

THE
WINE
POCKET BIBLE

EVERY WINE RULE OF THUMB
AT YOUR FINGERTIPS



ANDREW SMITH
& JENNY DODD

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INTRODUCTION

The astounding variety of wines available can seem a little overwhelming at times. Yet, to enjoy wine you don't necessarily need to know its life story. This book introduces you to some of the nuances of the wine world, so that you can make your own exploration of the tantalising opportunities available. With a little more wine knowledge you may surprise yourself – safe old favourites are soon replaced with exciting new gastronomic discoveries. From wine and food pairing to correct tasting procedure, we will help you get the best out of the galaxy of stunning wines available from across the world. Including tips on buying, cellaring and the health benefits of the noble beverage, *The Wine Pocket Bible* is your trusty companion on a truly enjoyable tour of the world of wine.

A SHORT HISTORY OF WINE

By way of introduction, this whirlwind history of wine may serve as a brief indication of how changes have shaped the character of the modern wine industry.

The **Egyptians** planted grapes along the fertile banks of the Nile in 2500BC and were the first to embark on a process which would transcend the legacy of even their own culture. They designed an early wine-press that consisted of a platform upon which the grapes were placed for treading through a mesh, with a vat set underneath to collect the resulting juice and pulped skins. This mixture of grape flesh, juice, skin and seeds was then put in earthenware pots to ferment, before being siphoned off and filtered ready for drinking. The process is remarkably similar to today.

From humble beginnings as a rustic brew in the land of the Pharaohs, winemaking travelled to its natural home on the Mediterranean and further to the Aegean. In the hands of the **Greeks**, the process of winemaking changed dramatically. They trained grape vines to grow up trellises and planted them in orderly rows, giving birth to the concept of the vineyard. Amazingly, traditional Greek winemaking practices still influence local production of rustic wines with some international appeal. Thucydides remarked that 'The peoples of the Mediterranean began to emerge from barbarism when they learned to cultivate the olive and the vine.' The spread of both the vine and cultivation to Rome was to herald a turn in the fortunes of the Greeks and a shift in historical dialectic.

As power balances readjusted, **Rome** became the world's dominant force and their cultural hegemony stamped itself across early Europe. So too did their winemaking, and the land of cultivated vines, termed 'Oenotria' by the Greeks, exhibited the greatest innovations in winemaking since its conception. As the imperial eagle of Rome spread across Europe, so too did the vine. Roman settlers cultivated vines in Britain, France, Germany and beyond, impressing their methods on local populations who would come to make their own wines.

The eventual decline of Rome's influence did not herald the death of winemaking, and locals took over control of production. Wine production flourished for a time in the Middle East and North Africa, before it was checked by the spread of Islam which forbade intoxication. In France and Germany, however, monks and religious orders became some of the most prodigious wine producers as Christian sacraments virtually demanded libations. They produced rustic wines for use in churches.

and distributed wine to help fund the abbeys. Throughout the **Middle Ages** wine was a popular and widely available drink, varying widely in quality and price as it does today. From the courts of kings to London ale-houses, wine enchanted and intoxicated myriad drinkers, thinkers and thieves.

The social advances witnessed in the **Early Modern** period revolutionised lives across Europe. The rise of artisanal bourgeois classes turned winemaking into a skilled pursuit practised by enterprising businessmen in the Renaissance states of Italy. Likewise, an appreciation of fine wine developed.

Under Elizabeth I, the expansion of Britain's merchant navy saw widespread trade links with Portugal and Spain established and wine freely traded with them for the first time. The use of glass to bottle wine began in the 17th century, and this improved both the quality and ability to transport and store individual bottles, as opposed to the casks previously used. Perhaps the greatest change to this was that some Europeans now conducted their business and pleasure outwith Europe itself in a so-called **New World**. Fearful that lush new worlds and cities of gold would lose their lustre without recourse to familiar wine, conquistadors brought with them samples of their native vines and attempted to grow them in a hostile climate. Most did poorly and the New World would remain obscure in the wine world until much later. Nevertheless, the seed had been planted.

The 18th century saw the development of distinguishable grape varieties, as French and German wine growers established the tenets of the modern classification systems by developing distinct regional wines. This distinction heralded the birth of a wine industry worth speaking of – as private individuals began increasingly to import and export wines of some recognised quality. The rise of the industry was fed by something of a golden age in European wine, as the beginning of the 1800s failed to halt the popularity and availability of fine wine at all the best dinner tables in Europe.

The 19th century, however, held a massive shock in store for the European wine industry. Travel to and from the Americas brought a pestilential louse back to France. *Phylloxera vastatrix* (a kind of root louse) claimed the vines and livelihood of most of Europe's wine regions during a period beginning in the 1860s as it spread like wildfire. Solutions were difficult to come by, yet were eventually found: cuttings of the European vine were grafted onto the rootstock of the American vine which were not affected by the louse, allowing for the winemaking potential of the European grape to be augmented by a resistance to this new outbreak. Replanting was swift and large scale, with very few places in Europe unaffected. This solution also resulted in the successful cultivation of European vines in North America, resulting in a boom in New World production.

The wars of the 20th century blighted many vineyards, whilst devastating the production of traditional growers in France, Germany, Italy and elsewhere. Much wine was, however, produced for soldiers ensuring the survival of a diminished wine economy. The spread of unionisation as a concept also led to the increasing appearance of **cooperative wineries** – first in the Languedoc-Roussillon then the rest of France and the world. **Technological advancement** likewise changed the wine industry. From tractors to irrigation methods to stainless steel wineries, the making of wine progressed immeasurably.

The '**Judgement of Paris**' in 1976 was a turning point in the history of wine. It represented the moment at which the New World came of age, gaining a critical reputation it had lacked until that point. An international wine tasting organised in Paris pitted the wines of California against those of

France. Californian Cabernet Sauvignons were set alongside Bordeaux Châteaux, and Californian Chardonnays were set alongside Burgundian classics. The wines were submitted to a panel of 12 judges (one from Britain, one from the USA and nine from France) for blind tasting and analysis. In a surprising result, California triumphed, with an American wine being ranked highest on average in both red and white categories. Without doubt the results revolutionised the wine market – greatly increasing the demand for New World wines and forcing some introspection on behalf of the French. The results have always been controversial due to the subjectivity of individual tasters but the results were enough of a shock to alter the modern wine market forever. This test was instrumental in the increasing global nature of the wine market and the forerunner of today's surfeit of imported international varieties.

The new international wine world, with 'Flying winemakers' and global consultants has changed the nature of wine production. In Argentina, Chile and other such countries standards have been improved as experienced winemakers have brought new methodology to traditional production. However, the **globalisation** of the market has also challenged some, who believe the identity of the varied wine regions is challenged by dominant consumer markets which respond to articulate critics. Debate over the concept of '**Parkerisation**' has characterised this discourse, with international vineyards responding to the preferences of the influential American critic Robert Parker to ensure better reviews and therein better sales. Likewise, investment by companies such as Mondavi has been resisted by French winegrowers as 'Dollar imperialism'. These emotionally charged terms over-simplify the debate, as a changing wine market offers both the opportunities and drawbacks that cyclical changes in climate have historically brought. The USA has led a **consumer revolution** which has revitalised the wine market since the 1970s, by focusing on accessibility and market demands rather than staunch adherence to tradition. However, within the Old World of European vineyards there is likewise innovation alongside superlative tradition. Many of these wines have a centuries-old history simply because they merit one. Neither New nor Old has triumphed and victory belongs only to the wine lover and his cellar.

Wine at times seems a substance bound to baffle. At the heart of the matter, however, is an irreducibly pleasurable beverage bound up only in the vocabulary of effusive praise. Amongst AOCs, DOCGs and IGTs there lies merely a promise to the drinker: you've found what you're looking for. If anything, this book is intended to display openness, and an accepting attitude to the wines of every region of the world. Consider then this book as a corkscrew: a map through vineyards, an ally in the cellar and a guide at awkward moments of indecision.

'In vino veritas'

Pliny

HOW WINE IS MADE

‘Making good wine is a skill. Fine wine is an art.’

Robert Mondavi

This section will show you the ins and outs of how wine is made, bridging the vast gap between the grape and the wine sitting in your glass.

FACTORS AFFECTING GRAPE-GROWING

LATITUDE

The majority of the world’s wine is produced in regions that lie between the latitudes of 30° and 50°. This is because the temperate climate in this band, which usually stays between 50°F and 70°F throughout the year, provides ideal conditions in which to grow all varieties.

SOIL TYPE

The soil type is extremely important and influences the amount of minerals and nutrients that the vine is exposed to, supports the root structure and controls the drainage potential. Vines grow best on well-drained soil and ‘damp feet’ can ruin the potential for good wine. Poor soil, which often would not support other crops, encourages the vine to send its roots deep into the mineral rich sub-soil and encourages less fruit with more concentrated juice. Vines grown in rich soil tend to produce too much fruit with little concentration of juice – this in turn leads to a poor-quality wine.

Viticulture

The job of a viticulturist is a busy one, entailing numerous duties such as monitoring the development of the fruit in order to ascertain the optimum time to harvest the crop, fertilising the vines, preventing or controlling the spread of pests and diseases, and ongoing maintenance of the vines.

CLIMATE

Many vineyards are planted on sloping ground as this provides both a natural means of drainage for the vines and also helps to control the sunlight they receive throughout the year.

- In cooler climates, vineyards are usually located on a south facing slope as this increases the strength of sunlight and maximises the hours of sunshine they are exposed to during the summer growing season.
- In warmer climates, planting vineyards on a north facing slope is favoured as they offer some

protection against overexposure to the potentially scorching rays of the sun.

The presence of lakes and mountain ranges can also be beneficial, as they help to create a stable microclimate for the vines to grow in.

The importance of *terroir*

The French have a standard phrase that encompasses the interplay of soil type, climate and grape variety – this is terroir. This term, which has no English equivalent, describes a belief in how the unique nuances of a wine’s upbringing influence its eventual quality. Ideally, terroir represents a marriage of ideal conditions for the cultivation of a particular grape, which leads to an excellent wine.

AGE

The best grapes tend to come from the oldest vines, which have a life span of centuries. In Europe however, there are few vines which pre-date the *Phylloxera* epidemic, although there are some 100 year-old vines in the USA and Australia. As vines age, they produce lower yields of fruit with extremely concentrated juice – ideal for the winemaker.

‘Good wine is a good familiar creature if it be well used.’

William Shakespeare, *Othello*, II. iii.

VINIFICATION

Vinification concerns the process of creating fine wines from raw grapes within a winery. This process generally takes place along the following lines.

PRESSING

Harvested grapes are collected and delivered to the winery in order to begin separating the liquid and solid parts of the grape by pressing. During pressing, grape clusters are placed between two surfaces and gradually squeezed in order to extract as much juice as possible. The product of this initial pressing stage is called must, a juice that still contains the skin and the seeds of the grapes.

Pocket fact

Although this varies widely depending on pressing methods and grapes used, as a general rule one kilogram of grapes will yield about one 75cl bottle of wine.

FERMENTATION

Fermentation turns the sugars in the grape juice into alcohol by adding yeast. Occasionally, a winemaker may wish to stop fermentation early if he wants to produce a sweet or medium-dry wine. Roughly speaking, every gram of sugar that is converted during fermentation will produce about half a gram of alcohol.

It is at this stage when variation creeps into the process of winemaking, so we shall take a look at the

nuances of red, white and rosé wines.

Red wine

The rich colours and deep flavours that characterise red wine are created from grape skins. Tannins which give reds a well-rounded, robust flavour and create dark, luminous colours are also present in the skins. Because of this, contact between the juice and the skins is essential during both the pressing and fermentation processes. The main techniques for producing red wine are:

- **Pumping over** (*remontage*): Wine from the bottom of the fermenting vat is drawn up and pumped back over the top of the contents. This ensures good consistent contact with the skins and breaks up any crust that has formed at the top of the vat, helping to ensure a wine is tannic and well coloured.
- A **fermenting juice** can also be drawn off to increase the proportion of solids (grape skins) to liquid and ensure a robust flavour. The wine drawn off is often fermented and bottled separately as rosé. This is common in California, where powerful red Zinfandel is produced using this method and the off-shoot is a light, fruity white Zinfandel rosé.
- **Carbonic maceration** is another variation on traditional fermentation. In this process, whole bunches of grapes are placed in the vat underneath a layer of carbon dioxide. Fermentation occurs within the grapes, which burst and release a lot of colour but little tannin. This process is generally used to produce soft and very fruity reds intended for early drinking.

Rosé wine

Most rosés are produced by allowing mid-length contact with the skins during fermentation (typically two to three days), but there are also two other ways in which rosé wines can be produced:

- **Saignée**: Grapes are de-stalked but not crushed before being vatted for 12 and 24 hours. After this the juice is run off for fermentation without further skin contact.
- **Blending**: Mixing red wine into white to impart colour is an extremely uncommon practice and illegal in most European wine-growing regions.

White wine

White wines are light in colour because the skins are removed from the must within a few hours of pressing. Because of this initial separation, whites have considerably lower amounts of tannin. Fermentation takes place at lower temperatures and over a longer period than with red wine, to ensure a concentration of fruit flavours combined with lightness of colour.

MATURATION

After fermentation, the winemaker is left with a rough wine not yet ready for the public. Although most wines are made for youthful drinking, finer wines generally benefit from some period of maturation in either cask or bottle. Maturation encourages a gentle oxidation, changing the character of the wine and adding tannin as it softens other characteristics.

Oak contains tannins that can supplement those in either red or white wine and enrich the flavours

both.

- In red wine, oak tannins infuse a rich woody flavour into the wine and extract overripe fruit aromas.
- In white they replace grassy acidity with complex vanilla and caramel flavours.

Small barrels increase contact with the wood and have a greater effect on the flavour. Different types of oak can influence the taste.

FINING

Before bottling, every wine must undergo some process of fining. Microscopic elements such as proteins and other particles that give wine a cloudy appearance are removed using fining agents such as egg-white. These are added to wine to capture suspended particles and weigh them down to settle at the bottom of the vessel. The wine is then filtered in order to separate it from the sediment that has been collected. Generally, the finer the quality of a wine, the gentler the filtration will be, and unselective filters can damage the character of a wine.

BOTTLING

Wines are bottled in a clean environment to ensure they reach the public in excellent condition. Wines have traditionally been fitted with a cork at this point, to allow bottle-aging, although many wines intended for early drinking are now closed with screw-tops.

DIFFERENT WINE STYLES

Clearly wine is not limited to still red, white and rosé, and some of the more individual wine styles vary from these standard practices.

SWEET WINE

To create a tasty sweet wine, the grape variety needs to maintain high acidity alongside very high levels of ripeness. Commonly used varieties to make sweet wine are Riesling, Gurztraminer and Muscat.

There are three main techniques behind the creation of sweet wines:

- ***Botrytis cinerea* (Noble Rot)**

This is a spore-like fungus that attacks healthy grapes and spreads over them, feeding on the sugars in the fruit. If the correct temperature combination of damp nights and warming days occurs while the grapes are under attack from the fungus, they will naturally dry and dehydrate beneath it, which concentrates their sugar content. Examples of Noble Rot wine are the marvellous Sauternes wine from Chateau d'Yquem and the famed Tokaj Aszu from Hungary.

- **Eiswein (Ice Wine)**

Eiswein is made from grapes that have been picked during a hard frost. When these frozen grapes are pressed, the denser concentrated sugars are separated from the frozen water content of the grapes to create an extremely sweet must with high acidity. This is increasingly popular in Canada, where

complex and luscious Ice Wine is produced during their cold winters.

- **Late harvesting**

The later grapes are picked, the riper they will be, and if they are left on the vines well into autumn they will ripen to their fullest. Leaving the grapes to dehydrate concentrates their sugars by removing much of the natural water content, creating sweet wines that are full of sticky honey and intense fruit flavours.

FORTIFIED WINE

When making fortified wine, alcohol is added to the must before fermentation is complete; this kills off the yeast and leaves a higher amount of residual sugar in the wine than usual. The end result is a wine that is sweeter, with a higher alcohol content of 18%–20%. The most well-known varieties of fortified wine are port, sherry and vermouth.

‘Wine fills the heart with courage.’

Plato

CHAMPAGNE AND SPARKLING WINES

Sparkling wine can legitimately be made from virtually any grape variety, but true Champagne can only be made from Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier in the Champagne area of France.

The grapes must be harvested about three to four weeks earlier than usual as it is at this point that the acids are high and the sugars low – optimum levels for creating a sparkling wine. They are then pressed and undergo the same primary fermentation process as that of white wine.

Following primary fermentation, Champagnes and sparkling wines undergo several unique processes

Blending

This blends together the must from various grape varieties in order to create a pleasing wine. For Champagne, this could be a blend of all the accepted grape varieties, only two, or it could be created from just one. For example, Champagne produced solely from the dark Pinot Noir grape is called Blanc de Noirs (white from black); Champagne produced from Chardonnay alone is known as Blanc de Blancs (white from white).

In reality, a blend is most common and is usually created within guideline perimeters of each winemaker’s individual style. This final blended mixture is known as the *cuvée*.

Second fermentation

The *Méthode Champenoise* is the most well-known and popular bottling process in the production of Champagne and sparkling wines, yielding by far the highest quality results. The *cuvée* is inserted into each bottle, along with a mixture of wine, yeast and sugar (known as *liqueur de triage*) which will encourage the second fermentation in the bottle. The carbon dioxide produced as a by-product gets trapped inside in the form of bubbles. Non-Vintage Champagnes must remain thus for a minimum of 15 months, whilst Vintage Champagnes require *at least* three years.

Dégorgement

Once the bottle of sparkling wine has been left *en triage* for two to four years, it is mature enough to drink. However, the left-over yeast from the fermentation process is still trapped inside in the form of a silty sediment. To get rid of this, each bottle is tipped from a horizontal position to vertical (neck facing downwards) which encourages the sediment to slip down into the tip of the neck (known as *rémuage*). The top inch of the bottle is then rapidly frozen and the cap removed, allowing the natural pressure from the bubbles in the wine to push out the frozen yeast plug (known as *dégorgement*).

Dosage

During the process of *dégorgement*, a little liquid is lost – and this is topped up with a mixture of wine and cane sugar solution. This increases the level of residual sugar in the sparkling wine, and moderates how dry the wine is according to the individual house style. Without this counterbalancing agent, sparkling wines would be incredibly acidic.

Finishing

Finally, a cork and wire hood are placed over the top of the bottle and the wine is left to sit for at least another six months in order to allow the dosage to integrate fully, and to let the wine rest. After that it's ready to crack open!

Pocket fact

When a bottle of Champagne is opened, the cork flies out at around 25 miles per hour.

ORGANIC AND BIODYNAMIC WINES

Organic and biodynamic wines have grown in popularity over recent years – due to the increasing emphasis on sustainable agriculture and our awareness of pesticides and quest for natural produce.

ORGANIC WINE

All organic wines are produced in adherence with strict standards set out by official regulatory bodies (such as the United States Department of Agriculture in America, or Ecovert in France). Remember, different nations have differing certification criteria, and as such what is classed as organic in one country may not be in another.

Organic viticulture

At a viticultural level, all organic growers dismiss pesticides and insecticides in favour of natural pest control methods. Ingenious ideas include planting blackberry bushes around the perimeter of the vineyard in order to encourage insects that will eat the bugs that prey on the vine leaves, putting up bird boxes to coax them to settle in the area and pick off the pests that eat the grapes, and weeding out unwanted plants by hand or machine.

Sulphites are present in most organic wine as a natural by-product of fermentation. However, their use is kept to a minimum during viticulture and vinification, so that they only reach levels of about a third of that found in conventionally made wines. If sulphites are a real worry, make sure that you buy

organic wine from America, where legislation dictates that any wine certified organic will have had no extra sulphites added in the process.

‘Wine in itself is an excellent thing.’

Pope Pius XII Airen

BIODYNAMIC WINE

Biodynamic wine offers a truly ecological approach to winemaking along holistic, sustainable principles. And just like organic wines, they have to meet rigorous criteria set out by third party regulators to be certified as biodynamic.

The theory

In biodynamic winemaking, the timing of operations such as planting and harvesting depend upon lunar cycles and other natural phenomenon. The balance of the soil is carefully maintained through recycling of nutrients and the use of a complex system of herbal sprays and composting techniques. All this creates a harmonious balance between man harvesting the resources of nature without corrupting it, and results are starting to suggest that this holistic approach yields excellent results.

Does it work?

There is no doubt that some methods used in biodynamic viticulture are quite odd. It is no wonder scepticism surrounds practices of burying cow horns full of manure in the soil during the autumn equinox and spraying ground quartz over vines. But these methods are beginning to gain a strong reputation on the competitive playing field of international wine because of genuine success especially in France. There have been a number of very high-profile commercial converts in recent years, including Domaine Leroy in Burgundy, Château de la Roche-aux-Moines in the Loire, Maison Chapoutier in the Rhone Valley, and Domaine Zind Humbrecht in Alsace.

Pocket fact

In a recent blind testing conducted by Fortune magazine, 10 biodynamic wines were judged against 10 conventionally made wines by leading industry experts, including a Master of Wine. The biodynamic wines were favoured nine out of the 10 times because they were deemed superior in flavour, aroma and texture. These results are subjective, but point to a bright future for biodynamic production.

VARIETIES OF GRAPE

WHITE

Albariño (Al-bar-een-yoh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly grown in north-west Spain and Portugal • Produces dry, refreshing, high-quality wines • Characteristic flavours of apricot, lime and grapefruit always discernible, but more intense in the Spanish varieties
Chardonnay (Shar-doh-nay)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classic white grape, first grown in Burgundy and Champagne, now all over the world • A principal variety in the Champagne blend • The only grape used to make Chablis and White Burgundy • Old World Chardonnay is characterised by classic fruit flavours such as lemon and lime, whereas that from the New World exhibits more tropical fruit flavours and aromas • Fermentation and aging in oak barrels lends lovely vanilla overtones to the wine
Chenin Blanc (Shen-in blahnk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originally grown in the Loire Valley, and more recently proved extremely successful in South America • Clean on the tongue with notes of honey, vanilla, lime, guava and melon depending on style • Wines range in style from dry to very sweet • In older wines, a mellow, nutty quality is distinguishable • Most notable wine from this grape is Vouvray
Colombard Call-om-bar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popular in New World countries such as California, South America and Australia because of its ability to produce a decent yield in high temperatures • Creates reliable everyday wines that are fruity and crisp with occasional tropical highlights
Gewürztraminer (Geh-vertz-trah-mee-ner)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grown most successfully in France, Germany and New Zealand as this grape prefers cooler climates • Notable for its distinctive, pungent fragrance of roses, lychees and spice, with flavours of peach and apricot • Can range from dry to sweet in style
Marsanne (Mar-sarn)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grown almost exclusively in the northern Rhône valley • Creates medium dry, full-bodied wines that have a rich flavour with pear, peach and spicy notes • Commonly blended with Roussanne, and occasionally Viognier, to create more balanced wines
Muscat (Moos-caht)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muscat refers to a family of over 200 grapes • Two common types are Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains, which produces small grapes and is the highest quality, and Muscat d'Alexandre, which is a higher yielding vine • It produces a remarkable range of wines from the very dry to the very sweet • The juice is naturally high in sugar, so this is a variety favoured for use in semi-sweet or dessert wines • An easy variety to detect as it has a unique, musky aroma with honey and marmalade flavours
Müller-Thurgau (Moo-lerr turk cow)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aromatic, high yielding variety which is usually dry to off-dry • Produces wine of note in Germany and Alsace
Muscadelle (Moos-cah-dell)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of the Muscat family • One of the three approved varieties (alongside Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon) for making white wines in the Sauternes region of France
Pinot Blanc (Pee-no blahnk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grown in Alsace, California, Italy, Germany and Austria • Produces dry wines that are not dissimilar to Chardonnay in their light, pleasant qualities • Grapes from the Alsace region are also used to produce aperitif wines notable for their creamy, apple flavour
Pinot Gris (Pinot Grigio) (Pee-no gree or Pee-no gree-jo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grown in France, Germany and Italy • The region of Alsace creates deep coloured wines with rich and spicy aromas • Varieties produced elsewhere create medium-bodied, well balanced wines with flavours that can range from citrus fruits through to apples and peaches

- Wines from this grape have a distinctive aroma of lily and honey blossom, and are pleasingly fresh in nature

Riesling (Rees-ling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grows best in cooler climates so popular in northern Europe, Germany in particular • Recent years have seen cultivation further across the globe, resulting in a wider range of flavours and characteristics appearing within this previously very traditional grape variety • Generally speaking, wines from this grape have a high acidity, but this is softened and complemented by delicate lime and apple flavours • Has a pleasing aroma of peach and honeysuckle, which can develop into a petrol nose as it ages • Wines range in style from very dry to very sweet • Some of the finest sweet wines in the world are a result of the effect of <i>Botrytis cinerea</i> on the grape, which creates a fabulous, rare and long-lasting wine
Rousanne (Roo-sarn)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly grown in the Rhône valley • Prized for its aromatic qualities and apricot flavour • Used in Hermitage Blanc, and often blended with Marsanne or Viognier
Sauvignon Blanc (Sew-veen-yon blahnk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originally grown in the Loire valley and Bordeaux regions, it is now grown widely in New World countries as it has the ability to tolerate heat better than many other varieties • Seems to have the ability to produce wines of distinction no matter where it is grown • Has a subtle nose of cut grass, gooseberry and melon, giving a fruity, exotic aroma • The delicacy of the grape means that it is easily overpowered and so is rarely aged in oak • Designed to be drunk young; most versions should be consumed within one year of harvesting • The grape behind two of the world's finest dry white wine styles, Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé
Sémillon (Say-me-yon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A hardy variety that ripens earlier in the season than most grapes • Produces a wine with fairly high acidity, this variety is often blended with other grapes such as Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay to balance their tendency towards slightly sticky sweetness and create a fresh, zesty wine • Creates young wines with citrus flavours of lemon and lime, but older wines mature to become full flavoured, rich and aromatic • Well suited to oak aging
Torrontés (Tor-ron-taze)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principal white grape of Argentina • Creates quaffable, medium-bodied wines that are fresh, fruity and delicious
Ugni Blanc (Oo-nee blahnk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widely grown in France and Italy • The predominant grape of Cognac, and also the base of several Italian white wines • Creates medium-bodied wines with a certain zing, that can have a distinctive aroma of banana
Viognier Vee-on-yeey-ay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once grown only in the Rhône valley, this variety is now gaining popularity in California and Australia • Creates wines that can range from exquisite to very ordinary, depending on the producer • Wines mainly characterised by full bodied, fruity peach and apricot aromas that mingle with undertones of gentle spice, and a lovely golden colour

RED

Baga (Bah-guh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost exclusively planted in Portugal • Grapes are incredibly thick skinned, resulting in wines that are high in tannin and acid • The variety is susceptible to rot so is harvested early, resulting in the exacerbation of the already astringent quality of the wine produced • Commonly used in Mateus rosé wine, where reduced tannins create a refreshing and pleasingly dry drink
Cabernet Franc (Cab-er-nay frahnk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the six approved grapes for use in the blend of Bordeaux wines • Creates light and sweet wines with good acidity, which means it adds life, freshness and well-rounded flavours to a Bordeaux blend, as well as a rich colour
Cabernet Sauvignon (Cab-er-nay sew-veen-yon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dominant variety in Bordeaux blends • Grown in every major wine region of the world in the hope of creating a wine that can rival the eminent Bordeaux styles • Produces wine that is deep in colour with plenty of tannin and a full body • Aromas of blackcurrant, cherry, cedar and tobacco mingle and play on the senses, creating the complex flavour that is its prized blending quality • Commonly aged in oak barrels for five to 10 years, which adds a woody, vanilla dimension to the

wine

Carmenère (Car-men-yerr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Almost exclusively grown in southern Chile• Low tannin levels create a wine that is light and easy to drink, whose flavours benefit from tantalisingly rich fruit and spice qualities
Gamay (Gam-ay)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The grape of Beaujolais• Distinctive in its deep violet colour and fruity aroma of strawberry and cherry• High acidity but low tannin levels create a fresh, light, unpretentious wine• Best drunk young (within two years of bottling)
Grenache (Garnacha) (Gre-na-sh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Found in numerous wine blends from around the world• Produces wines that are light in tannin and colour, and as such lends itself as a good variety for rosé (particularly popular in California)• Notable wines of this grape are the red Lirac and rosé Tavel, produced in the Rhône valley
Malbec (Mahl-bek)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One of the six that can be used in the Bordeaux blend• A spicy variety with rich plum and black cherry flavour• Because of its strength, it is used sparingly in blends to add depth and length• Has become the flagship grape of Argentina
Merlot (Mare-low)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One of the six that can be used in the Bordeaux blend• It is susceptible to fungal infections and can prove tricky to grow, so the quality of wines depend greatly on both location and skill of production• Characterised by plummy, berry flavours with the occasional chocolate undertone, a sweet and fruity bouquet, and a smooth, velvety quality• Commonly blended with other varieties, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, to soften the wine
Mourvèdre (More-veh-druh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A late ripening grape that performs best in warm climates, and so is predominantly planted along the Mediterranean coasts of France and Spain• Creates medium-bodied, deeply coloured wines that are full of cherry and berry flavours and distinctive for their gamy aroma• Used in the Rhône valley in blends of Cotes du Rhône and Châteauneuf du Pape
Nebbiolo (Neh-bee-oh-low)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can improve on aging for up to 10 years• Almost exclusively grown in Italy, it enjoys success in the Piedmont region where Barbaresco and Barolo are produced• Wines are full flavoured with a fruity, spicy flavour• Can age very well
Petit Verdot (Peu-tea ver-doe)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Another member of the Bordeaux Six• Gaining popularity in California as a minority blend to add depth and colour to wine• Produces a deep wine with a strong tannin structure and intense blackcurrant and damson flavours• Because of its tannic strength and depth of flavour, it is blended in as little as 1% to Bordeaux reds to add just a dash of these qualities to the final wine
Pinotage (Pee-no-tahje)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A South African hybrid variety• Has a very individual aroma of smoky wood, plum and blackberry, with a kick of peppery spice• Pleasantly smooth to drink
Pinot Meunier (Pee-no mu-nee-ay)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One of only three authorised grapes to be used in the Champagne blend (alongside Chardonnay and Pinot Noir)• A mutation of Pinot Noir but in use since the 16th century• Makes a fairly tart, acerbic wine that lends a bright and fresh edge to Champagne
Pinot Noir (Spätburgunder) (Pee-no nwahr)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The red grape of Burgundy• Also used to add body and richness to Champagne• Notoriously difficult to grow as it flourishes in a climate with warm days and cool nights• Produced and popular worldwide• As a rule, it is light in colour and low in tannin, with notable cherry and strawberry aromas and flavours• Can be aged for three to 12 years depending on its quality
Sangiovese (Brunello) (San-joe-va-say)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The primary grape used in northern Italy• Produces Tuscan Chianti and Brunello di Montalcino• Also being grown in California and Australia where they are experimenting with blending

- Produces fruity, lively, medium-bodied wines with good acidity that adds a racey edge to an otherwise smooth drinking experience

Syrah (Shiraz) (See-rah)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the Rhône it produces full-bodied, inky coloured wines that are characterised by spicy aromas• When grown in the warmer climate of Australia, wines are sweeter, riper and almost jammy in flavour, but retain the distinctive spicy quality
Tempranillo (Tinto del Pais, Tinto Roriz) (Tem-pra-nee-oh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grown on the Iberian peninsula of Spain and Portugal• The major grape in Rioja• Creates medium-bodied, acidic wines that have a rich colour and flavours of blackcurrant and plum• Often blended with Cabernet Sauvignon or Grenache• Benefits from oak aging, which adds vanilla softness and a smoky complexity to the wine
Tinto Cão (Tin-toe Kai-oe)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grown in small quantities in Portugal only• Historically used for port, recent experimentation proves that it can yield excellent table wines which have floral aromas, fresh flavours and a captivatingly harmonious palate• Wines are best for aging
Touriga Nacional (Too-ree-gah nas-see-o-nahl)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Portuguese variety that is <i>the</i> grape for port• Creates deep coloured, tannic wines with concentrated flavours that are very dry in the mouth• More recently being used to create red table wine as well as port
Zinfandel (Zin-fan-dell)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grown almost exclusively in California• Produces heavyweight reds with intense flavours of blackberry and spice• Produces a fruity, off-dry rosé known as white Zinfandel

WINE REGIONS OF THE WORLD

Understanding the nuances of wine production can seem daunting, but it basically relies on a understanding of exactly what is made exactly where. In this long chapter, we'll look at the major wine producing countries of the globe.

Top 10 world wine producers

1. France	5.35 million tonnes
2. Italy	4.71 million tonnes
3. Spain	3.64 million tonnes
4. USA	2.23 million tonnes
5. Argentina	1.54 million tonnes
6. Australia	1.41 million tonnes
7. China	1.40 million tonnes
8. South Africa	1.01 million tonnes
9. Chile	0.97 million tonnes
10. Germany	0.89 million tonnes

ARGENTINA

HISTORY

Argentina is a country whose colourful cultural influences are matched only by its rich diversity of grape varieties. Most of these varieties were brought over in a wave of immigration from Spain and Italy during the mid-19th century. Argentina is a country which produces a great volume of wine, although mostly low-quality plonk to satisfy the home market.

It was not until the mid 1990s that Argentina began to dip its toes in the international wine market when a rise in economic wealth allowed for greater investment in the industry. 'Flying winemakers' have begun to improve quality, with increased investment from Old World wine companies leading an attempt to market Argentine wines internationally.

Pocket fact

Argentina is now the world's fifth largest wine producer, although only 10% is exported – a whopping 90% is consumed in the country itself.

CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

Argentina is a mixture of extreme landscapes, yielding a great diversity of wines. The main secret of Argentine grape-growing success is the altitude of its vineyards.

The lowest vineyards are situated at altitudes of around 900m above sea level. This would

unthinkable to European viticulturalists, but it is this height that creates the temperatures that allow Argentine grapes to flourish.

Overnight, temperatures on this high ground drop to levels low enough to encourage red grapes to develop good flavours and deep colours. In the northern vineyards, temperatures are several degrees lower as standard, which allows for the growth of white grapes that produce wines with sumptuous aromas.

GRAPE VARIETIES

Argentina is home to a wealth of different wine grape varieties, and a few of the most notable are listed here.

Red

- Malbec is the signature grape of Argentina and produces its optimum flavours when grown on the soils. Creates a smoky, spicy wine that can be punctuated with jammy fruit flavours.
- Other varieties include Cabernet Sauvignon, Bonarda, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Sangiovese, Syrah and Tempranillo.

White

- Torrontés is the grape that features most strongly on the international market for Argentina. It makes an easy-drinking, medium-bodied wine with floral and herbal fragrances that give way to crisp, fresh, fruity flavours.
- Also grown widely are Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon, Riesling and Ugni Blanc.

KEY WINE PRODUCING AREAS

Argentine wines fall under similar rules of appellation to that on the continent: wines are labelled by region and vineyard. Some 90% of Argentine wine comes from the Cuyo region north of Santiago, encompassing San Juan and Mendoza, although there are other notable areas worth exploring.

Salta

- The northernmost wine-growing region of Argentina, and home to the world's highest vineyards.
- Grapes grown include Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Syrah and Chardonnay, but Torrontés is the signature grape of the region.
- Look out for Torrontés wines from the *Cafayete region*.

La Rioja

- Wine varieties include Malbec, Syrah, Bonarda, Cabernet Sauvignon and Torrontés.
- Best known for its Torrontés Riojana, which is produced by the local wine cooperative.

San Juan

- The region's landscape with its numerous valleys provides ideal conditions for a number of grape varieties. Because of this, almost a quarter of all Argentine wines come from this area.
- Varieties include Moscatel, Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Bonarda, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Viognier, Torrontés and Syrah.
- Famed for its sweet *Moscatel de Alexandria*, San Juan is also gaining international repute for its fine Syrah wines.

Mendoza

Classed as one of the world's eight Great Wine Capitals and divided into the following sub-regions:

- Luján de Cuyo* This area is well known for producing quality wines from the Malbec grape. Vineyards of note are *Vistalba*, *Perdriel*, *Agrelo* and *Las Compuertas*.
- San Rafael* This southern area was the first in Argentina to qualify for its own appellation. This area is the main producer of Chenin, but other varieties such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Malbec, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon are also cultivated.
- Uco Valley* The most distinguished region of wine production, notable for creating the finest wines in the country.
- Central Mendoza* Not an area that produces the most exciting wines, but does create very pleasant table wines.
- Tupungato* This sub-region produces the finest Argentine Chardonnays.

Patagonia

- Production is centred in the high altitude valley of San Patricio del Chanar where there are plantations of Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.
- Growers claim it to be the southernmost vineyards on Earth (but Kiwi growers are potentially little further south).
- Good producers include: *Bodegas del Fin del Mundo* and *Bodegas Familia Schroeder*.

One to watch: Bodega Familia Zuccardi

This family-owned estate produces an excellent range and is moving towards entirely organic production. Its Malbec is an excellent example of Argentina's signature grape.

Pocket fact

The eight wine Capitals of the World are linked together by an organisation intended to promote their economic growth. The eight are:

- Bordeaux (France)
- Bilbao (Rioja) (Spain)
- Mendoza (Argentina)
- Cape Town (South Africa)

- Firenze (Italy)
- Mainz (Rheinhessen) (Germany)
- Porto (Portugal)
- San Francisco (Napa Valley) (USA)



AUSTRALIA

HISTORY

In the past 10 years, the Australian wine industry has boomed and it is now one of the leading exporters in the world. A combination of tax incentives, growing confidence from continuously high sales, and investment from overseas winemakers has put Australia at the top of the wine production hierarchy.

GRAPE VARIETIES

White

- Chardonnay: One of the most popular wines in the world, and as such is the main white grape grown for export. Australian Chardonnays tend to exhibit lovely melon and peach flavours, and are often aged in oak for a year or so to enhance their smooth vanilla flavour.
- Also produces Pinot Gris, Riesling, Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc, Gewürztraminer and Verdelho.

Red

- Shiraz: The most famous red wine to come out of Australia, it is full bodied, richly coloured and bursting with rich fruit flavours and a hint of spice.

- Also produces Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Grenache, Petit Verdot and Pinot Noir.
-

KEY WINE PRODUCING AREAS

Western Australia

Although this region produces less than 5% of the country's output, the wines rank amongst the highest in terms of quality. They retain a lightness which distinguishes them from traditional Aussie 'fruit bombs'.

Margaret River

The most notable area for winemaking within this region, it enjoys lush vegetation and a climate that is far more conducive to grape cultivation than anywhere else in the country.

Its reputation has been built on its Cabernet Sauvignon. Some excellent Shiraz, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc also make this an exciting wine region.

One to watch: Howard Park

Howard Park produces an excellent oaked Chardonnay with nutty complexity on the nose alongside a zesty fruit palate. Its Shiraz shows ripe black fruit alongside a chocolatey finish accentuated by the fresh mint and herbs on the nose. In the Cabernet Sauvignon, vanilla and blackcurrant accentuate the spicy, muscular feel of this superb wine.

South Australia

This is the winemaking hub of Australia. It produces an ever-increasing majority of vintages and is home to all of the important wine research organisations. Within this region, there are seven key areas:

Barossa Valley

- This area is absolutely saturated with vines, as it is Australia's biggest quality wine district.
- Shiraz is the grape from which the most distinctive wines are produced in the region. Under the blistering sun, the Shiraz grapes seem to reach their full ripening potential to produce potent, spicy wines with rich, chocolatey flavours.
- If you are looking for good independent producers, *Peter Lehmann* and *Hewitson* are great bets.

Eden Valley

- This area only recently gained distinction from the Barossa Valley, thanks to family wine company *Yalumba of Angaston*, which began to mark it out as Riesling country in the 1960s. Rieslings grown high in the hills of the Eden Valley are remarkable for their beautiful floral and mineral aromas.

Clare Valley

- Famed for Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz, the vineyards are at a fairly high altitude, creating the cool nights that are good at preserving the acidity levels in these grapes.
- Unlike other areas of South Australia, few producers in Clare Valley have associations with large

corporations (the exceptions being *Leasingham*, which is owned by *Hardy's*, and *Annie's Lane* which is owned by *Fosters*).

- For Australia's finest examples of Riesling, look to *Jeffrey Grosset*, *Kilkaroon* and *TK Wines*. For Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz, *Jeffrey Grosset* is again very good, as are *Wendouree* and *Jim Barry*.

McLaren Vale

- McLaren Vale has a long history in Australian wine production, and is still home to distinguished wine firm *Hardy's* and the famous *Amery* vineyards.
- Some good Grenache comes from the vineyards of Blewitt Springs, whilst Kangarilla produces excellent Shiraz. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are also delicious, and wineries to look out for include *Geoff Merrill*, *Tatachilla*, *Chapel Hill* and *Woodstock*.

Adelaide Hills

- The Mount Lofty ranges in the Adelaide Hills are usually overshadowed by cloud, which maintains the continuously cool temperatures necessary to produce the zesty Sauvignon Blanc, bursting with the citrus flavours that this area is known for.
- The vineyards of Gumeracha, more southerly than Mount Lofty, are warmer and ideal for growing beautifully ripe Cabernet Sauvignon. In a similar geographical area, Mount Barker produces masterful Shiraz. Pinot Noir and Merlot, though less widely grown, can also produce high-quality wines. Sparkling wines are also a feature. Those from producers *Nepenthe* and *Starve Dog Lane* are worth trying.

Limestone Coast

- As the name suggests, this area has loamy soils that encourage vine cultivation. Couple this with a warm climate and the conditions are good for some successful winemaking. Grapes grown include Riesling, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz and Pinot Noir.
- The majority of the grapes harvested in the area go into blends, but those that do not make easy drinking wines that are fairly uncomplicated.

Coonawarra

- The soil of Coonawarra is quite remarkable, being vibrant red in colour. Below this bright, crumbly topsoil is a layer of free-draining limescale, and below that again fresh water. This combination makes for the perfect growing terrain.
- Signature wines of the region are an easy-drinking Shiraz and the juicy Cabernet Sauvignon. Top producers include *Katnook*, *Majella* and *Wynns*.

One to watch: Knappstein

A small producer of excellent quality wines in the Clare Valley region. Look out for their Riesling with a delightfully lime and citrus nose that leads into clean, lush fruit on the palate.

Victoria

The smallest state on the Australian mainland, Victoria is nonetheless important to the country's wine

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