

What is wine?

Wine is the fermented juice of grapes

Sugar + Yeast = Alcohol + Carbon Dioxide (CO²)

The sugar is in the grape juice and the yeast is present on the grape skins and in the air

Fermentation ends when the alcohol reaches around 15%

Three major types of wine

- Table wine: 8-15% alcohol
 - Sparkling wine: 8-12% alcohol + CO²
 - Fortified wine: 17-22% alcohol
- (All wine fits into at least one of these categories)
(Table wine is all that concerns us today)

New World vs. Old World

New World wine regions (California, Australia, Chile) usually list the grape variety on the label

Old World wine regions (France, Italy, Spain) list the region, village or vineyard where the wine is made, but usually not the grape

What's a vintage?

As grapes ripen, their acidity decreases while their sugar increases

Grapes are picked when they reach the sugar/acid ratio for the style of wine they're to produce

The "Vintage" is the year that the grapes were harvested

In the Southern Hemisphere, the seasons are reversed

Northern Hemisphere harvest is between August-November

Southern Hemisphere harvest as early as January-March

The Winemaking process

Freshly picked grapes are sorted

De-stemmed and crushed

Placed into a vat with (red) or without skins (white)

Fermentation occurs (4- 20 days)

Pressed

Barreled and aged

Filtered and bottled

What kind of grapes make wine?

The major wine grapes come from the species *Vitis vinifera*

Both old world (Europe) and new world (America) wine producers use *Vitis vinifera*

The Native American grape species (*Vitis labrusca*) is still grown in the U.S. but some describe the wines as having a 'foxy' aroma and flavor

The White Wines of the World

There are about 50 major white grapes used for white wine

The big three (from lightest to fullest):

- Riesling
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Chardonnay

Where do the big three grow?

Riesling: Germany; Alsace, France; many New World regions (e.g. New York State)

Sauvignon Blanc: Loire Valley, France; Bordeaux, France; New Zealand; California

Chardonnay: Burgundy, France; California, Australia, Champagne, France

The Red Wines of the World

There are about 40 major red grapes used for red wine

The big three (from lightest to fullest):

- Pinot Noir
- Cabernet Sauvignon
- Syrah/Shiraz

Where do the big three red grapes grow?

Pinot Noir: Burgundy, France; California; Oregon; Champagne, France; New Zealand

Cabernet Sauvignon: Bordeaux, France; California; Chile

Syrah/Shiraz: Rhône, France; Australia

Why is geography important?

All major wine regions fall between 30 and 50° latitude, north and south of the equator

It is between these two bands where various "microclimates" are found which give the correct balance between warm and cool, sun and rain, etc. for the production of fine wine

Microclimate

Or better put, *terroir*, is the environmental factor affecting the quality of grapes:

- Soil
- Slope
- Sun
- Wind
- Temperature
- Et cetera

When the *terroir*, grape variety, vintage and winemaking are in sync, great wines are the result

The wines of the Old World

France, Germany, Italy and Spain all have great white and red wine traditions

The new world wine regions have tried to mimic these wines, sometimes successfully, and sometimes not

Each country has its own special regions where red and/or white wines are produced

The white wines of France

There are four major white-wine producing regions in France

- Alsace
- Loire
- Bordeaux
- Burgundy

The white wine regions of France

Alsace: Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Muscat, Pinot gris and Pinot blanc

Loire: Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, and Melon

Bordeaux: Sémillon, Sauvignon Blanc

Burgundy: Chardonnay

The white wines of Germany

Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Müller-Thurgau and Silvaner

The white wines of Italy and Spain

Both Italy and Spain produce world class white wines but traditionally, white grapes are planted in colder (more northern regions) while red grapes are planted in warmer (more southerly regions)

Pinot Grigio and Rias Baixas are examples of world class wines from Italy and Spain respectively

The red wines of France

There are three major red-wine producing regions in France

- Bordeaux
- Burgundy
- Rhône

Bordeaux: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc

Burgundy: Pinot Noir

Rhône: Syrah, Grenache

The red wines of Italy

There are three major red-wine producing regions in Italy

- Piedmont
- Tuscany
- Veneto

Piedmont: Nebbiolo, Barbera, Dolcetto

Tuscany: Sangiovese

Veneto: Corvina, Molinara, Rondinella

The red wines of Spain

There are three major red-wine producing regions in Spain

- Rioja
- Ribera del Duero
- Cataluña

Rioja: Tempranillo, Garnacha

Ribera del Duero: Tempranillo (Tinto fino)

Cataluña: Cariñena

European grapes in the New World

As previously mentioned, learning the grapes grown in the wine region is the key to understanding Old World wines

All of the above mentioned varieties have been attempted in the New World wine regions

The French varieties are by far the most important and have come to be known as the "international varieties"

New World wine regions.

- California, Oregon, Washington
- Australia, New Zealand

- Chile, Argentina
- South Africa
- Canada

These and other regions are gaining in popularity as they perfect their skills with the “international grape varieties”

“The Big Six”

Riesling:

The classic white grape of Germany
To many, the greatest of white wines
Dry and full in Alsace
Often minerally, yellow/green apple, white peach, citrus and floral

Sauvignon Blanc

Crisp and Fresh
Gooseberry, Citrus, Grapefruit, Melon
Grassy, Asparagus
“Cats Pee”

Chardonnay

Classic white grape of Burgundy and Champagne
Full flavor and crisp acidity
Best in calcium rich soils
Lemon, green apple, melon skin
Often matured in oak; this adds toastiness, vanilla, and spice flavors
Another great transponder of place

Pinot Noir

Classic grape of red Burgundy and Champagne
The single variety of AOC Côte d'Or reds
Light in tannin
Raspberries, strawberries, red and black cherries
Can become quite earthy/barnyard/ exotic with age
Incredibly sensitive to *terroir*

Cabernet Sauvignon

Firm Structure
Aromas and flavors of...
Currants, Blackberries, Cassis
Olives, Anise, Herbs

Syrah

Known as Shiraz in Australia
Powerful and full-bodied
Aromas and flavors of...
Black pepper, Raspberry
Mulberry, Rubber, Liquorice, Chocolate
Leather and game when mature