social classes feeling this recession; everybody's looking for value, even at the very top end."

Now, hundreds of winemakers from South Africa to California are planting the once-ignored grape. While some can be too sweet (almost like drinking honey) and some are not sweet enough (too dry to be truly representative of the grape), we've found some versions that hit a happy medium. Sorted by place of origin, here's a cross section of some of the best Moscatos on the market.



**BATASIOLO**  
**NV Moscato Rosé Dolce (\$13)**  
Nose of candied fruits, jolly rancher watermelon.  
Great flavor, bubbles explode in mouth with  
notes of red fruits and honey.

BOISSET AMERICA