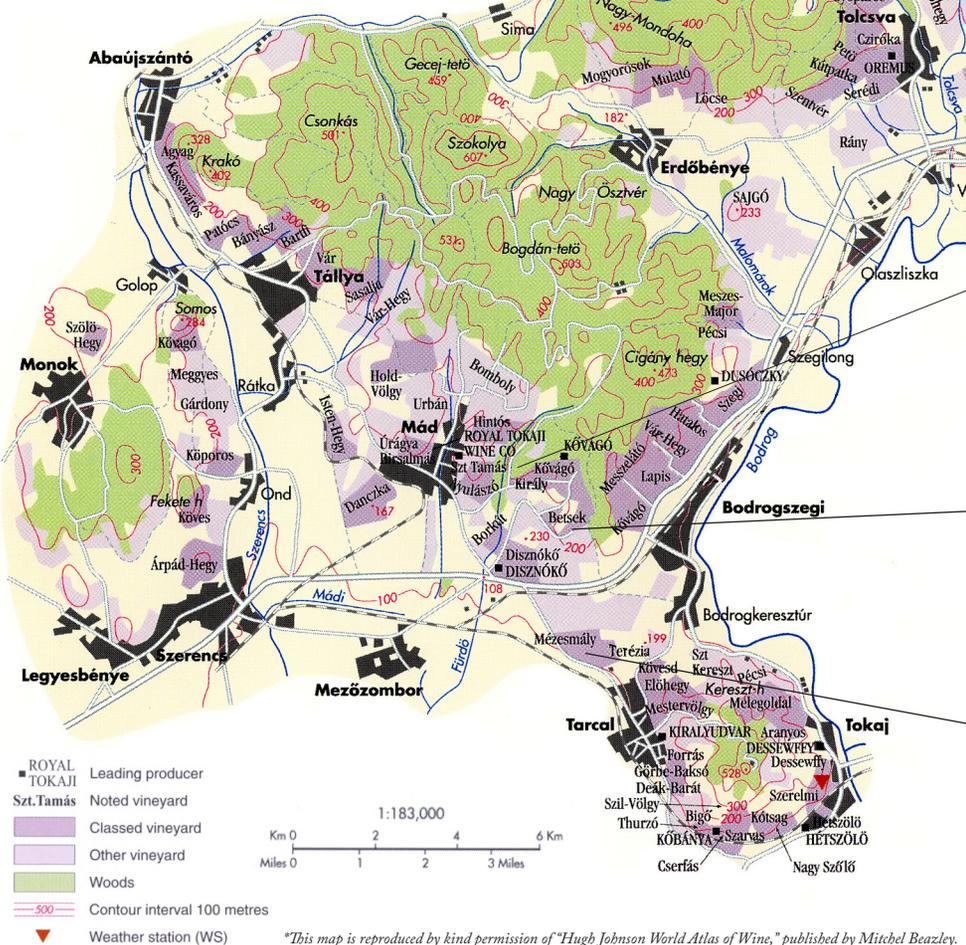


THE REGION: TOKAJ

The Tokaj wine region is located in northeast Hungary in the Zemplén Mountains, an area characterized by late springs and short growing seasons. Although the average temperature here is generally cool, Tokaj enjoys long, sunny summers and dry autumns. The meeting of the Tisza and Bodrog rivers in Tokaj creates a mist similar to that of the fog in Sauternes. The mist encourages “botrytis cinerea,” or “noble rot,” which dries and shrivels the Furmint, Hárslevelű and Muscat grapes that comprise Tokaji wines, and concentrates the sugars. Grapes that are infected with botrytis are commonly referred to by the Hungarian term *aszú*.



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THE VINEYARDS

Royal Tokaji owns a unique combination of first- and second-growth vineyards that have always been privately owned. At one time, first-growth vineyards *Betsek* and *Szt. Tamás* were owned by Prince *Rakoczi I.* His vineyards were sold in the late 1660s to save the prince, who was involved in a conspiracy that would have otherwise cost him his life. His son, Prince *Rakoczi II.*, was able to buy back the prized land in the 1700s. Three centuries later, these vineyards continue to be highly valued.

SZT. TAMÁS, first growth (SENT tahm-ash): Royal Tokaji owns 22 parcels of the *Szt. Tamás* Vineyard that are located north of the *Nyulászó* Vineyard on south-facing slopes at nearly 220 meters (720 feet), overlooking the winery's cellars. Named for the apostle *Saint Thomas*, the vineyard's red volcanic-clay soil is high in iron oxide and has the ability to retain moisture well, a characteristic helpful in drought years. Wines produced from grapes grown here have a lovely, pure fruitiness, nice acidity and good ageability.

BETSEK, first growth (bet-CHEK): The largest of Royal Tokaji's first-growth vineyards, *Betsek* is named after an old Magyar family. Shaped like a crescent moon and facing southeast, it is located in what is known as the basin of the first growths. The *Betsek* terroir totals 89 hectares (219.9 acres), of which Royal Tokaji owns 15 hectares (37 acres), all of which are planted to vines except 1 hectare which lies fallow. The area where the vineyard is located is typically cold — lower portions of the vineyard have been known to freeze in the spring. The black volcanic topsoil contributes to the mineral and lovely black pepper characters in the wine. Being at the bottom of the valley, the vineyard imparts a much more earthy character to the wine than the other first growths.

MÉZES MÁLY, great first growth (MAIZE-esh my): Royal Tokaji owns more than half of 46.9-hectare (19 acres) *Mézes Mály*, one of only two vineyards in all of Tokaj to be named as a great first growth in the classification of 1700 (the other portion of the vineyard is owned by *Hugh Johnson*). It has since been referred to as “pro mensa caesaris haberi,” or “to be the first choice at the royal table,” — an honorable distinction likened to *Château d'Yquem's* status in *Bordeaux*. Located on a south-facing slope, “*Mézes Mály*,” or “honeycomb,” is Royal Tokaji's only vineyard with loess topsoil, providing the wines with honey and floral characteristics. These wines are softer than other Royal Tokaji wines grown in vineyards with volcanic-clay topsoil.