# Gallo Family Vineyards Moscato 2011 California

29 Jun 2012 by Jancis Robinson

From $3.49(?), £5.09

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No, I have not gone mad. I tasted **Gallo Family Vineyards Moscato 2011 California**, a vintage-dated, sweet, low-alcohol, very slighty fizzy Muscat chez Sainsbury's and was very impressed. Here's my tasting note: 'Slight spritz. Clean as a whistle. Reminds me of Moscato d'Oro from Mondavi. Usefully light. Not heavy. Not tired. Go for it! In private, of course. Good value. 16/20 Drink in 2012' I thought it was good value at its regular price of £6.79, but while Sainsbury's are offering 25% off all purchases of six bottles of wine (see here), it's a light, summery steal at the reduced price of £5.09 until midnight on Monday.

Moscato, as you may know, is super-fashionable in the US - which may explain why on that side of the Atlantic, Gallo don't seem to offer a vintage-dated version but instead sell a whole series of non-vintage Moscatos of all three colours, even including one sourced in Australia. (The Gallo buying team has always been extremely flexible about sourcing - see, for example, the Red Bicyclette affair.) This presumably means they can continue to pump Moscato on to the market to satisfy the currently insatiable demand there.

For this reason, I suspect that the white **Gallo Family Vineyards Moscato NV** currently on sale in just about every wine store in the United States from $3.49 per 75cl bottle does not taste the same as this 2011-dated version that has been launched in the UK in 571 Sainsbury's stores. In my experience, commercial wines blended for the American market tend to be a bit sweeter (perhaps even more than the 73 g/l residual sugar in this UK blend!) than those intended for British palates.

No one ever accused Gallo of being a slouch at marketing. For that reason, I'd love you to read the background information on this wine they supplied to Sainsbury's:

*76% Moscato, 24% French Colombard. The grapes are grown in specially selected Central Valley vineyards with cool evenings to facilitate the delicate structure required of Moscato. The season had an above average cool and damp spring which led to fertile growth of the vines and development of the fruit during the summer. The grape canopies were managed to allow just the right amount of sunlight on the fruit. The winemakers have used hand-selected yeast and a cool fermentation process, halting it to allow the natural sugars from the grape to remain in the wine. The wine is fined with bentonite and filtered prior to cold stabilisation and bottling. Residual sugar: 73.3g/l. Winemaker: Cal Dennison, E&J Gallo Winery - established in 1933, it is the largest family-owned winery in the world.*

I just love that expression 'hand-selected yeast', and of *course* the grapes benefited from 'just the right amount of sunlight', too. It is also notable that this canny supplier has blended in a neutral filler of Colombard grapes to the maximum proportion allowed since there is currently such pressure on sought-after Muscat grapes in California. (They should be looking to Roussillon, Spain and Greece, where there are so many spare Muscat grapes - they probably are.) Anyway, the result is, as they say on the label, 'lusciously sweet', but not sickly. It's just 8.5% alcohol so, apart from anything else, does not incur too punitive a level of UK duty.

I also liked **Jacob's Creek Moscato 2011 South Eastern Australia** that Tesco is currently selling for £7.49. It is 8% alcohol and has a mere 60 g/l residual sugar. It's frothy and tastes slightly lighter and more refreshing than the Gallo version.They're all getting in on the Moscato act...

Michael Broadbent MW, incidentally, is a huge fan of this style of wine (see, for example, details of his 85th birthday dinner). These are refreshing wines to share with visitors and to serve with summery desserts such as raspberries and strawberries. Drink them while watching Wimbledon.

Connoisseurs may well prefer one of the archetypes of this style from northern Italy, **Elio Perron 2011 Moscato d'Asti** currently on sale at just £6.75 (slightly less than the regular price of the Gallo at Sainsbury's) from The Wine Society. Richard loved this 'luscious but balanced, creamy' grapey fizz that is only 5% alcohol, a more usual potency for a Piemontese Moscato. 'So this is why there's a fuss about Moscato', he wrote.

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