

**“Strongly spice-scented, young, good”.
Ways of Classifying Wine and the
Change in the Assortment of Polish
Nobles’ Cellars in the second half of
the eighteenth century and early
nineteenth century**

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„Mocno korzenne, młode, dobre”. Sposoby klasyfikacji wina
oraz zmiana asortymentu piwnic szlacheckich w drugiej połowie XVIII
i na początku XIX wieku

Abstract: This article focuses on cellar inventories and notes (on the quality, taste and age of the liquors) from the second half of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century that could be used to identify changes in the assortment of wines and to characterise the language of wine description. It can be assumed that while the assortment of nobles’ cellars was subject to quite dynamic change and successive expansion in the 19th century, the taste qualities of wines themselves did not undergo such a rapid revolution. The knowledge of wines, their medicinal properties, and the types of wines which were to be considered good, was still firmly rooted in the past, and the preferred tastes were consistent with the dietary tradition of the time, though opposed to new culinary trends.

Key words: wine, taste, cellars, degustation, wine collecting

Abstrakt: Niniejszy artykuł skupia się na inwentarzach piwnicznych i notatkach (dotyczących jakości, smaku i wieku trunków) z drugiej połowy XVIII i początku XIX w., które można wykorzystać do śledzenia zmian w asortymencie trunków oraz scharakteryzowania języka opisu win. O ile asortyment piwnic szlacheckich podlegał w XIX w. dość dynamicznym zmianom i sukcesywnemu rozszerzaniu, o tyle opisywane walory smakowe win nie uległy tak gwałtownej rewolucji. Wiedza o winach, ich właściwościach leczniczych i rodzajach, które należało uznać za dobre, była jeszcze mocno zakorzeniona w przeszłości, a preferowane smaki, chociaż były zgodne z ówczesną tradycją żywieniową, to jednak pozostawały w opozycji do nowych trendów kulinarnych.

Słowa kluczowe: wino, smak, piwnice, degustacja, kolekcjonerstwo

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I. Introduction. II. Research sources and objectives. III. Wine description and assortment.
IV. Taste. V. Wine age and quality. VI. Originality. VII. Conclusion

I. Introduction

The first attempts to objectively classify wines were mostly made in agronomic literature, focusing primarily on the types of grafts and their resulting wines.¹ In the second half of the eighteenth century, works dedicated to individual types of wines and their medicinal properties² appeared on the European publishing market. Literature placing significant emphasis on the art of tasting began to emerge only in the first decades of the nineteenth century.³ The geographical reach was also expanding. Wine merchant André Jullien's 1816 work *Topographie de tous les vignobles connus* was one of the first attempts to go beyond the focus on European winemaking. In addition to Spanish, Greek, Italian and other European wines, Jullien describes wines from America, Africa and China.

The author of the first English-language publication on wine classification is believed to be Alexander Henderson, who published *The History of Ancient and Modern Wines*⁴ in 1824. This 'history' was followed by a selection of similar works including the popular *History and description of modern wines* (1833) published by British journalist Cyrus Redding.⁵ A year later, Frederick Charles Husenbeth's parallel work *A guide for the wine cellar*⁶ appeared on the market. In the introduction, the author stressed that his book was already in progress much before Redding's publication, and was only delayed by publishing problems. Thus, as Husenbeth notes, the two books often overlap in their findings.

Before the rise of official wine classifications⁷ and the development of an elaborated discourse on the tasting qualities of wines, the nomenclature for wine in a given cellar and the hierarchy of wines were heavily subjective matters. By examining the records of eighteenth-century cellars in Poland, we can see how they were run and thereby better understand the first tasting practices and how individual wines were classified.

II. Research sources and objectives

This study is a preliminary work to trace the development of the idea of wine collecting in the Polish-speaking lands at the end of the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century.⁸ For this purpose, it is necessary not only to analyse the assortment of wine amassed in cellars, but also to learn about cellar-keeping practices and the vocabulary that was used to describe the taste, strength, aroma and other properties of old wines. After an initial analysis, it will be clear that the cellar language differed significantly from the literary depiction of wine's taste attributes.

¹ Liger L. 1701; Miller P. 1735.

² McBride D. 1793.

³ See more Oxford. 2015. (e.g. wine as medicine; the golden age).

⁴ Henderson A. 1824.

⁵ Redding C. 1833.

⁶ Husenbeth F.Ch. 1834.

⁷ See, e.g. Unwin T. 1996, pp. 241–249; Markham D. 1998.

⁸ In the second half of the eighteenth century, Poland was gradually annexed by Prussia, Russia, and Austria (three partitions in 1772, 1793 and 1795) so that it effectively ceased to exist as an independent state in the nineteenth century.

The language was definitely simpler, less colourful and poetic, but its purpose was primarily to convey the qualities and flaws of individual wines.

In the eighteenth century, Polish cellar inventories evolved from succinct lists, providing only information about a liquor's country of origin, into more elaborate documents. Apart from indication of origin, references to the region of production were also included, the colour of the wine were identified more often, and the description was more nuanced. Quality designations, flavour descriptions, information on the intended use of a given liquor were already common, and the closer we get to the nineteenth century, the more often we find the name of the vineyard or manufacturer of a wine or its year of production.

Cellar records from the eighteenth century provide us with valuable information about the evolution of the language of taste and the characteristics of the wines themselves. In this case, the material at hand is rich, although largely scattered and inconsistent due to the nature of the records kept at the time. The source corpus thus ranges from brief notes, lacking detail, giving the number of barrels of wine amassed in a cellar, to examples of many years of meticulous cellar records detailing the vintage of the wine, its flavour characteristics, purpose, sealing, and consumption history, and then developing further to include detailed notes on wine taste, which are strikingly similar to today's tasting notes. Such sources can be successfully used to analyse the storage, labelling and preservation practices applied to ancient wines in early modern Poland.

The analysis of the selections of wines kept in ancient cellars was carried out focusing on the most comprehensive cellar lists from several sites. Of these, four inventories of wines stored in the cellars of Lesko castle from the time of Józef Ossoliński are particularly noteworthy. The oldest is from 1746, "Record of wines in the cellar of the Lesko castle by Józef Ossoliński",⁹ followed by the 1750 "Record of wines from the Lesko cellar sent to Warsaw",¹⁰ then "Book of precepts and expenses of Hungarian wines and meads in the cellars of the Lesko castle"¹¹ from 1755–1763 and the last document dated to 1763 – "Specification of Hungarian wines for the sejmik to Łuck".¹² The cellar records from the Lesko castle, dating from the second half of the eighteenth century, are valuable research material not only because of the time period in which they were kept,¹³ but also because of the elaborate conceptual apparatus, detailed description of liquors and their purpose. With regard to the later period, we have more extensive materials, covering several months of consumption, from the courts of Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski in Sieniawa¹⁴ and Aleksandra Ogińska in Siedlce.¹⁵ Records of the royal cellar of Stanisław August Poniatowski¹⁶ were also used to identify the assortment of drinks popular in the late eighteenth century. These were supplemented by shorter, single inventories for a given year from scattered collections.

III. Wine description and assortment

The manner in which not only the taste, but also the wines themselves have been described has undergone many modifications over the centuries. These developments ranged from simple mentions of white and red, old and young wines, to elaborate descriptions covering not only colour and age, but also flavour characteristics, preservation process or purpose.

⁹ LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 345.

¹⁰ LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 1673.

¹¹ LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 85.

¹² AP Przemysł, AZLK, ref. 417.

¹³ Years: 1746, 1755–1763.

¹⁴ B. Czart., AKC, ref. 10584, vol. 2.

¹⁵ B. Czart., DS, ref. 11481.

¹⁶ AGAD, AK, ref. III/1459, III/578.

In the seventeenth century, one of France's best wines at the time, Haut Brion, was described by Samuel Pepys as having "a good and most perticular taste that I never met with".¹⁷ Nearly 150 years later, a liquor from the same vineyard was described as having a beautiful and delicate *bouquet*, an aromatic *sève*, although less *bouquet* than Margaux.¹⁸ This change in the linguistic richness and finesse of wine descriptions did not happen overnight. Over the course of the eighteenth century, there was a gradual development of a consistent wine terminology as well as increased attention to various characteristics in the descriptions of wines, a trend that we also see in Polish cellars.

At the end of the eighteenth century, when the scientific study of wine was successfully developing, laying the foundations of today's oenology, a number of publications appeared that meticulously analysed not only the process of wine production, but also its taste characteristics. The French undoubtedly led the way and the new scientific discoveries of French researchers were echoed in the pages of Polish journals. In one of the issues of the "Nowy Pamiętnik Warszawski" journal from 1801, the section "Chemical philosophy" includes an elaborate article "On beverages chemically dissected as affecting the maintenance of health".¹⁹ The article featured in the journal, unattributed at the time, was actually a translation of a work by French physician Étienne Tourtelle, *Éléments d'hygiène*.²⁰ The work, published in 1797 in Strasbourg, was influenced by seventeenth century traditions, as evidenced by the continued strong adherence to humoral theory. Nevertheless, Tourtelle's findings represented a kind of breakthrough, and his book was repeatedly reprinted until the mid-nineteenth century.²¹ The widespread reception of Tourtelle's work, especially the section on beverages, can also be evidenced by manuscript copies of the article from the "Nowy Pamiętnik Warszawski",²² which can still be found in the archives. In addition to information on the properties of wines, we can find here fairly detailed characterisations of liquors from each country and a differentiation of wines by their colour, density, taste, aroma and age.

In the introduction, Tourtelle explains what we mean by good wine. It is, first of all, a beverage that, when consumed in moderation, in small quantities, does no harm. He proceeds by stating what to consider when choosing a wine: colour, transparency, aroma, and taste according to personal preference. However, he warns against counterfeit wines and excessive consumption, asserting that this inevitably leads to death. For wine lovers, however, who would like to taste more than a sip of the beverage, the author offers hope, writing about the effects of wine consumption: "Some drink it every day, and even in considerable quantity, and it does them no harm: many have even lived to a ripe old age".²³ Nonetheless, he qualifies these examples, identifying them as the few fortunate chosen ones, and reasserting his opinion that excessive consumption of wine usually caused various diseases associated with drunkenness.

Nevertheless, in the available source material on the description of wines in cellar inventories, we do not find such detailed comments. Information on the medical properties of individual beverages is outweighed here by technical remarks on the organization of the cellar: the labelling of individual barrels and casks, pouring and adding one wine to another: "Wine from the year 1749 is now poured into two casks, that is: into one lees barrel *sub literis* 5KR, and the

¹⁷ Pepys S. 1995, p. 100.

¹⁸ Shapin S. 2012, p. 67.

¹⁹ O Napoiach. 1801.

²⁰ Tourtelle É. 1796.

²¹ Rudolph G. 1982.

²² AP Lublin, AMK, ref. 1.

²³ "Niekórzy piją go codziennie, a nawet w znacznej ilości i nic im nie szkodzi: wielu nawet z nich przyszło do późnej starości"; O Napoiach. 1801, p. 4.

same wine with everything was poured into the other cask. Both two casks of the same wine poured from the barrel are completely full; they have been sealed with two seals of the master; one on the red wax, the other on the tar, sealed sub no 12do and under the letters 6IOS both casks marked as two newly carved [...]”²⁴

The cellars of Lesko castle were mostly filled with Hungarian wines, with only occasional presence of champagnes and ‘bastards’.²⁵ Hungarian wines can be found under the terms “dry berry wine”,²⁶ “maślacz wine”²⁷ or “maslas wine”,²⁸ “samorodni” or simply “Hungarian”,²⁹ which, given previous research on the contents of the nobles’ cellars, was likely Hungarian table wine. The most represented wines are those made from dry berries, *i.e.* sweet Hungarian wines highly valued among consumers of the time.

Samuel Orgelbrand’s dictionary describes the popular *maślacz* as “sweet wine, thickly made from perfectly ripe berries. When harvesting such a species of berries, the juice produced under the pressure of their own weight, called *kapka*, is put aside separately. This is the best type of Hungarian wines, which, when used for the spicing of lighter ones, improves them, gives them flavour and raises the price superbly”.³⁰ In the guidebook *Sposoby ciekawe...*, it is written about *maślacz* that it is “this Tokaji wine, which is left for lees³¹ after the essence and is poured into barrels with it”.³²

The Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski cellar records from 1795 also list a collection of Hungarian liquors, though described differently as Hungarian table wines and Hungarian old wines. There are also Austrian wines, which we do not find in other such inventories.³³ Inventories of royal cellars from a similar period of 1793–1795 show Hungarian wines in significant competition from French wines. Thus, in addition to Hungarian table wines and vintage *maślacz*, there were Burgundies, Champagnes, French table wines, Muscat de Frontignan and Rhine wine.³⁴

A somewhat different assortment is to be found in the cellars of the Nieśwież castle. In the inventory of 1793, which is quite a bit later than that of Lesko castle. There are a dozen different types of wine.³⁵ “Hungarian very old, Hungarian old clear, French very old, French inferior, Burgundy white, Bergerac old, Bergerac young, Montepulciano, Malvasia, muscatel, Lachrima

²⁴ “Wina z roku 1749tego teraz aktualnie na dwa antały przelanego to jest: na jeden lagier antałowy sub literis 5KR, w drugi zaś antał trochę mniejszy ze wszystkim też same wino przelane. Znajduje się zupełnie dolane i pełne oba dwa antały tegoż samego wina z beczki przelanego; pieczęciami dwiema pańskimi, jedną na laku czerwonym, drugą na smółce zapieczętowane sub no 12do a pod literami 6IOS obadwa antały naznaczone na nowo wyrżnięte dwa [...]”; LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 1673, fol. 14.

²⁵ A type of wine imported from Portugal, probably made from the Bastardo grape.

²⁶ “wino suchych jagód”.

²⁷ “maslasowe”.

²⁸ “maslas”.

²⁹ “węgierskie”.

³⁰ “wino słodkie, gęstawo z dojrzałych doskonale jagód zebrane. Przy winobranianiu, taki gatunek jagód odkładają oddzielnie pod naciskiem własnego ciężaru sok zebrany, zwany *kapką*, stanowi najwyborniejszy gatunek win węgierskich, który użyty do zaprawy lżejszych, poprawia je, nadaje im smak i cenę znakomicie podnosi”; Orgelbrand S. 1864, p. 145.

³¹ Lees resulting from the fermentation of wine, the Polish name *lagier* comes from the German: *lager*.

³² “to wino tokajskie, które się na lagier od essencyi pozostały i wraz z nim w beczki się nalewa”; *Sposoby*, 1783, p. 51.

³³ B. Czart., AKC, ref. 10584, vol. 2.

³⁴ AGAD, AK, ref. III/1459, III/578.

³⁵ In Polish sources, wine names are often written phonetically and with spelling errors (*e.g.* vin de graf instead of vin de Graves). For the purpose of this article original sources without the spelling correction are placed in the footnotes while the translated version uses the correct names.

Christi, Cypriot, De bona speranza, *kapka*,³⁶ Malaga, Pontac³⁷”.³⁸ In 1807, the Nieśwież cellar contained an even more interesting set of liquors, including “French old wine, Bordeaux, vin de Graves, Italian, Cypriot, wormwood wine,³⁹ Malaga, Burgundy, muscatel white, Hungarian, Rhine, Champagne, Burgundy ordinary, Italian de bonne sperance, Bergerac white, Malvasia old, muscatel, red Champagne, white Champagne”.⁴⁰

A detailed assortment of wines is also evident in orders and accounting records. One example of this is an order from the 1830s for the Młynowski Chodkiewicz palace. In addition to 500 bottles of “Medoc Bordeaux”, 200 of “St. Julien”, 200 of “Graves white”, or 600 bottles of “white Champagne”, we find 400 bottles of “Lafite anno 1792 old” wine and 200 of “Sauternes white anno 1794” or red Malaga from 1750 also described as old.⁴¹ However, such orders for vintage wines are characteristic of a later period and vintage was not included in eighteenth century accounts⁴². This is also confirmed by newspaper advertisements of wine warehouses, which only in the early nineteenth century encouraged the purchase of vintage wines on a wider scale, like the Poznan merchant Grawin, who offered “Château Margaux from 1809, 10 zloty per bottle, Bordeaux Lafite from 1807 for 14 zloty. Madera from 1784 for 24 zloty”.⁴³ City cellars, such as those in the Warsaw Old Town owned by Florian Fukier, also boast a similarly wide-ranging assortment. Hungarian wines were prevalent, but right next to them there was also French table wine, champagne wine, muscatel and wormwood wine.⁴⁴ It is a collection similar to the one presented in the “Motyl” journal from the late 1820s, where under the “nomenclature of more popular wines” more than 150 different types of wine that should be found in a cellar are listed.⁴⁵

A wider range of wines is also evident among the early nineteenth century announcements, as reflected in the aforementioned cellar inventories: “Champagne Żakson (Jacquesson) wine (Première and Supérieure Qualité) this year’s first shipment arrived by land to trade at No. 614 letter B on Wierzbowa Street”.⁴⁶ “For the trade of J.A. Spiski on Krakowskie Przedmieście Street at No. 376 opposite the Saski Hotel, an overland shipment of fresh Champagne wines has arrived, including: Clicquot, Schreider and Jacquesson in whole and half bottles of the best quality”.⁴⁷ The use of Polonisations in such advertisements (*Żakson* – Jacquesson; also, *Kliko* for Clicquot⁴⁸) seems to indicate that the widespread sale of wines from champagne houses already

³⁶ Polish name for a very sweet Hungarian wine.

³⁷ Name used for Haut Brion wines in Poland.

³⁸ “węgierskie bardzo stare, węgierskie stare klarowne, francuskie bardzo stare, francuskie podlejsze, burguńskie białe, berzerak stary, berzerak młodszy, monte policiano, małamzja, muszkatela, Lachrima Christi, cypryjskie, De bona speranza, kapka, malaga, pontak, cypryjskie”; AGAD, AR, XXVI, ref. 704.

³⁹ *I.e.* vermouth.

⁴⁰ “wino francuskie stare, Bordeaux, vin de graf, włoskie, cypryjskie, piolunkowe, malaga, burgundskie, muszkatela biała, węgierskie, reńskie, szampańskie, burgundskie ordynaryjne, włoskie de bonne sperance, berzerak biały, małamzja stara, muszkatel, szampańskie czerwone, szampańskie białe”; AGAD, AR, XXVI, ref. 730.

⁴¹ ANK, AMCH, ref. 1610, fol. 893.

⁴² *E.g.* AGAD, AGWA, ref. 115; AP Poznań, MK, ref. 1827; AP Poznań, MRR, ref. 35.

⁴³ “Szato Margo z roku 1809 a 10 zlot. butelka, Bordo la fitte z 1807 a 14 zlot. Mader z 1784 a 24 zlot”; Dodatek. 1813, p. 691.

⁴⁴ Kurczewski G. 2017.

⁴⁵ Podróż. 1829, pp. 163–165.

⁴⁶ “Wina Szampańskiego Żakson (Jacquesson) (Premiere i Superieure Qualite) pierwszy tegoroczny transport przybył łądem do handlu pod nr 614 lit. B przy ulicy Wierzbowej”; Kurjer. 1837a, p. 700.

⁴⁷ “Do handlu J.A. Spiskiego przy ulicy Krakowskie Przedmieście pod nr 376, na przeciwko Hotelu Saskiego, nadszedł transport ładowy Win Szampańskich świeżych jako to: Clicquot, Schreider i Jacquesson w całych i pół butelkach, w najlepszym gatunku”; Kurjer. 1837a, p. 700.

⁴⁸ Kurjer. 1837b, p. 964.

renowned in other parts of Europe, was only just developing in Poland. A preliminary analysis of trade advertisements from the nineteenth century showed these sorts of phonetic notations of wine names disappeared in its second half. This issue, however, requires further study and is beyond the scope of this article's topic and timeframe.

IV. Taste

Wines are sweet, sour, spicy or tart.

*Sweet wines, known by the name of liquor wines, contain a lot of sugar and alcohol.*⁴⁹

The language of taste in Europe was long influenced by medicine and dietetics. In ancient Rome, a beverage considered a good wine was one that had the right taste, but also medical properties. Pliny the Elder, writing about the taste of wine, focused primarily on describing the defects of a beverage: "tart", "sharp", "harsh", "hard", "rough", "luscious" and "unripe". For good wines, the dictionary was much more limited to rather ambiguous terms such as "pretty", "pleasant" and "sweet".⁵⁰ The description of medieval wines is still dominated by descriptions of poor liquors like tart, bitter, vinegary or harsh. In opposition to these shortcomings, sweetness invariably stood on the pedestal of liquor qualities.⁵¹

In a popular Polish dietary treatise from the mid-seventeenth century, Stanisław Hercius described most of the ingredients in the diet of the time and either their health-promoting or unfavourable properties, including liquors, both domestic and imported. He associates the age of a wine with its strength, and considers the taste, aroma, colour and substance of the liquor as the basic differentiating categories. According to Hercius, "Sweet wines are fattening and are pleasant to the stomach, since they are, however, thick, and cause clogging or sliming of the liver and spleen [...] the best wines are neither very sweet nor unpleasant, but good, having a graceful and penetrating aroma, an infallible sign of good wine".⁵² He then proceeds to describe the characteristics of wines according to their colour. White wines had little heat and were recommended especially for hot-tempered people, preferably additionally diluted with water, or for cooling down in summer. Red wines were warming, but only in moderation. Black wines, however, were not beneficial to health. Influenced by humoral dietetics, Tourtelle described the qualities of wines a century later in the same vein. Similarly, he focused on the colour of wine and its effect on health: white wines are "not so inflaming and go less to the head than others [...] for hot-tempered people, for hot-headed people and writers".⁵³ Red wines "cannot be digested as quickly as white wines, they encapsulate more sugar and salt tartare [...] therefore they are more nutritious and more refreshing".⁵⁴

Despite the eighteenth century changes in trends concerning liquors among the elite of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at that time, the gradual replacement of Hungarian wines with the best French burgundies and champagnes demonstrates the shift from quantitative to qualitative consumption.⁵⁵ One thing does not seem to have changed – the taste for sweetness. The main

⁴⁹ "Wina są słodkie, kwaśne, ostre albo szczypiące. Wina słodkie, znane pod nazwiskiem win likworowych, zamykają wiele cukru i alkoholu"; O Napoiach. 1801, p. 13.

⁵⁰ Shapin S. 2012, p. 54.

⁵¹ Grieco A.J. 2009, pp. 15–24.

⁵² "Wina słodkie tuczają i wewnątrznościom są przyjemne, iż jednak są gęste, zatkanie abo zamulenie wątroby i śledziony czynią [...] najlepsze ani barzo słodkie, ani przykre, ale szrednie, zapach wdzięczny przenikający mające, znak jest nieomylny dobrego wina"; Herciusz S.K. 1660, p. 13.

⁵³ "nie tak zapalają i mniej do głowy idą niż inne [...] dla ludzi krwistych, dla choleryków i literatów"; O Napoiach. 1801, p. 12.

⁵⁴ "nie tak prędko trawią się jak białe, więcej w sobie zamykają cukru i soli tartary [...] dlatego też są pożywniejsze i bardziej pokrzepiające"; O Napoiach. 1801, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Mennell S. 1985, p. 32; Dumanowski J. 2007.

positive descriptors remain: sweet, spicy, strong, substantial. Regardless of the origin of a wine, sweetness was often the determinant of its quality. Thus, even French champagnes delivered to Warsaw or Krakow had to be as sweet as honey and resemble the best Tokaji wines in taste.⁵⁶

Stocktaking and cellar inventories refer to the taste qualities of wine rather laconically. Among the rare documents with an elaborate conceptual framework on the taste of wine is the "Inventory of wines of Anna of Sanguszko Radziwiłłowa".⁵⁷ In a document from 1732, the most common terms for wine are: "very sweet, similar to *kapka*",⁵⁸ "very good, but not as sweet as the one from Górski"⁵⁹, "very good and very sweet like muscatel".⁶⁰ Also included are descriptions not obvious for this type of sources, referring to the taste of wine as "angelic",⁶¹ "hideous",⁶² "shamefully good"⁶³ or "graceless".⁶⁴ The description of the sweetness of wine is strongly extended, with expressions such as: "having sweetness in itself",⁶⁵ "sweetish",⁶⁶ "deliciously sweet".⁶⁷ The preferred sweetness of wine is also combined with expressions referring to spices. Hence, it is a kind of winemaking interpretation of Baroque cuisine,⁶⁸ for wines are simultaneously sweet and piquant, sweet and peppery, sweet and delicate, sweet and spicy, sweet and sour.⁶⁹

Similar baroque flavour combinations can be found in the cellar of Lesko castle. An analysis of the collection amassed over nearly two decades, reveals that if anything has been recorded about the taste of wine it was rather in a positive context. We have no information about bad wines, there is rarely any information about wine turning sour, as in the case of an eight-year-old 'bastard' wine.⁷⁰ The predominant emphasis is on sweet, spicy flavour, as well as on complex flavour: "sweet and spicy",⁷¹ or "pleasant and spicy at the same time"⁷² and graded flavour: "strongly spicy".⁷³

In the wine lists of the Lesko cellars, Hungarian dry berry wine was the most popular and was described as sweet, sweet-spicy and old. Its unique taste was also described in fiction. Jan Gorczyzewski, who undertook the translation of Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux's satires, made quite significant changes to the third satire "Sur une repas ridicule"⁷⁴ adapting it to Polish reality. In the original, we read about fourteen bottles of old wine from Bucingo,⁷⁵ which Gorczyzewski, as a translator, replaced with an old cask of dry berry wine:

"I have, he says, and old cask of wine from dry berries;
I would like to treat you to it tomorrow on my special day;

⁵⁶ Dias-Lewandowska D. 2014, pp.124–126.

⁵⁷ AGAD, AR, XXVI, ref. 228.

⁵⁸ "bardzo słodkie, podobne do kapki".

⁵⁹ "bardzo dobre, ale nie tak słodkie jak to od Górskiego".

⁶⁰ "bardzo dobre i bardzo słodkie jak muszkatała".

⁶¹ "anielskie".

⁶² "ohydne".

⁶³ "haniebnie dobre".

⁶⁴ "niewdzięczne".

⁶⁵ "słodycz mający w sobie".

⁶⁶ "słodkawy".

⁶⁷ "przepyszny słodki".

⁶⁸ See Dumanowski J. 2008; Dumanowski J. 2009.

⁶⁹ Dias-Lewandowska D. 2014, pp. 140–144.

⁷⁰ "basztard"; LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 345, fol. 5.

⁷¹ "słodko-korzenny"; AP Przemysł, AZLK, ref. 417, fol. 4, 8; LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 345, fol. 1, 13, 18, 20.

⁷² "przyjemny i korzenny zarazem"; Mitrenga B. 2014, p. 128.

⁷³ "mocno korzenny"; LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 345, fol. 1, 13, 18.

⁷⁴ Boileau-Despréaux N. 1721, pp. 38–63.

⁷⁵ Well-known wine merchant; Boileau-Despréaux N. 1721, p. 40.

Away with Champagne, Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Lachryma Christi.
What a taste! Of old wine! Peppery! [...]⁷⁶

Dry berry wine was an extremely desirable type among enthusiasts of Hungarian wines, particularly because it was often difficult to find and only available in limited quantities, and usually described as “so [...] good as there can be no better”⁷⁷ and equated with Tokaji wine.⁷⁸ The ‘translation’ of the wine is done both linguistically and culturally and his choice of ‘dry berry wine’ demonstrates the difference in Polish tastes at this time, and emphasises the importance of this wine in Poland as suitable for a ‘special day’. The adjective ‘peppery’⁷⁹ – was used to describe the taste of wine; “containing pepper”,⁸⁰ “tasting of pepper, spicy”⁸¹ in this context probably expressing the more piquant qualities of spicy wines.⁸² Spanish wines such as Pedro Ximénez⁸³ were also considered peppery, and were used to improve the taste of other, lower quality wines. Referring to wines as peppery continued well into the nineteenth century, and usually related to the already-mentioned *petercyments* or Tokaji wines.⁸⁴

Interestingly, pepperiness was also recognized in good beer, as evidenced by the speech of the Rector of the Institute of the Deaf-Mute at a meeting of the Royal Warsaw Society of Friends of Sciences on 3 May 1819: “Good beer has the following properties: it should be transparent, not dull, its colour should be more or less close to straw, it should fizz, its taste should be peppery, that is, it should be tart, refreshing, at first sweet and viscous, and then bitter and spicy, it should not go to one’s head too much, so that it can be consumed as water when thirsty”.⁸⁵

When it comes to describing Hungarian wines, the term sweetness prevails in contemporary records. In cellar records, the question of the sweetness of a wine seems to be of central importance, hence the frequently encountered terms “having sweetness in itself”, “sweetish”, “deliciously sweet”, “very sweet”.⁸⁶ Wines were often compared to each other, e.g. sweeter than another wine, sweet as *kapka*, etc. Sweetness was also an element of the aforementioned combined taste.

The flavour combination, sweet and spicy, was already rather archaic in the cuisine of the time,⁸⁷ yet for Hungarian wines it was still quite common in the eighteenth century. In the Lesko castle records, the vast majority of wines were described as sweet and spicy, and only a few times does the wine appear to be described as only spicy or strongly spicy⁸⁸. In the following century, the sweet and spicy flavour appears more often as a term for meads, the ones considered traditional.⁸⁹ Thus, it became synonymous with archaic and forgotten flavours.

⁷⁶ “Mam, rzeczce, z suchych jagód stary antał wina; Chcę ci niem bydź rad jutro w dzień mój uroczysty; W kąć Szampan, Bordo, Burgoń, i Lachryma Christi. Co za smak! myszki! Pieprzyk! [...]”; Boileau-Despréaux N., Gorczyzewski J. 1805, p. 22.

⁷⁷ “tak [...] dobre jako lepsze nie mogą być”; AGAD, ZAPKB, ref. 419, fol. 8.

⁷⁸ Piaskowski F. 1865, p. 11.

⁷⁹ It appears in the Lesko castle cellar documents only once; this taste is attributed to a wine described as old (the date suggests it was six years old, ordinary, used for refilling); LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 85, fol. 10.

⁸⁰ “pieprzyk mające”; Rykaczewski E. 1866, p. 542.

⁸¹ “pieprzykiem oddający, korzenny”; Linde S.B. 1811, p. 689.

⁸² Szymanowski W. 1856a, p. 2.

⁸³ Spanish wine made from Pedro Ximénez grape variety, in Polish sources named *petercyment*.

⁸⁴ Szymanowski W. 1856b, p. 2.

⁸⁵ “Dobrego zaś piwa własności są następujące: powinno być przezroczyste, niemętne, koloru mniej więcej do słomianego zbliżającego się, powinno szumieć, smak jego powinien być pieprzykowany, to jest, szczypek mający, orzeźwiający, z początku słodkawy i lepki, a potem gorzkawy, i korzenny, nie powinno mocno głowy zawracać, by go tak, jak wodę w miarę pragnienia pić można”; Rozprawa. 1820, p. 217.

⁸⁶ AGAD, AR, XXVI, ref. 228, fol. 38.

⁸⁷ Wielądsko W. 2012; Tremo P. 2022.

⁸⁸ LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 345, fol. 1, 20.

⁸⁹ Kurjer. 1853, p. 240.

We can find a similar nomenclature of old type tastes of wine in foreign language textbooks in the form of dialogues and dictionaries,⁹⁰ which as utilitarian literature reflected the practical use of wine terminology. In *Zebranie słów...* by Kaliszewski, the following terms appear in the context of wine taste: “sweet and young wine”, “sweet spiced wine”, “stale sour wine”, “sweet and peppery wine”, “spiced wine”, “wine with a smoke”.⁹¹ In other such sources, we also find reference to the “wine smoke”. *Rozmowy francuskie i polskie* from the late eighteenth century include the following phrase: “The smoke of this wine rushed into my head (*Les fumées de ce vin me montent la tête*)”.⁹² In the same publication, wine is mentioned only once more: “this wine is mediocre, it is acceptable (*ce vin-la est passable*)”.⁹³

V. Wine age and quality

*Wines have various qualities because of their old age*⁹⁴

The vintage of a wine, today seemingly one of the main determinants of the character, quality and potential of a given wine, was not always of such great importance. In wine countries, *i.e.* France, back in the seventeenth century, people tended to enjoy young wines from the year of production, while wines that were several years old were often considered unfit for consumption. This was caused not so much by a lack of skill in preserving and storing wines, but by the characteristics of production at the time and the type of wines that were made.⁹⁵

In the Polish nobleman cellars inventories of the seventeenth or even early eighteenth century, it is virtually impossible to find vintages of wines. On the other hand, the records documenting the contents of the Lesko cellar are quite detailed in this regard and allow us to draw conclusions not only about the age of the liquors stored there, but also about how old the wines were considered at the time. The inventory of 1755 describes old wines, dating back to 1746 or 1749, that is, wines that are six or nine years old. On the other hand, wines three and four years old are considered young.⁹⁶ Similarly, in the 1750 inventory, dry berry wines described as old are from 1740, 1744 and 1745, respectively.⁹⁷

Received wisdom at the end of the eighteenth century seems to have agreed that wines that were several (3–4) months old, with little amount of lees, but with a high sugar content due to incomplete fermentation, were usually considered young. Wines older than four months were called annual and were considered drinkable after about 12 months. Old wines, that is, two, three or four years old, were the best and healthiest, but should be mixed with water. Liquors older than six or eight years became bitter and sour.⁹⁸ Cellar practices related to wine storage included refilling wine barrels, improving the taste of an inferior wine by mixing with a better one, topping up older wines with younger ones, pouring one wine over a lees of another. This meant, that the vintage of wines stored in barrels often indicated only the original date of purchase and did not indicate the full ‘story’ of the wines therein. Only in the case of bottled wines could the exact year of manufacture be determined. Bottled wines were specially marked: “And by each bottle there is a piece of paper, and on the top of the bottle, on the red wax, there is the

⁹⁰ In the study of cuisine, the precursor to the use of this source was Klonder A. 2011.

⁹¹ “Słodkie, młode wino”, “Wino słodkie korzenne”, “Wino zwietrzałe, skwaśniałe”, “pieprzykowane”, “Wino przyprawne”, “Wino dymek mające”; Kaliszewski A. 1795, p. 156.

⁹² “Dymek tego wina wparował mi do głowy”; X.S.E. 1793, p. 75.

⁹³ “to wino jest pomierne, ujdzie”; X.S.E. 1793, p. 19.

⁹⁴ “Wina mają różne przymioty z przyczyny dawności”; O Napiiach. 1801, p. 17.

⁹⁵ Enjalbert H. 1953, s. 320; Flandrin J.-L. 1999, p. 30.

⁹⁶ LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 85, fol. 4–10.

⁹⁷ LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 1673, fol. 3–7.

⁹⁸ O Napiiach. 1801, p. 17.

master's seal".⁹⁹ In Polish inventories from the second half of the eighteenth century, storing wines in bottles is not as common as it was in the nineteenth century.

In the list of wines from the Sapięha's cellars from 1743, there is a division between cask and barrel wines. Here, too, one can come across information about the age of the wine. For example, cask wine from 1721 is described as old. The assortment of ordinary and dry berry wines is supplemented by flasks of Champagne, Burgundy wine, muscatel. Meads and vodka also appear, including one rather interesting lees vodka – possibly produced from lees left over from wines or mixed with it.¹⁰⁰ Pouring younger wines over the lees of the older ones was a common practice, hence the vintage of the wine seems to be a rather unstable value. A 1738 inventory of Hungarian wines in the Boćkowski cellar shows that only a year's younger wine from 1737 was poured on the 1727 lees.¹⁰¹

The comment: "Wines well stocked, fully topped up"¹⁰² is recorded in one of the Lesko cellar's inventories. As we read in *Gospodarz Galicyjski*: "They say that from a barrel containing two buckets, a pound of wine is lost every week despite the best plugging. By forcing air in, the wine [...] goes sour, and finally it gets musty. It is therefore necessary to always refill the barrels with fresh wine and collect the mold".¹⁰³ So, topping up one wine with another was not just a practice to improve the taste, it also served to preserve it.

VI. Originality

*The best test against adulterated wine is a perfect acquaintance
with that which is good*¹⁰⁴

Stanisław Jundził, in his *Botanika...* when describing *vitis vinifera*, also dedicated a few words to wines, mentioning, among other things, ways to improve their taste. Among those harmless, and therefore considered safe and acceptable, he included the addition of sweet things: raisins, sugar, syrup, wine spirit, adding sweet and strong wines (such as the Spanish ones).¹⁰⁵ Still, among eighteenth century connoisseurs of naturally flavoured wines, the practice of adding any spices, preserves or fruits seemed sacrilegious. Louis Liger, in his economic guidebooks, even claimed that the desire to add a variety of ingredients to wine was a matter of not being able to produce a good quality drink.¹⁰⁶

It was also forbidden to season the Mass wine. A Jesuit, Marcin Kurzeniecki, wrote about the necessary properties of Mass wine and described this practice as wicked: "Not wine that is very sour, because it would be vinegar [...] nor wine half-fermented, because this thick changes the nature of wine, nor the water with which the squeezed berries are poured, because in this dishwater there is more water than wine. [...] It is important, also, but wicked under great guilt without urgency to use at Mass wine seasoned with something else [...]".¹⁰⁷ Similar recommen-

⁹⁹ "Przy każdej zaś butelce karteczka jest oraz na wierzchu butelki, na laku czerwonym pieczęć pańska znajduje się"; LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 1673, fol. 15.

¹⁰⁰ ANK, ZZG, ref. 345, fol. 17.

¹⁰¹ ANK, ZZG, ref. 345, fol. 25.

¹⁰² "Wina dobrze poopatrywane, pełnuteńko podolewane"; LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 1675, fol. 10.

¹⁰³ "Powiadają, iż z beczki dwa wiadra w sobie mającej co tydzień funt wina mimo najlepszego zatkania ubywa. Przez wciskanie się powietrza, [...] wino [...] kwaśniej, na koniec zaś tęchnie. Potrzeba więc zawsze beczki dolewać świeżym winem i zbierać pleśń"; Thaer A., H.G.H. [1800], p. 50.

¹⁰⁴ Redding C. 1833, p. 362.

¹⁰⁵ Jundził S.B. 1799, p. 109.

¹⁰⁶ Liger L. 1701, p. 232.

¹⁰⁷ "Ani też wina barzo kwaśne, boby to był ocet [...] ani wina do pół wywarzone, bo ten gąszcz odmienia naturę wina, ani woda, którą się nalewają wyciśnione jagody, bo w tej lurze więcej wody niż wina. [...] Ważne,

dations for unseasoned wine can be found in the eighteenth century calendar: “Having eaten cheese or nuts, tasting wine afterwards, whatever it is, seems to be good: so, does eating anything that is fatty and sweet. But when you taste it, do not swallow it right away, but holding it on your tongue, watch the taste and smell: for the more it bites your tongue, the stronger it is, as long as it is not sour, or seasoned with some spice.”¹⁰⁸

According to Cyrus Redding, British journalist and author of the monumental work *A history and description of modern wines*, there was only one way to fight adulteration – through knowledge of wines.¹⁰⁹ One way to know a good wine was by taking samples, which enabled one to choose the best beverage. In the cellar of Lesko Castle there were also wine samples attached to barrels and casks: “Wine from the year 1749 now currently poured into two casks [...] from which two samples in quarter flasks”;¹¹⁰ “These wines come with slips of paper tied and sealed on red wax with the master’s seal, which are to be released from the Warsaw cellar against the master’s assignation, whoever receives it. These mentioned samples are to be left in the wine flasks, so they are to be one sample per each cask”.¹¹¹

A well-maintained wine collection depended on several factors. The aforementioned selection of suitable wines was, of course, fundamental, but keeping the cellar dry, fresh and dark was a guarantee that the wine’s flavour characteristics would be maintained. A guidebook for housewives from the late eighteenth century makes it clear that the role of the housewife was to take care of the cellar so that the beverages stored in it would not be spoiled “for it would be a pity if they could still be useful for a further time, or one would have a beverage that is not nice and disgusting”.¹¹²

This rather practical view of cellar economy stands in opposition to the romanticization of wine and wine collections evident in nineteenth century literature and press: “I like to walk underground, but between two shafts of well-clad barrels; I gladly wander under vaults decorated with barrels of various shapes and seals: I proceed with cheerful thoughts, to the labyrinth dedicated to Bacchus, and meditate with pleasure among those underground libraries invented for the comfort of the people”.¹¹³ So begins an article from the 1830s entitled “Journey to the Cellar”. Here the author mentions the idea of writing a work dedicated to the philosophy of wine. This treatise would deconstruct the moral properties of each type, go on to evaluate the various qualities and conclude with information on the benefits and discomforts of intoxication. The appearance of this type of publication may have been related to a new way of writing about

także, ale niegodziwe pod wielką winą bez pilnej barzo potrzeby używanie na Mszą S. wina przyprawnego czym innym [...]”; Kurzeniecki M. 1752, p. 216.

¹⁰⁸ “Przekąsiwszy sera albo orzechy jedząc, Wino po tym kosztując, chociaż ladaco, zda się być dobre: toż czyni jedząc cokolwiek tustego y słodkiego. Gdy się zaś kosztuje, nie zaraz go połykać, ale na języku trzymając, uważać smak i odor: im bowiem więcej gryzie w język, tym jest mocniejsze, byle nie kwaśne, albo jakim korzeniem zaprawione”; Duńczewski S. 1752, fol. D.

¹⁰⁹ Redding C. 1833, p. 362.

¹¹⁰ “Wina z roku 1749tego teraz aktualnie na dwa antały przelanego [...] od których dwie próbki w flaszkach kwaterkowych”; LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 1673, fol. 14.

¹¹¹ “Tegoż wina są z karteczkami przywiązanych i na laku czerwonym pieczęcią pańską zapieczętowanych, które za asygnacją pańską z piwnicy warszawskiej wydane być mają jak dla kogo nastąpi. Te pomienione próbki w flaszkach wina zostawione, tak mają być przy każdym antale jedna próbkę”; LNNBU, fond 141, section 1, ref. 1673, fol. 15.

¹¹² “bo by to szkodą było, gdyby mogły być jeszcze na dalszy czas użyteczne albo byłoby się przyczyna mieć napój nie miły i odrażający”; *Gospodini*. 1784, p. 81.

¹¹³ “Lubię spacerować pod ziemią, ale pomiędzy dwoma wałami beczek dobrze obitych; chętnie błądę pod sklepieniami ozdobnemi w beczki rozmaitego kształtu i pieczęci: postępuję z wesołemi myślami, do labiryntu poświęconego Bachusowi i medytuję z przyjemnością wśród tych podziemnych bibliotek wymyślonych dla pocieszenia ludzi”; *Podróż*. 1829, pp. 161–162.

the culinary arts, gastronomy, which was born in France in the early nineteenth century. Some of the earliest works addressing the subject would include *Almanach des gourmands* (1803) by Alexandre Grimod de La Reynière and *Physiologie du goût, ou méditations de gastronomie transcendante* (1825) by Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, the cellar records of the second half of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries are still far from treatises on the philosophy of wine, and focus primarily on conveying in a practical way the characteristics of wine taste and quality.

VII. Conclusion

When analysing cellar inventories, it should be noted that because of their peculiarities, they are not documents that convey full knowledge of the assortment, taste, and age of wines of the time. With few exceptions, they lack poetic comparisons, elaborate statements on taste values or the hierarchy of liquors. Indeed, these inventories were utilitarian documents, and show less of the gastronomic fascination with the taste of wine, but demonstrate the practical nomenclature and knowledge one had to have of the liquors collected to select and store them. The brevity of this type of source, combined with the gaps in the extant documentation that prevent modern historians from tracing developments and trends over a longer period of time such as the modification of tastes and the language of taste, problematise some conclusions we would like to establish with the source corpus.

However, based on the analysis of the collected source material, it can be assumed that while the assortment of Polish nobles' cellars underwent quite dynamic change and successive expansion during the second half of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the taste qualities of wines themselves did not undergo such a rapid revolution.

As demonstrated by the popularity of the works of French scholars (*e.g.* Tourtelle), the knowledge of wines, their medicinal properties, and the types of wines which were to be considered good, was still firmly rooted in the past, at the end of the eighteenth century. Documentary references to the taste of wine as good, sweet, sweet and spicy or sour were consistent with the dietary tradition of the time, but opposed to new culinary trends. Sources from the first decades of the nineteenth century show that the change in perception of wine from an element of dietetics and medicine to a subject of philosophical considerations took place under the influence of later published works and the reception of new gastronomic and wine literature in Poland under partition.

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¹¹⁴ Mennel S. 1985, pp. 268–269; Ory P. 1997.

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