



Topic  
Better Living

Subtopic  
Food & Wine

# The Everyday Guide to Wine

Course Guidebook

Jennifer Simonetti-Bryan  
Master of Wine



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**Jennifer Simonetti-Bryan, M.W.**  
Certified Wine Educator,  
Society of Wine Educators

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**M**aster of Wine Jennifer Simonetti-Bryan is one of only a few hundred people in the world and one of only 26 in the United States to have achieved the Master of Wine title (M.W.) from the Institute of Masters of Wine in London, England—the highest accolade and the most difficult title to achieve in the world of wine.

She is also among the few people to have received the highest credentials from both the Wine & Spirit Education Trust in London and the Society of Wine Educators in Washington DC. She has also been an instructor for the Wine & Spirit Education Trust.

Before turning her attention to wine, Ms. Simonetti-Bryan spent four years in corporate finance. She received her B.A. in International Business from the University of Denver in 1995 and worked as an associate for Citicorp in London until an exceptional glass of wine at a business meeting sparked a passion and a career change. Her business expertise contributed to her success in becoming a Master of Wine and educating others about the wine business.

Ms. Simonetti-Bryan has trained thousands of professionals in the wine industry, traveled to more than 30 of the world's most important wine regions, and judged international wine and spirits competitions, including acting as a wine advisor to the Ultimate Beverage Challenge in 2010. In 2008, she was honored for her palate with the Wiesbaden Tasting Trophy from the Institute of Masters of Wine.

Ms. Simonetti-Bryan is a well-regarded and widely sought commentator and has been featured for her expertise by Fox News, Fox Business, Bloomberg TV, NBC, CBS, Martha Stewart Radio, Wine Library TV, *Wine Enthusiast Magazine*, *GOTHAM* magazine, and *The New York Times*. She has hosted seminars with celebrity chefs such as Bobby Flay, Mario Batali, and Jacques

Pepin and was invited in 2009 to tour the White House cellar with the White House Director of Food and Beverage, Daniel Shanks, and Head Chef, Cristeta Comerford.

Ms. Simonetti-Bryan has written extensively on viticulture, vinification, and the wine business and was a contributing editor to the 2007 edition of *The Professional Wine Reference*. ■



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## **Disclaimer**

*The Everyday Guide to Wine* is for responsible adults of legal drinking age and is for informational and entertainment purposes only. The Teaching Company takes no responsibility for the effects of drinking the wines demonstrated in this course, and encourages you to always drink responsibly.

# The Everyday Guide to Wine

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## Scope:

**T**o the novice wine lover, the world of wine is a world of glamour, sophistication, luxury, and romance, but it may also seem impenetrable. There is so much variety, so much information, and so very many opinions, not to mention an elite image that many find intimidating. But through the ages, wine has been enjoyed by people all over the world, peasants and kings alike. You are already part of the culture of wine, just by being human. But to really get the most out of a glass takes knowledge and experience.

In this course, Master of Wine Jennifer Simonetti-Bryan will show you how you can become a knowledgeable wine drinker just by training your own



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**Vineyards in the Mosel region of Germany, famous for delicate Rieslings.**

senses to get the most out of every glass you drink. With each lecture, you are invited and encouraged to taste along. Experiencing the wines along with Ms. Simonetti-Bryan is the best way to learn about the wines themselves and about your own tastes and preferences.

We begin by building your taster's tool kit, a set of skills you will need to taste and analyze wines most effectively. Then we examine the process of making wine, all the way from the vineyard to the bottle. From there, we will approach the abundance and variety of the wine world in three different ways.

We will start by examining grape varieties. You will learn about the noble grape varieties—Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, and Syrah. These are the most widely planted varieties in the world because of their quality and adaptability. Understanding their character is the foundation for understanding all grape varieties; it is also how we come to understand how factors other than grape variety affect the flavor, complexity, and quality of a wine, as well as the decisions made by the winegrower and winemaker.

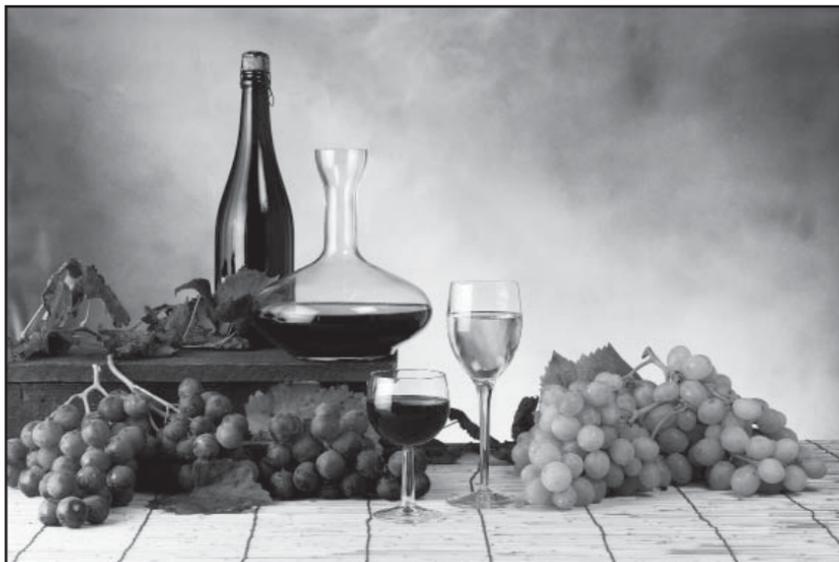
Next we will encounter the major styles of wine—dry and sweet; still, sparkling, and fortified. You will learn the basics of how each of them is made, both through viticulture (that is, how the grapes are treated in the field) and through the skills and techniques of the winemaker. You will learn important concepts such as the difference between Champagne and other sparkling wines and the many different ways to make a sweet wine. With your new understandings of grapes and styles, you will already be able to start making better purchasing and pairing decisions.

Our third approach to wine is regional. We will visit all of the major winemaking regions in both the Old World of Europe and the New World of North and South America, Australia and New Zealand, and South Africa. Through an understanding of the often-heard wine term “terroir”—both what it is and what it is not—you will deepen your understanding of how climate and soil affect the wine in your glass. You will see how even two tiny neighboring regions, or even neighboring vineyards, can produce very different wines from the same grape varieties based on their terroir, as well as learn the general characteristics to expect from, say, a California

Chardonnay or a red Burgundy. You will also learn how to decode the complex and sometimes confusing labels on European wines and how terms like Appellation Contrôlée and Reserva can tell you a lot about a wine's taste and quality before you even open the bottle.

The final lectures in the course discuss the best ways to buy wine (including analyzing wine reviews) as well as how to serve, store, and pair wine with food. While buying, serving, and storage are more or less sciences, food pairing is an art, one that takes many years of experience (and many wonderful meals) to master. You will be invited in the final lecture to make several pairing experiments of your own, a foundation you can build on at your next meal or party. Some of these pairings will be sublime, while some of them will be disastrous—on purpose, because there is no better way to understand wine-food pairings than by trial and error.

Whether you are an absolute beginner, a curious novice, or a seasoned amateur, this course offers an unparalleled interactive experience. If your goal is just to enjoy wine more or a journey toward professional-level knowledge, *The Everyday Guide to Wine* is the perfect way to begin. ■



# Why Learn about Wine?

## Lecture 1

**I was bitten by the wine bug, and hard. From that moment on, my eyes were opened to an entire new world of appreciating aromas, flavors, textures—a heightened awareness of these senses and sensations.**

**I**magine tasting a wine and, with no other information, being able to identify the place it was made, the grape or grapes it was made from, and maybe even the year the grapes were grown. Imagine, too, how expanding your knowledge and honing your tasting skills can add to the pleasure you take in wine. That is the goal of this course—to make you a better wine taster and to help you enjoy wine more.



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The instructor, Jennifer Simonetti-Bryan, holds the **Master of Wine** qualification. Conferred by the Institute of Masters of Wine in London, England, it is the most difficult professional wine title to achieve in the world. When Professor

Simonetti-Bryan passed the Master of Wine examination, she was one of only a few hundred people in the world and one of only 26 in the United States who had ever done so. Not to be confused with a **sommelier**, the French term for a wine steward, a Master of Wine is educated not only in food and wine pairing but in the production and business aspects of wine as well.

**For several thousand years, wine has been part of how we socialize and celebrate.**

To a less intense degree, this course will cover much of the same material required to pass the Master of Wine examination. You will also learn many of the techniques your instructor used to develop her knowledge and **palate**. The goal is to help you understand your own tastes—and perhaps others’—to help you make better wine-buying decisions, create better food and wine pairings, and enhance your experience of every wine you taste.

The experience of wine is one that humans have shared for thousands of years. The earliest wines in recorded history were made by the ancient Egyptians as early as 2500 B.C. The ancient Greeks and Romans worshiped a god of wine and traded wine throughout their enormous empires. Wine is referred to hundreds of times in the Bible and became an important symbol of the Christian faith. In the Middle Ages, monks took the ancients’ knowledge of winemaking and refined it through careful, scientific agriculture into a product like the one we know today. Wine is not only a pleasurable drink; it is a vital part of human history.

Throughout the course, you will also learn about the possible health benefits of drinking wine, the myriad ways wine is grown and made, and the wine industry. Not only will you come to understand wine as a drinker, but you will get a sense of what it means to be part of the wine industry.

You will get the most out of this course if you treat it as an interactive experience. A tasting list is included with most of the lectures, so you can experience for yourself the wines and wine styles the professor is describing. It is your choice whether to taste along with the lecture or at your own pace some time later, but the experience of each wine is vital to the learning process. ■

### Did You Know?

- There are approximately 11,000 wineries worldwide.
- Over 9,800 of the world’s recognized wine-growing regions contain 75 wineries or more.
- France is the largest producer of wine in the world, but Spain, the third-largest producer, has one and a half times as many acres under vine.

## Important Terms

**Master of Wine:** A professional wine industry qualification conferred by the Institute of Masters of Wine.

**palate:** The combined sensory experience of taste, smell, and texture of a wine in the drinker's mouth.

**sommelier:** A French term for a waiter who specializes in wine and food-and-wine pairing.

# A Taster's Tool Kit

## Lecture 2

**People get personal preference mixed up with quality assessment. If you do not like the flavors of butter and oak in your white wine, don't jump to the conclusion that all oaked chardonnays are of terrible quality. There are more objective parameters.**

**Y**ou have surely seen people perform the wine-tasting ritual—swirling, eyeballing, slurping, spitting, and pontificating—in earnest or in jest. Pontification aside, there is a good reason for each step in this process. In this lecture, you will learn what each step is for and how to perform it effectively.

At the core of a formal wine tasting are the steps that we call the Five S's. Pour yourself a glass of your favorite wine—it doesn't matter what kind it is—and follow along with Professor Simonetti-Bryan.

When you *SEE* the wine, you can use its color and translucence as clues to the grape variety, the style, and the age of the wine. We think of wines as red, white, and rosé, but there is an entire spectrum of colors wine can show: ruby, garnet, brick, tawny, violet, pink, peach, salmon, straw, gold, green ... and many more. Wines

can also show pale, medium, and deep tones of any of these colors (as a rule, white wines show deeper colors as they age, while red wines lose color) and can range from near-transparent to inky opaque. The best way to learn



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**The scents perceived in a wine are called the aromas, nose, or bouquet.**

about color differences is simply by taking note of them throughout the course.

When you *SWIRL* a glass of wine, you expose the wine to oxygen. This **oxidation** intensifies the aromas in the glass, so you can better sense them. Not all wines need to be swirled to release their aromas, however, and older wines should not be swirled, because too much oxidation can destroy their fragile, aged **aromatics**. When learning to swirl, hold your glass on the table by the base; when you are more experienced and confident, you can hold the glass off the table by the stem.

Now it's time to *SNIFF* your wine. Because different wines can have different aromatic intensities, the best technique is to sniff in three steps—the chest, chin, nose test. At each step, take a sniff and see what, if anything, you can smell from your glass. If you can detect something at the chest level, the wine is very aromatic. If you have to stick your nose into the glass to smell anything, the wine is neutral, or muted. There are 200 or more aromatics commonly detected in wine—everything from fruits, flowers, and herbs to vegetables, leather, and stone. You can, with practice, learn to identify many of them, although what you smell may have as much to do with your own sense receptors as with the wine itself. Do not worry if you can't smell what you are “supposed to”; just make note of the differences.

The next step is to *SIP* the wine. Take a significant mouthful of wine—a tablespoon or two—and roll it around on your tongue. Before you swallow, take note of the wine's flavors and its texture. You may get an impression of sweetness, sourness, or bitterness. You may find that the wine's flavors match up with its scent—much of flavor, after all, is delivered by your sense of smell—or you may detect something

## The Five S's of Tasting

- See:** Assess the wine's color and transparency
- Swirl:** Oxidize the wine
- Sniff:** Note the wine's aromas and aromatic strength
- Sip:** Assess the flavors and texture of the wine
- Savor:** Consider the wine's overall balance and complexity

more, less, or simply different. You can also feel the wine's weight; a wine that gives a heavier, thicker impression is called full-bodied, while a lighter, thinner wine is called light-bodied. Particularly with reds, you may detect the wine's tannins as a velvety or drying sensation on your tongue. Finally, you may get a thermoreaction—a sense of heat or coolness—that reflects the level of alcohol in the wine.

Once you swallow your sip, it is time to *SAVOR* the wine, to meditate on the reactions in your mouth. Consider elements like the wine's **finesse**, or smoothness; its balance—that is, whether the different elements work well together or compete with each other; its length, or how long its flavor lingers; its finish, meaning the impression it leaves once you have swallowed; and its overall complexity.

Once you have performed all of these steps, you can assess the **quality** of the wine. The more experience you have, the greater variety of wines you sample, the more capable you will become at assessing wines and discussing your assessments with others. ■

## Important Terms

**aromatics:** The formal term for the scents you perceive in a wine.

**finesse:** A wine-tasting term that refers to an elusive quality best described as smoothness.

**oxidation:** The interaction between wine and air that can enhance—or damage—the wine's aromatics and other characteristics.

**quality:** An objective parameter that is independent of a taster's preference. Among the many aspects used to determine a wine's quality are its complexity, balance, and finesse.

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**Wines have aromas as common as lemon or raspberry or cut hay, as well as aromas you wouldn't think you'd find in wine, such as green peppers or leather.**

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# Winemaking—From Vineyard to Harvest

## Lecture 3

Wine grapes are roughly concentrated into two bands in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres between 30 and 50 degrees latitude. This is where the temperatures, sunshine, and rainfall are ideal.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Chablis Appellation Contrôlée (AC)
- An unoaked South Australian Chardonnay



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In this lecture, we will learn about what happens in the vineyard right up until just before harvest. We will look at elements that affect the flavor and quality of wine grapes; climate and weather; and soil and viticulture. Acid, sugar, and tannin are the building blocks of quality wine and must be in careful balance, but many factors affect each of these elements.

The grape is the most important ingredient in wine. There are about 60 species of grapevine, but only *Vitis vinifera* is used for wine. The species is native to Europe. Hernán Cortés brought it to the Americas; the Dutch took it to South Africa; and the English brought it to Australia, then New Zealand.

An individual grape is called a **berry**. Whether it's a white, pink, or black grape, its pulp is white, and thus the juice itself is always white. **Anthocyanin** is the pigment that gives red wine its color, and it is produced by allowing the grape skins to sit in the juice. This process is also what gives red wine its tannins. For thin-skinned grapes, such as Pinot Noir, pigmentation is light and the wines is light in tannins, pale in color, and translucent. Thick-skinned grapes, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, make dark, rich, tannic, opaque wines.

The age of the vine affects its rate of production. The younger the vine, the higher the yield. The older the vine, the lower the yield—in some cases half as much. But the wine gets better and better as the vines age, so it is worth the lower yield.

The types of soil in which wine grapes are grown vary around the world. Soil type affects a vine's ability to bring up water and nutrients, which can affect how the vine functions and therefore quality and flavor. You may have heard the French term "terroir" used to refer to soil, but terroir encompasses much more than soil, as we will find out in a later lecture.



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**Almost all of the world's wine is produced from varieties of the *Vitis vinifera* grape.**

The growing season lasts four to five months in warmer regions, six to seven months in cooler ones. Vines are pruned in late winter, bud break occurs in spring, and pollination takes place in early summer, after which the berries begin to form. At some point late in summer (August in the Northern Hemisphere; January in the Southern Hemisphere), **véraison**, or ripening, begins. The grapes are harvested in late summer or early fall.

The climate where the grapes are grown can determine the region's rainfall, temperature, and so on, which in turn can raise or lower acidity, can raise or lower sugar, and can affect the ripeness of tannins. The world's wine-growing regions are concentrated between 30 and 50 degrees latitude in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, where conditions are ideal for wine grapes. Wines from cooler climates are generally higher in acidity, lighter in body, and lower in alcohol, while wines from warmer climates tend to be lower in acidity, fuller in body, and higher in alcohol. Altitude and proximity to water have cooling and warming effects, respectively, on climate, adding to the effects of latitude.

Cooler climates are less consistent and more susceptible to unexpected changes than warmer ones; thus the wines they produce are less consistent year on year. This is why vineyards in Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Champagne, making some of the most expensive wines in the world, make such a big deal of the timing of their harvests. Knowing the weather from a given vintage year could very well help you find a great wine (or a great deal). ■

### Important Terms

**anthocyanin:** The pigment that gives red wine its color.

**berry:** The winemaker's term for an individual grape.

**véraison:** The onset of grape ripening.

***Vitis vinifera*:** The scientific name for the wine grape.

### Tasting Notes

In this lecture, two different wines made entirely from Chardonnay grapes are compared to illustrate the effects of the growing climate on a wine.

	Chablis	Chardonnay
Grape	100% Chardonnay	100% Chardonnay
Region	Chablis, Burgundy, France	South Australia
Climate	Cool	Warm
Color		
Aromas		
Acid/Sweetness		
Body		
Finish/Length		

# Winemaking—From Harvest to Bottle

## Lecture 4

Why do we care as a consumer if the grapes are hand-picked? We care because it can mean a higher cost per bottle, as it can be an expensive process, but it can also mean better fruit and higher quality, as the individual picker decides which clusters (and in some cases, berries) to pick.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

#### WHITES

- A St. Supéry Sauvignon Blanc
- A Robert Mondavi Fumé Blanc

#### REDS

- A Rioja Crianza or Reserva
- A Rioja Gran Reserva



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Part of a winemaker's job is to determine when the grapes are ready to be picked to make your wine just the way you want it. If you pick too early, the flavors will taste underripe—too green, sour, and astringent. If you pick too late, your wine will taste unbalanced—too alcoholic, not fresh enough, or the fruit can taste too ripe, like dried fruit. So how does a winemaker make that call?

The modern winemaker uses a combination of ancient and new techniques. As harvest time approaches, winemakers begin tasting grapes, relying on their own senses. But they will also use **refractometers** to determine the berries' exact level of sugar, which is measured in units called **Brix**. The winemakers' personal senses and experience are combined with the very objective data to make a determination.

Ripening is a rapid progress, so harvesting must be quick to capture the one perfect moment. Although some wineries harvest grapes by machine, many

still pick by hand—a back-breaking, labor-intensive but more selective, gentle, and precise process.

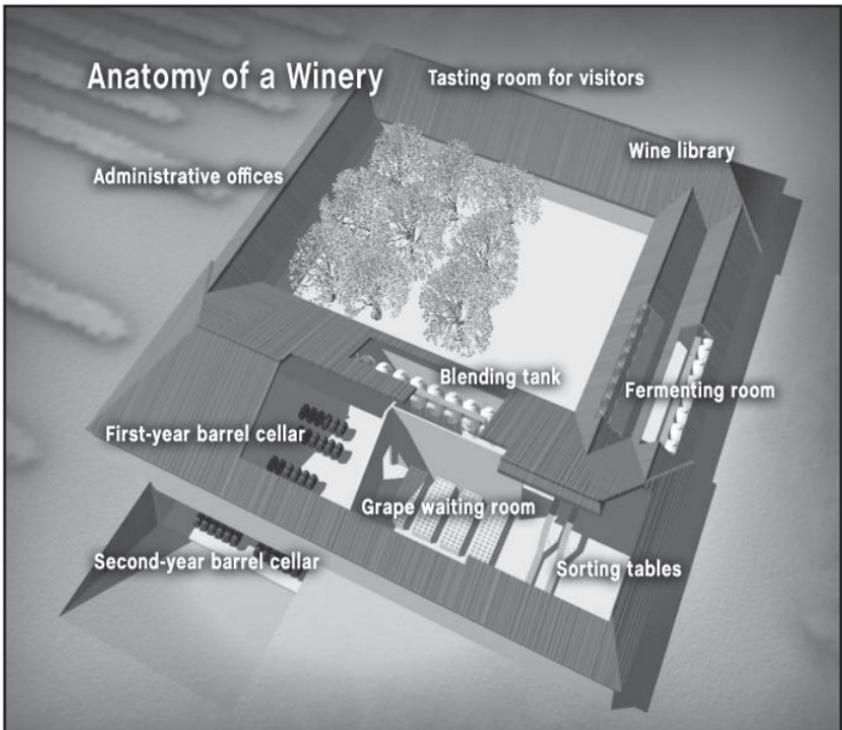
Wineries come in all shapes and sizes, but they their winemaking processes are usually much the same. Whether machine- or hand-picked, the grapes are sorted by hand to remove bad fruit and extraneous matter, like leaves and bugs. After sorting, the grapes are most often destemmed by machine, then brought to a pressing room. At this stage, the skins are removed from the white wines but left in the juice, or **must**, for the reds.

**Yeasts are just like people. We look different, we smell different, we have different energy levels, we work at different speeds, and each of us has a unique set of skills.**

Here, at the start of fermentation, is where processes begin to diverge. The must may be left to ferment via the **wild yeasts** present on the fruit and in the air, or it may be inoculated to these wild yeasts and exposed to a specific yeast strain. The type of yeast will change the nature of the wine. Wild yeast is less predictable but can produce more complexity to a wine.

The must ferments in tanks made of stainless steel or of oak. Stainless steel is an inert metal and does not impart flavor to the wine, leaving that job to the grapes and yeast. Oak barrels, on the other hand, can react with the wine in several different ways, adding flavors and tannins. The choice of stainless steel versus oak is a stylistic decision.

Fermentation is complete once all of the grapes' sugar has turned into alcohol. But this may not be the end of the process. Some wines are bottled immediately, some are filtered first, and some are matured in oak barrels. Just like different grape varieties have different flavors, different types of oak add different types of flavors. French oak adds more tannins and fewer aromatics than American oak, which is known for more intense aromas. On the palate, American oak makes a wine more coarse, while French oak produces more finesse. Toasted oak barrels add more vanillin flavor. The age and size of the barrel can affect the intensity of the flavors. These barrels, while watertight, are not airtight, and so the wine oxidizes as it ages. Aged white wines take



on a golden hue, and red wines go from purple to ruby red to a tawny brown. Again, the winemaker must decide among all of these factors which style works best for the grapes at hand.

When it is time to bottle the wine, one final decision must be made. The majority of quality wines are placed in bottles stoppered with corks, and wine in a screw-cap bottle has long been disdained. But corks, like oak, are porous, allowing the wine inside to oxidize. High-quality wines that will improve with age should always be celled with corked bottles. However, screw caps may be the superior choice for wines meant to be drunk young and savored in their youthful fruitiness and freshness, especially whites. More and more quality producers are using screw caps, so do not dismiss a wine out of hand for how it is bottled. Consider how, and for how long, the wine will be stored. ■

## Important Terms

**Brix:** The unit of measure for the sugar concentration of a grape, developed by German engineer Adolf Brix.

**must:** The unfiltered liquid that comes from crushed grapes.

**refractometer:** An instrument for measuring the ripeness of grapes still on the vine based on the refraction of sunlight through the berry.

**wild yeast:** The yeast already present on the grapes' skins or in the air at the winery, which are sometimes used in wine fermentation.

## Tasting Notes

In this lecture, we taste two styles of Sauvignon Blanc and two styles of Rioja. Both pairs are examples of the effects of oak aging on wines made from the same grape and grown in the same region.

### Whites

	St. Supéry Sauvignon Blanc	Robert Mondavi Fumé Blanc
Grape	100% Sauvignon Blanc	90–100% Sauvignon Blanc
Region	Napa Valley, California	Napa Valley, California
Oaked?	No	Yes
Color		
Aromas		
Acid/Sweetness		
Body		
Finish/Length		

## Reds

	<b>Rioja Crianza or Reserva</b>	<b>Rioja Gran Reserva</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Tempranillo blend (most likely Tempranillo-Garnacha)	Tempranillo blend (most likely Tempranillo-Garnacha)
<b>Region</b>	Rioja, Spain	Rioja, Spain
<b>Time in Oak</b>	1 year	2 years
<b>Color</b>		
<b>Aromas</b>		
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>		
<b>Body</b>		
<b>Finish/Length</b>		

# The Whites—Riesling to Chardonnay

## Lecture 5

Each of the noble grape varieties has unique characteristics that are retained regardless of origin, from France to Chile, California to Tasmania. They are some of the most popular grape varieties ... and they are popular for a reason. They make a great range of wines at all price points, from entry-level ones to some of the highest-quality wines in the world.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

For this lecture, the recommended wines may come from any winery. Just be sure to match the grape variety and the region.

- A dry Riesling, preferably Eden/Clare Valley from Australia or Austria
- A sweet Riesling, preferably a German Kabinett or Spätlese
- A New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc
- A Sancerre or Pouilly-Fumé
- A Chablis AC from France, not from a box
- An oaked California Chardonnay



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**T**he **noble grape varieties** are those grape varieties known primarily for how they retain their basic characteristics no matter where in the world they are planted. They are consequently some of the most popular, best-known grape varieties, and they come in a wide range of styles at all price points. This lecture covers the three white noble grape varieties: Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay.

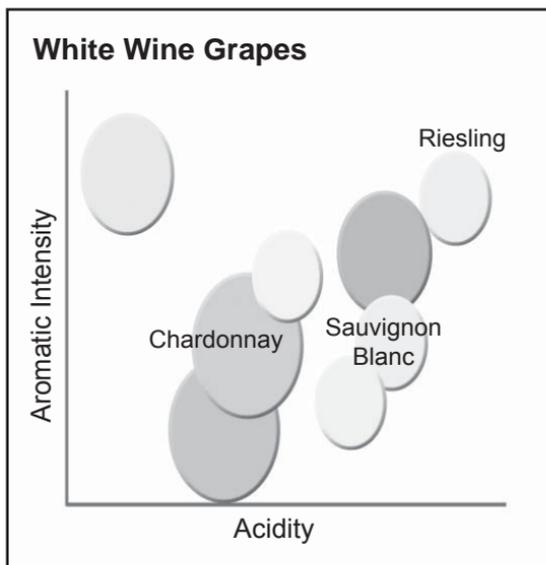
Riesling has one of the widest ranges of good food-and-wine pairings. They can be dry to sweet, delicate to luscious, and are usually intensely aromatic. If off-dry or sweet, the combined sweetness and acidity increase the wine's

length. Riesling can be drunk young, yet because of its high acidity, it makes some of the longest-lived wines in the world. It is typically pale in the glass, especially when young, and may exhibit greenish/grayish tones. Its fruit flavors range from citrus to stone fruits. It is rarely oaked.

Riesling has a thin skin and is easily infected by fungal disease. While this sounds negative, when infected by a fungus called *Botrytis cinerea*, the grape's sugars become concentrated, which adds honey and dried fruit aromas to the wine. Riesling can also take on a diesel-like aroma as it ages—also not a negative, as it adds to the wine's complexity and enhances the other flavors.

Riesling grapes generally like cooler climates, with the highest concentration of vines found in Germany, but it can adapt to many climates and many types of soils.

Sauvignon Blanc wines range from pale, especially when the grapes are grown in cool climates, to golden, especially when oaked. Like Riesling, it tends to have a greenish hue and can be just as aromatically intense—sometimes downright pungent—with aromas of gooseberries, asparagus, and fresh-cut grass. Grapes from cooler climates display citrus aromas, while grapes from warmer climates display passion fruit, melon, and fresh figs, and from certain regions (particularly the Loire Valley) they can be so mineral-like that they remind you of gun flint.



The white noble grapes vary greatly in character.

Sauvignon Blanc is higher in acid than even the most acidic Chardonnays, and good Sauvignon Blanc shows incredible finesse.

Unlike Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc sometimes sees some oak during the production process, which adds vanilla bean and toast to the aromatics. It is a good sharer and tends to blend well with other varieties, such as Sémillon. It can also stand slightly warmer climates than Riesling. However, it does not age well—it is best drunk when young and vibrant.

Chardonnay is among the most prolific of all wine grapes. It grows well practically anywhere, can be made in almost any style, and produces good-to-great wines at every price point. Even in its most delicate form, Chablis, Chardonnay is rounder and fuller in the mouth than Riesling, and when grown in warm climates, it is very full-bodied. It is known for apple-like aromas—Granny Smith from cool climates and Red Delicious from warm ones, where it also takes on tropical fruit characteristics. It shows excellent sense of place—it is practically a blank canvas.

In terms of winemaking, Chardonnay stands up to a fair amount of manhandling. Many Chardonnays go **malolactic fermentation**, which replaces green-apple flavors with creamy or buttery notes. It may also benefit from **lees stirring**, which adds complexity, richness, and a creamy texture. And lastly, it can handle a fair amount of oak. When Chardonnay's structure is right, it can last for decades; in fact, Chardonnay is one of the reasons why vintage Champagne can age so well. ■

### Important Terms

**lees stirring:** Deliberate agitation of the dead yeast and skins at the bottom of a wine barrel or tank.

**malolactic fermentation:** The conversion of malic acid to lactic acid via *Lactobacillus* bacteria.

**noble grape varieties:** The seven most prolific and adaptable varieties of wine grape in the world, including Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah.

## Tasting Notes

In this tasting, we try two each of the three noble white grape varieties. The differences among the grapes will be on display, and we see noticeable effects of both climate and winemaking style on each grape.

	<b>Dry Riesling</b>	<b>Sweet Riesling</b>	<b>Sauvignon Blanc</b>
<b>Grape</b>	100% Riesling	100% Riesling	100% Sauvignon Blanc
<b>Region</b>	Australia, Austria	Germany	New Zealand
<b>Oaked?</b>	No	No	No
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Sancerre or Poulilly-Fumé</b>	<b>Chablis AC</b>	<b>Oaked Chardonnay</b>
<b>Grape</b>	100% Sauvignon Blanc	100% Chardonnay	100% Chardonnay
<b>Region</b>	Loire Valley, France	Chablis, Burgundy, France	California
<b>Oaked?</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

# The Reds—Pinot Noir to Cabernet

## Lecture 6

**Poor Merlot. It has generally lived in the shadow of King Cabernet. But merlot makes some of the most beautifully luscious, rich, and concentrated wines in the world.**

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Bourgogne Rouge (or a New World Pinot Noir, but a Bourgogne Rouge is preferable)
- A Northern Rhône Syrah (Crozes-Hermitage, Saint-Joseph, Hermitage, Cornas, or Côte-Rôtie)
- A basic Bordeaux or California Merlot
- A Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon



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**I**n addition to the three white-wine grapes we discussed in the previous lecture, there are four red-wine grapes that are considered noble grape varieties: Pinot Noir, Syrah/Shiraz, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon. Like their white counterparts, they are known for their adaptability, quality, popularity, and sense of place. Being highly adaptable reds, they also age very well. But despite these common features, there is huge variation in the wines they produce—in body, aromatics, and tannins.

Winemakers call Pinot Noir “the iron fist wrapped in a silk glove,” but they also call it “the headache grape.” The wines it creates are capable of amazing perfume, power, and finesse—it is even used in making vintage Champagne. But it is remarkably difficult to grow and manage well.

Pinot Noir prefers cool climates. It is thin-skinned, so it is susceptible to fungal disease and suffers under manhandling. It is one of the oldest cultivated vines in existence and is today the primary red grape grown in the Côte d’Or in Burgundy.

In the glass, Pinot Noir is pale for a red wine because of the grape's thin skin, and its body and tannins are correspondingly light. It is so aromatic, red fruit aromas—strawberry, red cherry, and sometimes cranberry—practically jump out of the glass. Because of its preference for cooler climates, it tends to be lower in alcohol than the other noble reds.

The one characteristic that makes Pinot Noir an outstanding food-and-wine-pairing red is its high acidity. This acidity also allows Pinot Noir to age for decades, provided that the other elements—fruit, alcohol, and tannin—are in balance. Its delicacy and finesse allow it to easily show a sense of place.

Syrah (also called Shiraz) is one of the biggest crowd-pleasing reds. Although its origins are shrouded in myth, it likely originated in France,



**St. Christopher's Chapel in Tain-l'Hermitage, Rhône Valley, home of Syrah.**

and some of the world’s finest Syrah vines come from Hermitage in the Northern Rhône Valley. There are two general styles for this grape: Syrah and Shiraz. The Syrah style is typified by Northern Rhône wines—herbal, floral, peppery, smoky. The Shiraz style is the Australian cousin—obvious, upfront, and bold in its fruit.

**You will be able to identify noble grape varieties by using only your palate and what’s in the glass.**

Syrah is a fairly thick-skinned variety with a tolerance for both hot and cool climates. Its color can range from inky black, as in Hermitage, or more moderately ruby, as you may see in Southeast Australian Shiraz. It is a bit less pronounced in its aromas than Pinot Noir, but it has rich, concentrated raspberry, black cherry, and blackberry aromas. In some areas, it may show aromas of violets and—especially in the Northern Rhône—rosemary. Unlike the other noble varieties, it also displays spice without the help of oak. Syrah’s tannins vary from moderate and supple to firm and gripping. Its alcohol can be moderate to quite high, and its acidity varies too—all because of the wide range of microenvironments where the grapes grow and thrive.

Merlot, along with Cabernet Sauvignon, is one of the most popular red grapes in the world. Originating in the Bordeaux region of France, it is named for the blackbirds, or *merles*, that steal these sweet grapes off the vines.

Merlot makes some of the most beautifully luscious, rich, and concentrated wines in the world. It is the number one red grape planted in Bordeaux and is now planted anywhere from Chile to Bulgaria. It can make wines ranging from a “Two-Buck Chuck” to bottles worth thousands of dollars.

A thick-skinned variety, Merlot can get quite dark, but its tannins are soft and supple. It is most valued for its plush mid-palate texture, rather than for its aromas, which tend toward dark fruits, and even a touch of black tar. It is often blended with Cabernet Sauvignon to fill in Cab’s mid-palate gaps. Grown in warm climates, it can get juicy and jammy; in mild climates, it

shows higher acidity and a mineral undertone. Exposure to new oak brings out a chocolaty texture and vanilla, spice, and toast notes.

Cabernet Sauvignon is the king of noble grape varieties and is very likely *the* most popular red grape variety on the planet. It is rich and gripping, not delicate, though it can be elegant. Like Merlot, it originated in Bordeaux, the offspring of a natural crossing between Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc.

Cabernet Sauvignon grows well in hot and marginal climates; cool climates leave it too green and underripe. It is a late-ripening variety, thanks to its thick skin and tight clusters. The thick skin also lends the wine dark color and opacity, with dense, firm, and gripping tannins. While not as aromatic as Pinot Noir or Syrah, it is notable for aromas of black currants and a similar herbal note to its parent, Sauvignon Blanc. The herbaceous note is more notable in Cabs from Chile, for example, while Cabs from Bordeaux smell of pencil shavings, violets, cedar, and cigar box.

Cabernet Sauvignon is usually drunk with food because its tannins can be overwhelming alone. Foods rich in protein, like steak, are a particularly good match. ■

### Important Terms

***merle***: The French word for blackbird and origin of the name Merlot.

**tannin**: A polyphenol compound found mostly in red wines that creates a velvety or drying sensation and sometimes a bitter taste—ideally a pleasant one—on the palate.

## Tasting Notes

Here we taste the four noble red grape varieties, noting the dramatic differences among them.

	<b>Bourgogne/ Pinot Noir</b>	<b>Syrah</b>	<b>Bordeaux/ Merlot</b>	<b>Cabernet Sauvignon</b>
<b>Grape</b>	100% Pinot Noir	100% Syrah	100% Merlot	100% Cabernet Sauvignon
<b>Region</b>	Burgundy, France	Rhône, France	California or Bordeaux, France	Chile
<b>Color</b>				
<b>Aromas</b>				
<b>Acid</b>				
<b>Tannins</b>				
<b>Body</b>				
<b>Finish/Length</b>				

# Champagne and Other Sparkling Wines

## Lecture 7

**You might think that sparkling wine began with the Benedictine monk Dom Pérignon or that it was invented by the French. Both are myths!**

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A nonvintage (NV) Champagne
- A Cava
- A Prosecco
- A California sparkling wine
- A Moscato d’Asti
- A Brachetto



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**S**parkling wine is among the most celebrated and least understood types of wine. While in the United States the tendency is to call all sparkling white wine “Champagne,” Champagne is only one of the many forms that elegant, delicious sparkling wines can take. A better understanding of these forms will help you select and enjoy the right sparkler for any occasion.

Part of the reason the word “Champagne” has become shorthand for sparkling wine is the pervasive myth of Dom Pérignon as its inventor. In truth, carbon dioxide bubbles are a natural by-product of fermentation, and throughout history most winemakers—including Pérignon—struggled to get bubbles out of their wines. Although we don’t know who first decided to capitalize on wine’s natural effervescence, we do know that the British were the first to create bottles strong enough to contain its high pressure without exploding, and the French were the first to use them commercially.

Champagne is the best known of all sparkling wines, named for the region of France where it originates, about 90 miles northeast of Paris. It sets

the benchmark for all sparkling wines—the other reason “Champagne” is shorthand. There are over 17,000 growers of Champagne grapes and about 250 Champagne houses, called *négociants-manipulants* (NM), who actually produce the wine. Growers who make their own Champagne are called *récoltants-manipulants* (RM).

Most Champagne is made with two red grapes and one white grape: Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, and Chardonnay. Champagnes that predominate in red grapes will be fuller in body and more aromatic; Champagnes made mostly or only with Chardonnay (called Blanc des Blancs) have a leaner structure, lighter body, higher acidity, and more neutral aromatics.

**All Champagne is sparkling wine, but not all sparkling wine is Champagne.**

Most Champagnes are fermented in stainless steel, but oak is used by a few houses. The first fermentation produces a bubble-free wine called *vin clair*. The winemaker then blends *vins clairs*

from different grapes, regions, and vintages into a *cuvée*. Then a sugar-yeast solution is added to the *cuvée*, the *cuvée* is bottled, and the bottles are closed with crown caps and laid down to age for a minimum of 15 months. During aging, the sugar-yeast solution produces alcohol and bubbles; the longer the bottle ages, the smaller the bubbles get, and the higher the Champagne’s quality. The wine also goes through **autolysis**, wherein the dead yeast releases toasty, biscuity flavors into the wine. After aging, the winemaker uses the riddling process to draw the dead yeast into the neck of the bottle and remove it. A wine-sugar solution called the **dosage** may then be added to sweeten the Champagne. Finally, the crown cap is replaced with a caged cork, and the Champagne is ready to be sold.

Most of the world’s sparkling wines are made by this method, called the **traditional method** or the *methode champenoise*, but two wines produced from the same grape varieties in the same method can be very different in character, depending on where the grapes are grown. New World sparklers are most often made from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir by the traditional method, although they are often not aged as long as the Old World versions. And just as with still wine, wines from warmer climates have more upfront

fruit character. Cava, a Spanish sparkling wine, is traditionally made from Macabeo, Parellada, and Xarel-lo grapes and shows aromas of lemon and earth. It is also made by the traditional method, but its aging requirements are much shorter than Champagne's, which gives it more youthful, upfront fruitiness.

Instead of the traditional method, Italy's Prosecco, Moscato d'Asti, and Brachetto are made by the **tank method**, or Charmat method, where the second fermentation is done in a stainless steel tank, not a bottle, with little lees contact. This produces larger bubbles, more fruit character, lower acid, and less autolysis. Prosecco and Moscato d'Asti are particularly fragrant and fruity—even floral. Brachetto is a rosé that smells of strawberries and raspberries. Some of these wines are fully sparkling, called *spumante* in Italian, but some are only slightly sparkling, a style called *frizzante*.

No matter which sparkling wine you choose, be careful not to overchill it, which can mute some of the more subtle flavors. Sparkling wines are best served at 45°F (or 7°C), significantly warmer than most refrigerators. An ice bucket that is half ice, half water is the best method to chill sparkling wine quickly. Never put a sparkling wine in the freezer—it could explode!

You should also be cautious when opening a sparkling wine to prevent injuries from flying corks. Consult the lecture video for the best method. ■

## Sabering Champagne

According to legend, the Champenois celebrated one of Napoleon's victories by offering the cavalry bottles of Champagne. It is difficult to open a bottle while on horseback, so the cavalrymen hacked off the ends of the bottles with their swords.

While that sounds like it takes a lot of strength, it is actually physics. The point where the bottle's seam meets the lip is the weakest point on the bottle. A strong, sharp tap there with the back of a sword blade or chef's knife will crack the bottle's neck, sending the cork and broken section of neck flying.

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*While an impressive feat, sabering requires attention to safety and lots of practice. Do not try this without experienced, in-person guidance!*

## Important Terms

**autolysis:** The breakdown of dead yeast inside a bottle of sparkling wine, which lends the wine toast and/or biscuit aromas.

**dosage:** A wine-sugar solution added to sparkling wine after riddling to adjust the wine's sweetness.

***négociant-manipulant:*** A Champagne house that makes wine but do not grow grapes itself.

***récoltant-manipulant:*** A Champagne house that makes wine from grapes they grow itself.

**tank method** (a.k.a. **Charmat method**): Sparkling wine that undergoes its second fermentation in stainless steel tanks.

**traditional method** (a.k.a. ***methode champenoise***): Sparkling wine that undergoes its second fermentation in bottles.

## Tasting Notes

In this tasting, we try two each of the three noble white grape varieties. The differences among the grapes will be on display, and we see noticeable effects of both climate and winemaking style on each grape.

	<b>NV Champagne</b>	<b>Cava</b>	<b>California Sparkling Wine</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, Chardonnay	Macabeo, Parellada, Xarel-lo, sometimes Chardonnay	Primarily Chardonnay and Pinot Noir
<b>Region</b>	Champagne, France	Penedès, Spain	California
<b>Method</b>	Traditional	Traditional	Traditional
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Bubbles</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Prosecco</b>	<b>Moscato d'Asti</b>	<b>Brachetto</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Prosecco	Moscato Bianco	Brachetto
<b>Region</b>	Veneto, Italy	Asti, Italy	Asti, Italy
<b>Method</b>	Tank	Tank	Tank
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Bubbles</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

# Port, Sherry, and Other Fortified Wines

## Lecture 8

**Vintage Port has rich, concentrated fruit; balanced acidity; and dense, firm, and sometimes gripping tannins—and don't forget the high alcohol at 20 percent. It doesn't get more intense than vintage Port in the wine world.**

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A ruby Port (from Portugal)
- A tawny Port (from Portugal)
- A Fino Sherry (or Manzanilla)
- An Amontillado (or Oloroso)
- A Madeira (Sercial, Verdelho, Bual, or Malmsey)
- An Australian Muscat (called a “sticky”)



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**F**ortified wines—that is, wines whose alcoholic strength has been **fortified** with spirits—are underappreciated, undervalued, and virtually indestructible—a great opportunity for the wine collector. Although today they are most often served as aperitifs or as desert wines, they were originally the everyday wines of seafarers, invented by the Spanish to protect wines from spoilage during the long sea voyages of the age of exploration. There are two basic methods of fortification: the Portuguese Port method and the Spanish Sherry method.

Port was named for the Atlantic seaport of Oporto, although the grapes are grown inland in the Douro Valley's heat-absorbing granite soil. Port grapes are all red grapes: Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Roriz (called Tempranillo in Spain), and Tinta Cão. The quintas, or vineyards, harvest the grapes by hand, and human feet are still used to crush them.

Port comes in three primary styles. Ruby Port is a young, fruity, nonvintage wine, usually bottled at less than three years old. Tawny Ports are cask aged for years, even several decades, and like the rubies are nonvintage blends. The long aging brings out nutty and caramel aromas and brownish color. Vintage Port is another ruby style, usually bottled at two years old, but it comes from a single, outstanding vintage and reaches its peak of drinkability at 20 years old. A vintage-worthy year may be declared by the region or by a single Port house. Vintages declared by a majority of Port producers include 2007, 2005, 2000, 1997, 1994, 1985, 1977, and 1970.

The difference between the fermentation of a dry red wine and a Port is that a neutral grape-based spirit is added to the wine *before* all of the sugar has been converted to alcohol. This raises the alcohol to near 20 percent and leaves copious **residual sugar**—about 100 grams per liter. After this, the wine is quickly casked (and taken off the lees to prevent further tannins entering the wine) and stored in the cool, humid climate of Oporto.

Sherry is the original, Spanish version of fortified wine. It takes its name from the town of Jerez de la Frontera in Andalucía. The Sherry triangle, which comprises Jerez, Puerto de Santa Maria, and Sanlúcar de Barrameda, is a subtropical region with 300 days per year of sunshine. White Palomino grapes make up 90 percent of Sherry, with sweet, dried Pedro Ximénez grapes often making up the balance. The most elegant grapes are destined to become delicate Fino and Amontillado Sherries, while the coarser, more astringent juice is used for richer, heavier Olorosos. Unlike Port, Sherry grapes are fermented to dryness.

Finos are protected from oxidation by a film of **flor** yeast unique to the Fino process, which also imparts a yeasty, almond aroma. They are lower in alcohol than other fortified wines, up to 15.5 percent. Fino juice bumped above this level of alcohol kills the flor and becomes the fuller, toastier Amontillado. Oloroso Sherries never form a flor film, are fortified up to 18 percent alcohol, and are often stored in the sun during cask aging to enhance oxidation. They are fuller, richer, and sweeter than their Fino and Amontillado cousins. No matter the style, Sherry is nearly always nonvintage.



Portugal's island of Madeira, a waypoint for ships during the age of exploration.

Madeira is another Portuguese fortified wine unique to the island of Madeira. Red Tinta Negra Mole grapes are used in finest and reserve Madeira, while white Sercial, Verdelho, and Bual grapes and red Malmsey grapes are used for special reserve and higher styles, which are intended for longer aging. Madeira may be made via the Port or the Sherry process—that is, early or late fortification. Like Oloroso Sherry, Madeira is often heat aged, as Portuguese explorers discovered that time in the tropics improved the Madeira in their ships' stores. This process creates **volatile acidity** in the wine.

Fortified wines are produced all around the world, many of them decadently sweet, such as Australian stickies. Their winemaking techniques vary, and their aromas are heavily influenced by the grapes from which they are made. ■

## Important Terms

**flor:** A yeast that forms a film over a fermenting Fino Sherry.

**fortified:** A wine that has been microbially stabilized by the addition of grape-based spirits.

**residual sugar:** The amount of sugar in a wine that is left unfermented.

**volatile acidity:** The concentration of acetic acid (i.e., vinegar acid) found in a wine.

## Tasting Notes

Fortified wines come in a broad range of styles, with something to suit every palate. To help determine your own preferences, take particular note of the two styles of Port and two styles of Sherry in comparison to one another.

	Ruby Port	Tawny Port	Fino Sherry
Grape	Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Cão	Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Cão	White Palomino, Pedro Ximénez
Region	Portuga	Portugal	Spain
Color			
Aromas			
Acid/Sweetness			
Body			
Finish/Length			

	<b>Amontillado or Oloroso</b>	<b>Madeira</b>	<b>Sticky</b>
<b>Grape</b>	White Palomino, Pedro Ximénez	Tinta Negra Mole, Sercial, Verdelho, Bual, Malmsey	Various
<b>Region</b>	Spain	Portugal	Australia
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

# What to Drink with Dessert

## Lecture 9

Noble rot is a way to add complexity, which is one of the parameters of quality. ... It also adds weight and richness by forming more glycerol, which creates a silky mouthfeel. Plus it creates yeast-inhibiting glycol proteins that can stop the fermentation process before it is complete.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Sauternes
- A Tokaji (any *puttonyos* will do)
- A German Eiswein or Canadian Icewine
- A Vin Santo or Vino Passito



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**F**ortification and dosage are not the only ways to create a sweet wine. In Rheingau, Germany, in the early 1700s, an accidental late harvest revealed a third method: Using the natural processes of decay to concentrate the sugars inside the grape.

Spätlese is the name of this original late-harvest wine, made in Germany and Austria from Riesling grapes. (In the neighboring French-speaking region of Alsace, these are called *vendanges tardives*.) The grapes are allowed to dry on the vine and are carefully hand-selected, sometimes berry by berry. They are sweet and taste of peach, citrus, honey, and of course raisins. In the more refined forms, Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese, the grapes may also be infected with noble rot.

*Botrytis cinerea*, or **noble rot**, is a fungus that infects fruit under very specific climate conditions—namely, a string of cool, damp mornings and warm, dry afternoons. It is also more likely to affect white grapes than red, especially tightly-clustered ones. When botrytis attacks the grapes' skins, the pulp becomes dehydrated, and the berries resemble brown raisins. Like

many natural processes, it is hard to control botrytis infection; thus making **botrytized** wines is an unpredictable process.

Botrytization adds stone fruit notes to the wine (and thus complexity). It also creates silky mouthfeel through the addition of glycerol. Finally, it not only increases the sugar-to-acid ratio of the berries, but it can slow or stop the fermentation process—combined, these are the source of the wines' sweetness.

The French region of Sauternes, in Bordeaux, is completely committed to the production of sweet wine. These wines are approximately 80 percent botrytized Sémillon, with touches of Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle. The grapes are harvested and pressed by hand, then fermented in stainless steel or French oak. This produces a moderately aromatically intense wine, with aromas of honey, vanilla, and stone fruit in its youth and toast and nut aromas with age. They are full-bodied and sweet, with a lingering finish. They are long-lasting wines; the best recent vintages include 2007, 2005, 2001, 1999, 1997, 1996, and 1995.

Tokaji (pronounced *toe-kai*) is a botrytized wine from the region of Tokaj in northeastern Hungary. First made in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they were the favorite wines of kings, enjoyed by Louis XIV of France and the Austrian Habsburgs. The primary grapes in Tokaji are Furmint, Hárslevelü, and Yellow Muscat. Like Sauternes, the wine is processed by hand and includes a combination of botrytized berries, called *aszú* berries, and fresh berries. The sweetness level is measured as the ratio of *aszú* to fresh in units called *puttonyos*.

Tokaji typically has a beautiful, topaz hue, with strong aromas of fresh and dried apricots, plus cinnamon and honey. Younger Tokaji has a floral character, while older wines develop nutty and caramel aromas. Despite its sweetness, Tokaji finishes clean because of its extremely high acidity, which sometimes includes volatile acids. The balance of sugar and acid makes it one of the longest-lasting wines in the world. For the sweet wine lover, it is the ultimate expression of the type.

Eiswein, or ice wine, is a German wine made (as the name implies) from Riesling grapes that have been allowed to freeze on the vine. In recent years,

production of Canadian Icewine (as it is spelled there) has surpassed that of German Eiswein. In Canada, the primary grape is Vidal. Traditionally, but not always, these grapes are clean of noble rot.

The grapes are picked when the nighttime temperature drops below 21°F (or -6°C); a temperature around 18°F (or -8°C) is said to be optimal. They are pressed immediately, while still frozen. The greatest danger to an Eiswein harvest is hungry birds and animals raiding the fields for these intensely sweet berries.

Eisweins and Icewines usually show the pale colors and strong aromatics of Riesling and Vidal grapes, especially when young. Aromas include lemon, honey, passion fruit, and baked apples. Some say it has an aroma reminiscent of fresh snow. Like the Tokaji, there is enough acidity to balance the sugar and leave the palate clean, and its light body adds finesse. They rarely see oak.

The discovery of late-harvest wines in Germany was actually a sort of rediscovery. Records from the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. tell us that the ancient Greeks made wines from dried, or raisinated, grapes. This practice was transmitted to the Romans and survives today in Italy in the manufacture of **Passito** wines: Among the most popular of the sweet dried grape wines is Vin Santo from Tuscany.

Vin Santo, or “holy wine,” is made from two white grapes, Trebbiano and Malvasia. The grapes are dried on straw mats and crushed between November and March—the longer the drying period, the sweeter the wine. The must is

### **Extreme Hand-Picking**

**B**eerenauslese and Trockenbeere-nauslese are among the most expensive and most labor-intensive wines in modern production. The pickers must go through the vineyards seeking out perfectly dried grapes, berry by berry. For a typical dry wine, a hand harvester can pick approximately 750 bottles worth of grapes per day. For Beerenauslese, a harvester can pick only one bottle’s worth per day, and for Trockenbeerenauslese, only half a bottle’s worth.

fermented in old oak, which allows the wine to oxidize for the three years it must legally age in barrels. (Some winemakers allow five years of aging.) This oxidation lends an amber color to the wine, as well as nutty, toffee, and coffee aromas. On the palate, it is full-bodied. It can be nearly dry or very sweet and has very strong, sometimes volatile, acidity. They are lovely accompaniments to less-sweet, delicate pastry Italian desserts.

Whichever sweet wines you choose, serve them well chilled, but not refrigerator cold—about 45°F, or 7°C. ■

### Important Terms

**botrytized:** A wine made with botrytis-infected grapes, usually showing honey notes.

**noble rot:** Infection with *Botrytis cinerea*, a fungus that dehydrates grapes, concentrating their sugars.

**Passito:** The Italian term for dried grape wine.

**puttonyos:** The unit of measure of sweetness in Tokaji, based on the ratio of dried to fresh grapes.

### Tasting Notes

When tasting these dessert wines, among all the other characteristics, take particular notice of how each wine finishes. Is it cloying on your palate, or does it leave it clean? A clean sensation is an indicator of high acid, which contributes to a wine's overall balance—and thereby quality.

	<b>Sauternes</b>	<b>Eiswein/Icewine</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Sémillion, Sauvignon Blanc, Muscadelle	Riesling or Vidal
<b>Region</b>	Sauternes, Bordeaux Bordeaux, France	Germany or Canada
<b>Method</b>	Botrytized	Frozen
<b>Color</b>		
<b>Aromas</b>		
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>		
<b>Body</b>		
<b>Finish/Length</b>		

	<b>Tokaji</b>	<b>Vin Santo</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Furmint, Hárslevelü, Yellow Muscat	Trebbiano, Malvasia
<b>Region</b>	Tokaj, Hungary	Tuscany, Italy
<b>Method</b>	Botrytized	Dried
<b>Color</b>		
<b>Aromas</b>		
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>		
<b>Body</b>		
<b>Finish/Length</b>		

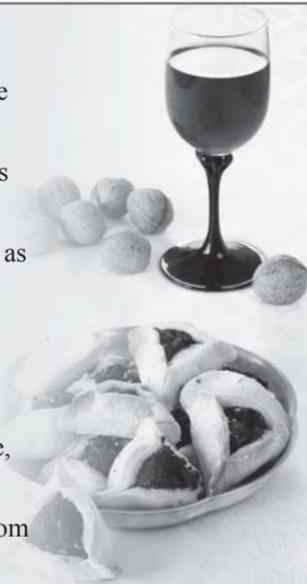
# French Regions—Bordeaux and Loire

## Lecture 10

Even if you remember nothing else from this course, learning how to read the details of a French label can consistently steer you to a great bottle.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Sauvignon Blanc–based Loire wine, like Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé, or Quincy
- A Chenin Blanc–based Loire wine, such as Vouvray, Touraine, or Savennières
- A Cabernet Franc–based Loire wine, such as Chinon or Bourgueil
- A white Bordeaux AC, preferably Graves or Pessac-Léognan
- A red Left-Bank Bordeaux—anything from Haut-Médoc, Pauillac, Saint-Estèphe, Saint-Julien, Margaux, or Graves
- A red Right-Bank Bordeaux—anything from Saint-Émilion, Pomerol, Blaye, or Bourg



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**F**rench wines are the benchmark for quality worldwide. All of the noble grape varieties are grown there; some of them may even have originated here. The concept of terroir originated here, among those French winemaking monks who kept such excellent records. Much of the world's winemaking technique and terminology began here. And for good reason.

In this lecture, we will look at two regions of Western France: the Loire Valley and Bordeaux. Bordeaux's wines are the most discussed, most influential, and often most expensive in the world. They produce powerful, long-lasting reds and delicate whites. There are 57 appellations within the region, which in southwestern France, near the Atlantic coast. The Gironde and Garonne

rivers split Bordeaux into the Left Bank, the Right Bank, and the area between called Entre-Deux-Mers—meaning “between the two rivers.” Within each of these three regions, there are many varied and specific terroirs.

There are two major styles of dry Bordeaux whites. Those predominant in Sémillon are fuller in body, while those predominant in Sauvignon Blanc are a bit lighter, more aromatic, and higher in acidity. Both are usually fermented and/or aged in new French oak, which lends weight, richness, and flavors of toast, vanilla, and spice. On the nose, they show citrus character with some mineral undertones and—with Sémillon—a beeswax-like note. Overall, these wines have beautiful balance, allowing them to age well.

The dry reds of Bordeaux, called **Clarets** in Great Britain, are the wines of serious connoisseurs. Fourteen red grape varieties are grown in Bordeaux, but the main Bordeaux varieties are Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and Malbec. The gravelly soils of the Left Bank of the river favor Cabernet Sauvignon, while the clay soils on the Right Bank favor Merlot, and you will see this reflected in the ration of Cab to Merlot in these wines. All of these wines benefit from the slow oxidation of oak aging. You can expect notes of vanilla and toast in all of these wines, along with dark fruits, mineral, and in the case of Left Bank wines, cedar, cigar box, and tobacco.

The official classification system for Bordeaux was created at the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1855. It had five growths, or **crus**. The premier cru classé is the highest, followed by the deuxième, troisième, quatrième, and cinquième crus. The list has undergone several revisions, adding the basic levels (in ascending order) of cru bourgeois, grand cru bourgeois, and grand cru bourgeois exceptional. The cru is always recorded on the label. To make matters more complicated, the subregions of Graves, Saint-Émilion, and Sauternes-Barsac have their own classification systems, too.

Because of the high value of Bordeaux wines, wine traders (and even outside speculators) can invest in classed growth futures at an annual sale called an *en primeur*. Each spring, speculators can taste the wines from the previous year’s vintage, which are still in barrel, and make a killing—or lose their shirts—when the wine is released a few years later.



The Loire Valley was the ancient cradle of civilization—and leisure—in France, stretching from the Atlantic near Nantes in the west to Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé in the east, about 125 miles south of Paris. Its wines are not as well known as Bordeaux and Burgundy, perhaps because so many are whites, but are of enormous variety and quality.

Muscadet, or Melon de Bourgogne, is planted in the western Loire, where it benefits from the coastal climate. It makes light-bodied, crisp, and clean white wines with lemony notes and a hint of brininess from the ocean. Muscadet Sèvre et Maine **sur Lie** is lees aged and has richness and biscuit tones. It is excellent with seafood, which is predominant in the regions cuisine.

The inland, central vineyards produce the Loire's most famous wines, Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé, which are made from Sauvignon Blanc and display the classic characteristics of that noble grape. The continental climate and chalky, stony soil gives these wines wonderful finesse. Pouilly-Fumé can also have a smoky minerality. Many of these wines see old oak, curbing their herbaceousness.

The regions of Anjou-Saumur and Touraine produce both white and red wines from Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc, respectively. The local soil, called *tuffeau*, is porous limestone calcareous chalk, which offers the good drainage these grapes need. Here, the cellars (and even some hotels and restaurants) are carved into the *tuffeau* itself. These regions produce white wines as varied as light, slightly sweet, and sometimes effervescent Vouvray to the dry, rich, full-bodied, and oaked Savennières. The reds from this area show aromas of raspberries, black currant, and a green leafiness, with marked acidity and lightly gripping tannins. ■

## Important Terms

**Claret:** The traditional British term for red Bordeaux wines.

**crû:** The French term for an officially classified superior wine or vineyard.

**sur lie:** The French term for a wine aged on lees.

## Tasting Notes

In your selection of wines from western France, see if you can identify both differences and similarities, and consider whether these are caused by grape, style, or terroir.

	<b>Sauvignon Blanc–Based Loire White</b>	<b>Chenin Blanc–Based Loire White</b>	<b>Red Right-Bank Bordeaux AC</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Sauvignon Blanc	Chenin Blanc	
<b>Appellation</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Length/Finish</b>			

	<b>White Bordeaux AC</b>	<b>Red Left-Bank Bordeaux AC</b>	<b>Cabernet Franc–Based Loire Red</b>
<b>Grape</b>			Cabernet Franc
<b>Appellation</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Length/Finish</b>			

# French Regions—Burgundy and Alsace

## Lecture 11

People go crazy reading up on the harvest reports. They want to predict how well these wines will taste and will age.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Chablis AC or Bourgogne Blanc
- A Meursault AC or any white Burgundy from the Côte de Beaune
- A Gevrey-Chambertin or any red Burgundy from the Côte d'Or
- A Beaujolais—either Nouveau, Villages, or Cru
- An Alsace Gewürztraminer or Pinot Gris.



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**B**urgundy is the antithesis of Bordeaux. While Bordeaux is full-bodied with deep color and gripping tannins, Burgundy is perfumed, silky, elegant, more delicate, and less grip but no less powerful.

An inland region at about the latitude of Seattle, Washington, it has more extremes of weather from year to year, and thus vintage is extremely important to Burgundy wines. Sunny, dry years produce beautiful ripe fruit and excellent balance. Wetter years create more delicate, mineralized, finesse-driven wines. The latter do not age as well, but they are still excellent while young.

Wine has been produced in Burgundy since at least the Roman conquest of Gaul, and possibly before. But it was the Cistercian monks who began keeping records of varieties, vintages, and terroir that formed the basis of the science of viniculture. For many centuries, all the vineyards of Burgundy were the property of the church or the nobility. Only after the Napoleonic Code outlawed primogeniture did land fall into the hands of younger sons and thus the commoners. But this also carved the region into smaller and

smaller plots, and today, some owners lay claim to as little as two rows of grapes.

This fragmentation created the need for *négociants*. In Burgundy, wines produced by vineyard owners are labeled “**domaine**,” but as in Champagne, this is not an indication of quality, only of origin. In that same vein, rather than classify producers as in Bordeaux, Burgundy classifies individual vineyards. The three classifications of Burgundy are grand cru (highest quality single vineyard wines), premier cru (high-quality single-vineyard wines), and village (multiple-vineyard wines). Below this are multiple-village designations, and finally Bourgogne, meaning the grapes can come from anywhere in Burgundy. Region, subregion, and terroir are particularly significant in Burgundy, because here there are over 400 types of soil, huge variation in topography, and many **microclimates**.

Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are Burgundy’s main grape varieties; in fact, Burgundy is their birthplace, and thus the gold standard for these varieties throughout the world. The wide spectrum of terroir in Burgundy means enormous variation in the wines, too. In Chablis, for example, the northernmost region of Burgundy, they make pale, mineraly, delicate, and crisp whites from grapes grown in **Kimmeridgian chalk**. In comparison, the whites from Meursault, in the southern Côte de Beaune region, have deeper color, fuller body, more aromas of riper fruit, and benchmark notes of hazelnut. (They are also more likely than Chablis whites to be produced with lees stirring and oak fermentation.)

Burgundy is the classic region for Pinot Noir, and it is classically difficult to manage even here. When done right, it reaches its highest expression in Burgundy, both in perfume and longevity. They are very aromatic, with both red berries, minerals, and sometimes meatiness. At the village level, they often see oak and thus display vanilla and spice. One signature note for Burgundy reds is called a barnyard smell, which many people find pleasant and certainly adds complexity. In body and tannin, they are stronger compared to other Pinots but somewhat lighter than Bordeaux reds. The Côte de Nuits villages of Gevrey-Chambertin and Morey-Saint-Denis are particularly known for high-quality, powerful reds. Further south, as in Chambolle-Musigny, the wines are gentler, more perfumed, and softer in tannins.

Beaujolais, in the south of Burgundy, is distinctive for making wines from the red Gamay grape. These wines are generally softer, lighter, and easier drinking than wines made from Pinot. Beaujolais Nouveau, which is meant to be drunk very young, is a perfect entry-level wine.

Alsace, northeast of Burgundy on the French-German border, shows a unique blend of France and Germany in its culture and its wines. It has only two classifications—Alsace AC and Alsace Grand Cru—and two regions—Bas-Rhin in the north and Haut-Rhin in the south, where the majority of the grand cru vineyards are found. It has a protected, continental climate and granite/schist soils, making for rich, unctuous, almost oily wines.

Alsatian grand cru wines must be made from one of four grape varieties: Riesling, Muscat, Pinot Gris, or Gewürztraminer; Pinot Blanc is also grown on the non-grand cru vineyards. Wines here are typically made with 100 percent of one grape variety.

*Gewürz* is German for “spice,” and Gewürztraminers are very aromatic, with notes of rose petals, cashews, and lychees. It is full-bodied for a white wine (and in color is often slightly pinkish), with a round texture, low acid and high alcohol (about 14 percent). Pinot Gris shares full body, low acid, and that pink tinge with Gewürztraminer, but it is much less aromatic and shows a bit of stone fruit and honeysuckle. Pinot Blanc makes round, mellow, laid-back wines, with creamy notes from malolactic fermentation. Alsatian wines, in general, do not show much oak influence. ■

## Important Terms

**domaine:** In Burgundy, a vineyard; on a label, this word is an indication that the producer grows its own grapes.

**Kimmeridgian chalk:** The soil of northern Burgundy that lends mineral character to its wines.

**microclimate:** The particular combination of weather conditions in an extremely tiny region, possibly as small as a section of a row of a vineyard.

## Tasting Notes

This lecture's wines are a whirlwind tour of the Burgundy region (with a quick day trip to Alsace). Notice the wide variety of styles that can be achieved and yet all be called Burgundy.

	<b>Chablis AC</b>	<b>Meursault AC</b>	<b>Gevrey-Chambertine</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Chardonnay	Chardonnay	Pinot Noir
<b>Region</b>	Chablis, Burgundy	Meursault, Côte de Beaune, Burgundy	Gevrey-Chambertin, Côte de Nuits, Burgundy
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Beaujolais</b>	<b>Gewürztraminer or Pinot Gris</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Gamay	Gewürztraminer or Pinot Gris
<b>Region</b>	Beaujolais, Burgundy	Alsace
<b>Color</b>		
<b>Aromas</b>		
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>		
<b>Body</b>		
<b>Finish/Length</b>		

# French Regions—Rhône, Languedoc, Provence

## Lecture 12

“In the U.S., we tend to think of rosé wine as blush, the cheap sweet stuff. However, dry rosés can be some of the best spring and summer wines you can find. ... They are also incredibly food friendly and have great versatility.”

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Viognier, either from Condrieu or Languedoc
- A Northern Rhône wine, such as Côte Rôtie, Hermitage, Crozes-Hermitage, Saint-Joseph, or Cornas
- A Côtes du Rhône
- A Châteauneuf-du-Pape or Gigondas
- A Tavel or Provence rosé
- A red wine from Languedoc-Roussillon



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**D**espite the fame of Bordeaux and Burgundy (and the infamy of Champagne), the most notable French wines in the ancient world actually came from the Rhône Valley. Pliny the Elder, the 1<sup>st</sup>-century author and naturalist, praised its wines in his *Natural History*.

The Rhône Valley is into northern and southern sections, with the Northern Rhône wines being the highest quality. (The Rhône has no strict classification system, but specific vineyards, called *climats*, are shown on the labels.) The climate is continental, with a touch of Mediterranean influence. The main grape varieties are Viognier, Marsanne, Roussanne, and Syrah.

Viognier is an aromatic white grape that smells of stone fruit and white lilies or honeysuckle. On the palate, it has a full body and low acidity.

Viognier from Condrieu is fermented and matured in French oak, which provides roundness, creaminess, complexity, and longevity. Elsewhere in the Rhône, it is generally unoaked and drunk young. The other white Rhône grapes, Marsanne and Roussanne, are mostly seen together. Roussanne shows pear fruit and herbal notes, while Marsanne adds floral, jasmine, and stone fruit flavors. The Roussanne balances Marsanne's full body and low acidity.

Northern Rhône Syrah is a benchmark traditional style, making deep, dark, rich, and meaty wines. The Côte Rôtie has intense sun by day and cool winds at night, reducing berry size and intensifying color and richness. Here, Syrah is blended with up to 20 percent Viognier to soften its robustness.

Hermitage is the most famous and best-regarded Rhône appellation. Here Syrah is grown on southwest-facing slopes with heat-retaining granite soils. The wines are deep ruby, almost inky, and quite opaque. On the nose, you get black and red raspberries, with smoke and a hint of rosemary. On the palate, it is as full-bodied as Syrah can get. Crozes-Hermitage is the Northern Rhône's largest-volume wine producer. They share characteristics with Hermitage wines but are lighter in body and tannin, more approachable in their youth, and more approachable in price. The regions of Saint-Joseph and Cornas are also great value Syrahs, but with coarser tannins and earthier aromas.

The Southern Rhône is a much larger region and produces much more wine. Its flatter landscape is covered in fields of herbs—called the

### Le Mistral

The regions of Rhône, Provence, and Languedoc are known not only for their wines but for their winds. Le Mistral is a cool, dry wind that sweeps down the Rhône Valley, across the broad plains of Languedoc and Provence, down to the Mediterranean coast at speeds that can reach 50 miles per hour. It can be a curse or a blessing to winemakers, at worst damaging vines but at best drying and cleansing the air and wafting the delicious scent of the garrigues throughout the region.

**garrigues**—whose spicy scent is blown across the vineyards and infuses the wines. In this Mediterranean climate, the predominant red grape variety is Grenache—called Garnacha in Spain. The Southern Rhône is its benchmark.

The best known region of the Southern Rhône is Châteauneuf-du-Pape, which can be a blend of up to 13 grape varieties. They are a somewhat aromatic, with red cherry/berry, licorice, cinnamon, mineral, and hint of toast and vanilla from French oak. They are full-bodied and low acid, with firm but fine tannins. They finish long, with notes of herbs, and have high complexity and excellent balance. Similar Rhône reds include Gigondas and Vacqueyras, which are a bit more rustic and earthy. Côtes du Rhône reds, which blend in Mourvèdre and Cinsault grapes, are lighter, simpler, and usually the most modestly priced reds from the region.

On the opposite bank of the Rhône from Châteauneuf-du-Pape is Tavel, home to one of the best dry French rosés. Do not confuse these with the sweet, entry-level blush wines common in the U.S. market. These wines are beautifully fruity but bone dry, with great complexity and finesse. They are wonderfully food friendly as well.

Tavel may include Grenache, Mourvèdre, Cinsault, Syrah, and sometimes Clairette and Bourboulenc grapes. It gets its color from brief skin contact or addition of dark juice from red grape vats, a method called *saignée*. It is aromatic, with light notes of strawberries, watermelon, and cranberries, yet with mineral undertones and some dried herbal character. They are usually complex, with a moderately long length and a clean, refreshing finish. However, they can be difficult to find because they are produced in small quantities. For a similar wine, look for a rosé from Provence, the region just south of the Rhône on the Mediterranean coast.

Languedoc, home of France's best-value wines, is its largest wine-producing region, west of Provence on the Mediterranean coast. The land here is quite flat, and the soil is so varied it is tough to generalize. Most of the wine made in this region is still labeled *vin de pays* or *vin de table*, but quality appellations include Corbières, Minervois, Fitou, Faugères, and Saint-Chinian. They are also known for some *vins doux naturels*, which are sweet fortified wines similar to Port but somewhat lighter.

A typical Languedoc red is a blend of Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre—a **GSM**—with moderate color and moderate aromatics. Aromas include ripe, jammy red fruit, minerals, sage, rosemary, and black pepper spice. You may also get bramble—a woody, earthy smell—a benchmark for the region. Tannins are firm and balanced with the acidity. These wines can be great bargains, and the region is worth watching for both its value prices and its technical innovation. ■

### Important Terms

***climat***: A French term for a specific vineyard designation that is not a legal cru or appellation.

***garrigues***: The herbal note specific to the wines of southern France.

***GSM***: The wine-trade term for a blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvèdre.

### Tasting Notes

While the Rhône appellations are fairly well known outside of Europe, Languedoc and Provence are more obscure to many buyers. Consider this tasting an opportunity to make some great discoveries.

	<b>Viognier</b>	<b>Northern Rhône Red</b>	<b>Côtes du Rhône</b>
<b>Grape</b>	100% Viognier	Syrah or Syrah blend	Grenache, Mourvèdre, Cinsault
<b>Appellation</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Châteauneuf-du-Pape or Gigondas</b>	<b>Tavel or Provence Rosé</b>	<b>Languedoc-Roussillon Red</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Grenache blend	Grenache, Mourvèdre, Cinsault, Syrah, Clairette, Bourboulenc	Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre
<b>Appellation</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

# Wines of Northern Italy

## Lecture 13

**Piedmont was part of the Savoy Kingdom ... which gave Piedmont a glimpse into French viticultural practices and a head start on developing quality viticulture and winemaking.**

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Pinot Grigio from Friuli or Alto Adige
- A white Piedmont—Gavi or Arneis
- A Barbera d’Asti or Barbera d’Alba
- A Barolo, Barbaresco, or Langhe Nebbiolo
- A Soave
- An Amarone



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Italy is one of the most exciting and complex countries for wine. The nation cultivates about 1,000 different types of *Vitis vinifera* (with more than 1,000 names for them) and has more than 300 different quality regions, each with its own traditions, rules, and styles. The four pillars of great Italian wine are Super Tuscan, Brunello di Montalcino, Barolo, and Amarone. The latter two are the subject of this lecture.

Italy’s long and rich history of winemaking began with Greek settlers, who likely established vineyards in the peninsula as early as 800 B.C. The ancient Etruscans produced and traded wine as well. The Romans spread viticulture throughout Europe. But only in the last 40–50 years has Italy been internationally recognized as a high-quality wine producer.

The first classification system for Italian wine was created in 1963. The three main classifications were *vino da tavola* (like France’s *vin de table*), Denominazione di Origine Controllata, or DOC (similar to France’s AC), and the highest designation, Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita,

or DOCG. In 1992, Indicazione Geografica Tipica, or IGT, was added to bridge the gap between *vino da tavola* and DOC/DOCG. A *vino da tavola* differs from the others in that it may not show vintage, variety, or name of the estate on the label. For the other classifications, it is common to see any or all of these, as well as region.

Barolo, Barbaresco, and Langhe Nebbiolo wines come from the region called Piedmont. Piedmont lies in the foothills southeast of the Italian Alps, at about the same latitude as Bordeaux but with a continental climate. The soil is rich in calcium and the topography is highly varied—perfect for winemakers who focus on terroir. The main grape variety is Nebbiolo, named for the fog—*nebbia*—that sometimes blankets the area. In other regions, this grape is called Spanna.

Nebbiolo is thinner skinned and makes fairly pale wines. Traditional-style long barrel maturation gives them a slight orange hue. Wines made in a more modern-style with short barrel maturation will be deeper ruby or purple. Nebbiolo is quite aromatic, almost like Pinot Noir, but with upfront floral and herbal aromas and the mineral notes of the Old World, plus vanilla and toast from French oak, cinnamon spice from Slavonian oak, or both. It is high in acidity and tannin and thus can age for decades.

Nebbiolo from the Barolo DOCG has the most gripping, **masculine structure**. Wines from its sister region, the Barbaresco DOCG, tend to be more perfumed and softer in tannins—a more **feminine structure**.

Piedmont's other red grape is Barbera. Years ago, Barbera was known as a simple, unoaked, easy-drinking red. Today, higher-quality producers are doing more with this grape. Barbera is not as aromatic as Nebbiolo, but it has cherry fruit aromas and mineral tones. Again, it may have the French oak notes of vanilla, spice, and toast. It is also lighter in body, similar in acid, and softer in tannins. This combination makes it a great everyday, food-friendly wine.

In the sparkling wine lecture, we tasted one Piedmont white—Moscato d'Asti, which is made from Moscato grapes. Cortese is another Piedmont

white grape, found in wine the Gavi DOCG, where limestone-rich soils make wines with great acidity. They have a pale greenish color, citrus fruit, and

**The Italians have captured our imaginations, particularly when it comes to wine, food, and romance.**

Old World mineral notes. Most are unoaked, with youthful fruit and vibrancy, crisp acidity, and a clean finish. Arneis is another Piedmont white, made in the DOCG of Roero. This floral, less-aromatic grape has the benchmark Italian white note of almonds.

Pinot Grigio (called Pinot Gris in French) is probably Italy's most famous wine export, at least in North America. It is an aromatic grape variety, although it is less intense here than in other regions, showing flowers and stone fruit.

Its medium body, medium acid, medium fruit intensity, and medium alcohol make it the quintessential crowd-pleaser white. The best Pinot Grigio comes from Friuli and Trentino-Alto Adige.

The Piedmont region of Veneto, surrounding the city of Venice, is the home of Soave. Made with Garganega, it is a close cousin of Chardonnay—straw to golden in color and medium bodied, with soft scents of citrus and almond.

To the west of this region is Valpolicella, known for reds blended from Corvina (sometimes botrytized), Rondinella, and Molinara grapes. Its highest expression is the DOCG of Amarone della Valpolicella (Amarone for short). After harvest, the grapes are dried for several months on bamboo mats in a process called *appassimento*. Its aromas are of moderately intense dried fruit or even chocolate-covered cherries. Amarone can give an impression of sweetness, despite being fermented dry. It is full-bodied, with rich, dense tannins and high alcohol but outstanding balance and complexity.

Another style somewhere between basic Valpolicella and Amarone is Ripasso. Amarone skins or fresh dried grapes are added to a Valpolicella tank, which adds tannin and color. They are fresh like Valpolicella but richer and deeper—like a baby Amarone, and they can be incredible values. ■

## Important Terms

**appassimento:** A technique of drying grapes on bamboo mats.

**feminine:** Refers to a wine with a softer tannic structure.

**masculine:** Refers to a wine with a more gripping tannic structure.

## Tasting Notes

The wines of northern Italy show strong French and German influences in terms of both grapes and styles. As you taste these selections, think about the French wines you have tasted so far, noting the similarities and differences.

	<b>Pinot Grigio</b>	<b>Piedmont White</b>	<b>Barbera</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Pinot Grigio	Cortese or Arneis	Barbera
<b>Region</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Barolo, Barbaresco, or Langhe Nebbiolo</b>	<b>Soave</b>	<b>Amarone</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Nebbiolo	Garganega	Corvina, Rondinella, Molinara
<b>Region</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

# Wines of Southern Italy

## Lecture 14

Look at whether there's not only a grape mentioned, but also a region—it's likely to be a better wine.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Chianti Classico or Brunello di Montalcino
- A Super Tuscan
- A white from southern Italy, such as Greco di Tufo, Lacryma Christi, Fiano, Falanghina, or Chardonnay
- An Aglianico, such as Taurasi or Aglianico del Vulture
- A Primitivo
- A Nero d'Avola



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**T**uscany, in central Italy, is the home of Chianti—a name that evokes red-checked tablecloths and straw-wrapped bottles in many people's minds. But in recent years, Chiantis have broken out of the entry-level category and offer great experiences at great value.

Barone Ricasoli is credited with creating the original recipe for Chianti in 1874. It is a blend of red Sangiovese and Canaiolo with white Malvasia. Trebbiano, another white, was added in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The region's official borders were established by Duke Cosimo de' Medici in 1716, stretching between Siena and Florence. Today, wines from this region are labeled Chianti **Classico**. Both Classico and the wider region of modern Chianti have separate DOCG statuses.

Chianti's color is medium ruby, typical for Sangiovese wines. It is moderately aromatic, somewhere between Pinot and Merlot, with aromas of ripe sour cherry/chokecherry, mineral tones, and herbal notes. It can take on a meaty character reminiscent of grilled steak. It is medium-bodied; even in its most concentrated examples, it has a bit less body than a Cab. Its acid is high, and its tannins can be moderate to gripping and astringent. They are perfect partners to meats and tomato-based sauces.

In Montalcino, Sangiovese is called Brunello. The climate there is warmer and drier than Chianti, leading to wines with riper fruit and warmer alcohol. Its higher altitude produces smaller berries with thicker skin, and this shows in the wine as concentration and gripping tannins. These wines are typically a bit more expensive than Chianti but pair with similar dishes.

In both Chianti and Montalcino, the label "Riserva" refers to longer aging, both in barrel and bottle. Both wines are produced in traditional and modern styles—the former typically aged in Slavonian oak and undergoing more oxidation, the latter in new French oak and keeping more youthful fruit.

One of the greatest success stories of modern Italian winemaking is the **Super Tuscan**. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, several producers set out to create great Italian wines from Bordeaux grape varieties. In 1978, when Sassicaia won an international tasting of Cabernets in London, they knew that they had succeeded. Mario Incisa della Rocchetta created Sassicaia from 90 percent



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**Tuscany is home to the Sangiovese grape and Chianti wine.**

Cabernet Sauvignon and 10 percent Cabernet Franc. Piero Antinori followed this example, creating wines from Cabernet and Sangiovese. These wines now sell for several hundred dollars a bottle.

As high in quality as these wines are, they initially ran afoul of the Italian classification system. There was no DOC or DOCG for wines made from Cabernet, and they were given the lower-quality *vino da tavola* label. Eventually, their international status led to IGT status for Super Tuscans.

In the glass, these wines show the dark and opaque color of the Cabernet grapes. Their aromas are subtle ones of cassis, smoke, toast, vanilla, and a hint of herbs. On the palate, they are full-bodied, rich, and dense, with firm, powerful, and gripping tannins. Their high complexity and long length are further clues to their remarkable quality, although they tend to drink better with some age.

Moving south along the boot of Italy, we find the region of Campania. Home to the ancient city of Pompeii, its soil is primarily volcanic. One of its white wines, Lacryma Christi, is named for the tears Christ is said to have shed over the destruction of the city. It is made from Coda di Volpe grapes, an ancient variety with clusters shaped like fox tails. This medium-bodied, pale straw-colored wine is not strongly aromatic, showing fresh nectarine fruit, minerals, and the characteristic Italian almond notes.

Other wines produced in Campania include Greco di Tufo, a fresh, crisp, and bright white known for flavors of apple peels with mineral

### Deep Breathing

There's more to letting a wine breathe than just uncorking the bottle and letting the wine sit inside. Very little of the wine gets exposed to oxygen through that tiny neck. Decanting is a better option. A wide-bottomed decanter will expose much more surface area and let oxygen do its work. Try opening two of the same wine, decanting one and leaving the other in the bottle. Taste each wine every half hour or so and make note of the differences real breathing makes.

notes, and Fiano di Avellino, a medium-bodied and aromatic white with notes of pears and hazelnuts. Off the Campania coast, the island of Capri produces fragrant white Falanghina, a prestigious wine of the ancient world. But overall, Italy is not known for its indigenous whites, but the upside of this is that its best whites are quite affordable.

Aglianico is the main red grape of Campania and nearby Puglia. These produce opaque wines with mild aromas of ripe, dark fruits and bramble, high astringency, and firm tannins, such as Taurasi, Bocca di Lupo, and Aglianico del Vulture. With their high complexity and long length, they are among the most underappreciated Italian wines—affordable alternatives to Super Tuscans.

Puglia also grows early-ripening Primitivo grapes, cousin to California's Zinfandel. These are lighter than their Aglianico cousins and more aromatic, with jammy red fruit and herbs. Its body is medium to firm, its alcohol is high, but its acid and tannin are less prominent than in Aglianicos.

Our final Italian region is Sicily, with its hot, dry climate and winemaking tradition dating back to ancient Greek settlers. Its premier wine is Nero d'Avola, a deep, dark red with jammy dark fruit and soft, plush tannins. Look for examples with the quality designation *Q*, which is unique to Sicily. ■

### Important Terms

**Classico:** An Italian DOC or DOCG wine that has been produced in the area of the style's origin.

**Super Tuscan:** A high-quality Italian wine made from French, especially Bordeaux, grape varieties.

### Tasting Notes

The wines of Italy are too many and varied to cover them all in a general wine-tasting course, but the samples in this lecture and the previous one offer a broad selection to illustrate Italy's diversity and give you a starting point for your own exploration.

	<b>Chianti or Brunello</b>	<b>Super Tuscan</b>	<b>Southern Italian White</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Sangiovese, Canaiolo, Malvasia, Trebbiano	Cabernet or Cabernet-Sangiovese blend	
<b>Region</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Aglianico</b>	<b>Primitivo</b>	<b>Nero d'Avola</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Aglianico	Primitivo	Nero d'Avola
<b>Region</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

# The Tastes of Germany and Austria

## Lecture 15

German Riesling is the little darling of sommeliers everywhere—or at least it should be.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

#### Germany

- A Liebfraumilch
- A Riesling, such as a Kabinett, Spätlese, or Auslese
- A Spätburgunder or Dornfelder

#### Austria

- A Riesling
- A Grüner Veltliner
- A Zweigelt



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Germany is the home of the white noble grape Riesling, and Rieslings from Germany are the most versatile food-pairing wines in the world. Most of Germany's wines are white because white grapes do better in cool climates, and Germany is at about the same latitude as Newfoundland, Canada—50 degrees north.

All of Germany's regions have continental climates, with warm summers and very cold winters, so wines are classified by ripeness as well as quality. *Deutscher Tafelweins* are Germany's equivalents to *vin de table/vino da tavola*, and its *Landweins* are equivalent to France's *vin de pays*. The two quality categories are the intermediate *Qualitätswein bestimmter Anbaugebiete (QbA)* and the high *Qualitätswein mit Prädikat (QmP)*.

Liebfraumilch, meaning “beloved mother’s milk,” is a QbA originally from a church vineyard. These wines became popular in the United States in the 1980s for their sweetness and approachability; many Americans know them under the label Blue Nun. They are made predominately from Müller-Thurgau grapes, which are a cross between Riesling and an earlier-ripening variety, Madeleine Royale.

Liebfraumilch is similar to Riesling in color and aroma (citrus and stone fruit), but the aromas are less intense. It is quite delicate and low in acid, overall lacking Riesling’s depth, but this makes for an entry-level crowd pleaser.

Some Liebfraumilch wines are **chaptalized**; that is, sugar is added to the must before fermentation to compensate for underripe grapes. Chaptalization is illegal for QmP wines, but **Süssreserve**—addition of unfermented juice as a sweetening agent after fermentation, is allowed. Within QmP are six levels of ripeness/sugar concentration. From lightest to heaviest, they are Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese, Eiswein, and Trockenbeerenauslese.

Spätlese is the late-harvest wine discussed early in Lecture 9. In classic Riesling fashion, it is very aromatic, but the grapes are riper, giving tropical fruit notes. On the palate, it is sweet and concentrated, with richer weight than the Liebfraumilch, low alcohol, and high acidity that keeps the sweetness from cloying.

Spätlese grapes are generally not botrytized, whereas Auslese and above sometimes are. You can recognize a botrytic note as honey, dried apricot, or marzipan. These wines will be weightier and fuller in body.

When a Spätlese or Auslese is fermented completely dry, it is called **trocken**. (If you don’t see *trocken* on the label, look at the alcohol level; if it is about 13 percent, the wine is probably *trocken*.) Similarly, a **halbtrocken** wine is lightly sweet—sometimes called off-dry.

Most of Germany’s wine regions are around the Rhine River, including its 13 quality regions. The rivers here moderate the climate and assist grape ripening. Rieslings from Mosel-Saar-Ruwer (now generally called Mosel)

are the most delicate, most crisp, and lowest in alcohol of any of the regions. The Mittelrhein has similar growing conditions, and its wines can be great values. Rheingau, to the east, is a bit warmer, and many of its vineyards face south, producing wines with riper fruit and fuller body.

Germany's regions for red are Baden and Pfalz, which are relatively sunny, dry, and flat. Here Pinot Noir is called Spätburgunder, and it is pale, aromatic, and mineraly, with vanilla and spice from oak. It is light-bodied and high in acid even for a Pinot Noir and ages well at a lower price point than its French cousins. Dornfelder is another German red, with deeper color and more youthful fruit than Spätburgunder.

Germany has an astonishing 1,400 wine villages and more than 2,600 vineyards, which can make the wines' labels difficult to interpret. Aside from quality designations and sweetness levels, look for *Weingut* (meaning "wine estate") *Gutsabfüllung*, or *Erzeugerabfüllung* (both meaning "estate-bottled"). Any word or number ending with *-er* is possessive; thus "Wehlener" means "from Wehlen village" and "2009er" means "vintage 2009."

A few decades ago, Austria's wines were more infamous than famous. It was discovered that a few Austrian winemakers added diethylene glycol—antifreeze—to boost their wines' body and sweetness. Although the concentration was minute and harmless, the scandal nearly destroyed the industry.

As a result, Austria now has some of the strictest wine laws in Europe, and the quality of their wines is fantastic. Their labels are similar to Germany's,



Church of Our Lady in Worms, Germany.

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but their wines are quite different. Austrian Rieslings resemble Rheingau Rieslings in ripe fruit aroma but tend to be bone dry, fuller-bodied, and higher in alcohol. Wines from Neusiedlersee may be botrytized and thus made sweet. Wachau, Kremstal, and Kamptal are the three main regions in Lower Austria, or Niederösterreich. Of the three, Wachau's wines have the highest quality. Look for Smaragd Grüner and Federspiel in particular.

Austria's star grape variety is Grüner Veltliner. As pale as Riesling and less aromatically intense, it gives light lemony and mineral notes, but its benchmark aromas are lentils and white pepper. Medium-bodied and moderate in both acidity and alcohol, it is another great crowd pleaser in youth. It gains richness and honey and toast notes with age.

The warmest and driest region in Austria is Burgenland, where Zweigelt, Austria's most popular red, is planted. Zweigelt has rich cherry fruit and a hint of pepper, with soft tannins, and can be age-worthy. ■

### Important Terms

**chaptalization:** The addition of extra sugar to must before fermentation to increase the alcohol content of the final product.

**halbtrocken:** Literally, “half dry,” the German/Austrian term for an off-dry or slightly sweet wine.

**Süssreserve:** The German/Austrian term for adding juice to a wine after fermentation; similar to dosage.

**trocken:** The German/Austrian term for dry wine.

### Tasting Notes

By this point in the course, you are probably very familiar with Riesling, but German Riesling is the benchmark, whether dry or sweet, fresh or late-harvest. Germany and Austria are less famous for their red wines, but they are worth experiencing for that very reason.

	<b>Liebfraumilch</b>	<b>German Riesling</b>	<b>Spätburgunder or Dornfelder</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Müller-Thurgau, Riesling, Silvaner, Kerner	Riesling	Pinot Noir or Dornfelder
<b>Region</b>	Germany	Germany	Germany
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Austrian Riesling</b>	<b>Grüner Veltliner</b>	<b>Zweigelt</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Riesling	Grüner Veltliner	Zweigelt
<b>Region</b>	Austria	Austria	Austria
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

# The Tastes of Spain and Portugal

## Lecture 16

These wines bridge the gap between the Old World's traditional style and the New World's international, modern style. They have powerful reds, elegant reds, delicate whites, and powerful whites. Spain has it all.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Rioja (Crianza, Reserva, or Gran Reserva)
- A Rueda or white Rioja
- A Rías Baixas
- A Priorat
- A Jumilla or Yecla Monastrell
- A red wine from Portugal, such as Douro, Bairrada, or Alentejo



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Spain is the third-largest wine-producing country in the world and has more area under vine than France or Italy. The area has been producing wine since between 4000 and 3000 B.C. Since the late 1980s, it has been enjoying a wine renaissance, thanks to the international influence of the **flying winemakers**. Spain's wines now bridge the traditional and the modern and are made in every conceivable style.

Spanish wine laws and quality classifications are similar to Italy's. *Vino de mesa* is equivalent to *vino da tavola*, *vino de la tierra* to IGT, Denominación de Origen (or DO) to DOC, and Denominación de Origen Calificada (or DOC) to DOCG. Like in Italy, there are minimum aging requirements, both in oak and bottle. On the label, the producer is called a bodega.

Spain has over 60 regulated wine regions, among which Rioja is probably the best known. Located inland along the River Ebro, about 75 percent of its

production is reds from Tempranillo grapes. Navarra, east of Rioja, makes similar wines, but they contain more Garnacha (a.k.a. Grenache) and are typically priced a bit lower.

We tasted a Rioja Reserva and a Gran Reserva in Lecture 4, noting their deep color, red-fruit and oak-based aromas, medium body, and plush tannins. Rioja's benchmark aroma, thanks to its stringent aging requirements, is a leather or earthy note, along with a barnyard or Band-Aid aroma from the *Brettanomyces* yeast, called Brett.

In Rioja, the term Crianza means the wine has spent a year in oak. (Elsewhere in Spain, only six months is required for Crianza.) Rioja Reserva spends a year in oak and three or more in bottle. Rioja Gran Reserva spends two years in oak and four or more in bottle. Anything labeled *joven* is a young wine.

**Portugal is the least understood of all the major wine-producing regions in Europe. Keep an eye on Portugal; they're going places.**

Rioja whites are made from Viura grapes (a.k.a. Macabeo). They are soft, medium-bodied, and fairly neutral aromatically, with notes of lemons and hints of apples. When blended with Malvasia, barrel fermented, and oak aged, they can taste very similar to oaked Chardonnays.

West of Rioja is Ribera del Duero, where Tempranillo is called Tinto Fino. Ribera del Duero is a continuation of Portugal's Douro River Valley, where Port grapes are grown. It has a higher elevation than Rioja, with wide variation in **diurnal temperatures** and a lot of limestone in the soil. Its grapes are thus smaller, denser, more concentrated, and higher in acidity and tannins. Its new-wave winemakers blend Tinto Fino with French grape varieties to produce Spain's equivalent to the Super Tuscan.

Farther west along the river is Rueda, which is known for its whites. It has chalky soil and a continental climate with cool nights to keep fresh acidity and encourage aromatics. The major grape here is Verdejo, making pale, aromatic wines with citrus fruit, pear, flower, and green notes. On

the palate, they are medium-bodied, crisply acidic, and moderately long in finish.

In the DO region of Rías Baixas in Galicia, the climate is maritime—cool and damp. They make white wine from the Albariño grape. Straw colored and very aromatic, it displays stone fruit, pear, and Old World minerals. It may remind you of Viognier in its perfume. It is medium-bodied and crisp but less acidic than Rueda.

Catalonia, in Spain's northeast, is the home of Cava, but its signature red is Priorat (or Priorato)—another Old World monastic legacy. These inky wines are made from Garnacha and Cariñena. Compared to a Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the Priorat has darker fruit—blackberries and dried figs. It is very full-bodied and very high in alcohol, with an extremely long finish. Traditional-style Priorat has a savory note and needs longer aging. More modern styles have more upfront fruit and are sometimes blended with Cab or Merlot.

The Levante regions of Yecla and Jumilla make exciting, modern, juicy wines from Monastrell (a.k.a. Mourvèdre) grapes. Deep in color, high in alcohol, and moderately intense, they have dark, jammy fruit and bramble character, with notes of gingerbread.

Portugal is known as the home of Port, but you may also be familiar with the sweet, slightly sparkling

## French Oak versus American Oak

French oak barrels impart a strong vanilla and spice character—nutmeg, allspice, and cinnamon—and fine tannins to a wine. American oak imparts very different flavors—coconut (and some say dill)—and it produces coarser tannins. Both can add aromas of toast, tobacco, or even bacon. The choice between them is sometimes regional (American oak in France? *Mais non!*), sometimes financial (American oak is less expensive), and sometimes based on the grape: American oak can overwhelm delicate reds, like Pinot Noir, but it can compliment more robust ones, like Tempranillo and Cabernet Sauvignon.

wines of Lancers or Mateus. Nowadays, Portugal is making great strides with their still, dry wines.

As one might expect, Portugal's wine laws and quality designations are similar to Spain's: *vinho de mesa*, *vinho regional*, Indicação de Proviencia Regulamentada (or IPR), and Denominação de Origem Controlada (or DOC). Here, Reserva refers not to aging but to vintage requirements and passing a tasting panel. Garrafeira wines have met the Reserva parameters plus are aged for at least two years in cask and another in bottle.

Portugal has a wide range of climate regions. Vinho Verde, meaning “green wine,” produces light, crisp white wine with modest alcohol and a touch of fizz from Alvarinho (a.k.a. Albariño) grapes. It pairs beautifully with *bacalhau*—Portuguese-style codfish.

Dry reds from Portugal's Douro Valley come from the same grapes as Port does, predominately Touriga Nacional. Compared to Rioja, they are deeper in color but similar in body and tannins, although the Touriga tannins will be finer from time in French oak. The aromas are moderate, including dark fruit, plum, cassis, spice, and violets.

South of Douro is the Dão. It is landlocked, with granite soils and warm, dry summers, and it grows the same grapes as Douro. Alentejo is also inland, very dry, and hot. Famous as the home of the cork oak (*Quercus suber*), Alentejo also makes Aragónez (a.k.a. Tempranillo) and Chardonnay. ■

### Important Terms

**diurnal temperature variation:** The difference between average day and nighttime temperature; an important aspect of terroir.

**flying winemakers:** A group of Australian winemakers who brought new techniques to the Old World in the late 1980s–early 1990s.

*joven:* The Spanish term for a young wine.

*Quercus suber:* The scientific name for the Portuguese cork oak.

## Tasting Notes

The wines of Spain and Portugal are not as well known as they deserve to be, often overshadowed by their French, Italian, and Californian competitors. If all you know of the Iberian Peninsula is fortified wine, this tasting will be an eye-opening experience.

	Red Rioja	Rueda or White Rioja	Rías Baixas
<b>Grape</b>	Tempranillo	Verdejo or Viura	Albariño
<b>Region</b>	Rioja, Spain	Rueda or Rioja, Spain	Rías Baixas, Spain
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Priorat</b>	<b>Châteauneuf-du-Pape</b>	<b>Jumilla or Yecla</b>	<b>Portuguese Red</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Garnacha, Cariñena	Grenache	Monastrell	Touriga Nacional, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Cão, Touriga Franca, Tinta Roriz
<b>Region</b>	Catalonia, Spain	Rhône Valley, France	Levante, Spain	Portugal
<b>Color</b>				
<b>Aromas</b>				
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>				
<b>Body</b>				
<b>Finish/Length</b>				

# U.S. Regions—California

## Lecture 17

**American wine consumption more than doubled during Prohibition, from about 60 million to 150 million gallons, mostly due to families making wine at home.**

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon
- A Left Bank Bordeaux, such as Pauillac
- A Chardonnay
- A Merlot from anywhere in California
- A Pinot Noir from the Russian River, Carneros, or Santa Barbara
- A Zinfandel or Petite Sirah



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In Lectures 5 and 6, we looked at the noble grape varieties and how they retain their essential characteristics no matter where they are planted. Cabernet Sauvignon is Bordeaux's Left Bank noble red grape, but it is also a significant player in California's wine industry. So how does Cab play out in each region? In both it shows a deep, opaque, ruby purple color and aromatic intensity, but its specific aromatics are very different. The subtle Bordeaux black current/cassis, tobacco, and woody notes (like cedar or pencil shavings) and its strong mineral note are replaced by very ripe, upfront fruit, with less acidity and none of that Old World minerality. Both can be excellent, but they are not the same.

Wine production began in North America with European settlement. Thomas Jefferson tried cultivating wine grapes at Monticello, Virginia. But just as in Europe, Christian monks established the first successful vineyards, mostly in California—Sonoma, Napa, and Santa Clara. Commercial wine production began in earnest after the California gold rush of 1849.

By 1900, California was producing about 1.5 million bottles of wine annually. When Prohibition was enacted in 1920, production of *Vitis vinifera* juice continued; it was sold with a label warning the buyer not to add yeast—and a broad wink—and America became a country of home winemakers. Commercial wine production plummeted 93 percent, with most of the remainder being sacramental wine.

Prohibition ended in 1933, but the industry struggled until the 1970s, when the rest of the world began to take California winemakers seriously. Today, the state produces 189 million cases a year—90 percent of U.S. wine production—making California the fourth-largest producer of wine in the entire world.

The U.S. equivalent of the AC or DOC is the **American Viticultural Area**, or AVA. AVAs are defined by geography and climate, but varieties, yields, and production methods are entirely up to the producers. This freedom has allowed California to innovate and develop its own styles.

Napa Valley in Northern California is nestled between the Mayacama and Vaca mountain ranges. The land is almost too fertile for wine grapes, which can lead too much leaf **vigor** and harm the fruit. But the mountains also subdue the maritime influence of the Pacific Ocean, producing a stable, sunny, dry climate that makes for more consistent yields and quality year-on-year. The one potential danger in California's vineyards is drought, so winemakers here irrigate, unlike in most of Europe.

Napa is best known for Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. Their Chardonnays are deeper in color than a white Burgundy, with riper notes of red or even baked apple. The acid is low and alcohol warm, as we expect from a warm climate, and these wines often undergo malolactic fermentation, adding creamy and buttery notes. They sit at the opposite end of the Chardonnay spectrum from Chablis. Napa Chardonnay and Cab can be found at every price point, but Napa Cabs in particular can have such high quality that they can achieve cult status.

Most California Sauvignon Blanc is made in the Fumé Blanc style, thanks to pioneering winemaker Robert Mondavi. Inspired by the Pouilly-Fumés

of the Loire, these oaked wines have a smoky flavor and vanilla/spice notes, along with the acid, citrus, and grassy aromas of classic Sauvignon Blanc. Note, however, that they are rarely called Fumé Blanc, so check the back label for mention of oak or oak flavors.

Merlot is another Bordeaux grape grown in Napa, and like Cab, it produces a strikingly different wine in California than in France. The key again is the obvious and upfront fruit, in this case jammy blackberry and plum. Compared to a California Cab, the Merlot is rounder and plusher. Cabernet and Merlot complement each other very well in blends, and blending is one of the areas where California innovates.

West of Napa is Sonoma Valley. Though less well-known than Napa, its reputation and quality are similarly high. It is hillier and cooler, with more microclimates—the Burgundy to Napa’s Bordeaux—and makes California’s best Pinot Noirs, especially in the Russian River Valley, Carneros, and Santa Barbara.

Sonoma’s Pinots are as aromatic as you would expect from this grape, with red fruit and berry aromas, but lacking that Old World mineral note. They are lower in acid and fuller in body than their French counterparts, yet they are still more delicate than California Cabs and Merlots. In Sonoma’s Santa Barbara, North Central Coast, and South Central Coast AVAs, the **Rhône Rangers** make Syrahs with New World influence. They have rich, upfront, raspberry fruit but focus more on herbal notes and hints of black pepper spice in the Rhône style, not the Shiraz style.

California’s lesser-known Central Valley produces three-quarters of its wines, most of it for E. & J. Gallo, the largest family-owned winery in the world. Though in the U.S. Gallo is associated with inexpensive bulk wine, they also produce several premium brands. They have state-of-the-art quality control, and their salespeople are reputed to be the best-trained in the industry.

California is renowned for Zinfandel, a cousin of Italy’s Primitivo. Old Vine Zinfandel comes from century-old vines, is deep and dark, and usually sees a lot of oak. Its aromas are black cherry and cranberry fruit with cinnamon spice and even raisin, and their alcohol can get as high as Port. Look for

Zinfandel from the AVA of Paso Robles in the Central Coast. Petite Sirah is another great California grape for robust wines like Zinfandel at a great price. (Despite the name, Petite Sirah is unrelated to Syrah.) ■

### Important Terms

**American Viticultural Area (AVA):** A geographically, climatologically determined American wine-growing region.

**Rhône Rangers:** A group of California winemakers who experiment with Rhône-style Syrah wines.

**vigor:** The quality of a grapevine's stalks, vines, and leaves, which can affect sugar concentration in the berries.

### Tasting Notes

	Napa Cabernet Sauvignon	Left Bank Bordeaux	California Chardonnay
Grape	Cabernet Sauvignon	Cabernet Sauvignon	Chardonnay
Region or Subregion			
Color			
Aromas			
Acid/Sweetness			
Body			
Finish/Length			

	<b>California Merlot</b>	<b>Sonoma Pinot Noir</b>	<b>Zinfandel or Petite Sirah</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Merlot	Pinot Noir	Zinfandel or Petite Sirah
<b>Region or Subregion</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

# U.S. Regions—Washington and Oregon

## Lecture 18

There are many clones, or individual propagations, of Pinot Noir—each with its own set of characteristics. ... If you want to get a good conversation going with a real Pinot Noir connoisseur, ask about the types of clones that were used to make the wine.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- An Oregon Pinot Gris
- An Italian Pinot Grigio
- An Oregon Pinot Noir
- A Washington Merlot
- A California Merlot
- A Washington Syrah



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The northwestern U.S. states of Oregon and Washington share one significant geological feature: the Cascade Mountains. Yet most of the vineyards in Oregon are west of the Cascades, and most of the vineyards in Washington are east of them. Why is this? Because of the different grape varieties grown in each state.

Oregon's wine-growing regions are affected by the Pacific Ocean. They are cool, more humid, and have a long growing season—perfect for cool-climate varieties. Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir are their specialties.

Compared to Pinot Grigio made in Italy from the same grape, Oregon Pinot Gris has more intense color and aromas, with New World upfront fruit of nectarines and apricots, plus a floral, honeysuckle note. It is also fuller in body than Italian Pinot Grigio but has less body than an Alsatian Pinot Gris, as well as higher acid. It is essentially the midpoint between the two European

styles. Oregon grows other Alsatian grape varieties, such as Gewürztraminer and Riesling. Chardonnay is planted here as well and shows higher acidity than in California.

But Oregon's premiere focus is Pinot Noir. The best known AVA for Pinot Noir in Oregon is the Willamette Valley, just south of Portland. This is the coolest region in Oregon. Robert Drouhin, from the Drouhin family of Burgundy producers, established Domaine Drouhin in Willamette in the mid-1980s. In part because of the Drouhins, Burgundy and Dijon **clones** of

Pinot Noir are very popular in Oregon, despite their lower yields, because of the Burgundy-like structures they produce.

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**Make sure that the wines you compare match each other in vintage and price point as much as possible. It makes for a more apples-to-apples comparison.**

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Oregon's Pinot Noir is pale ruby, though often deeper in color than those from Carneros or Burgundy. Always an aromatic grape, in Oregon Pinot displays darker fruit, like red and black cherries. On the palate, it is medium-bodied and full for a Pinot Noir, with fine, not gripping tannins and balanced acidity.

Oregon's Pinot Noir can be more expensive than California's. While that can be a reflection of quality, it is also a reflection of quantity—Oregon simply doesn't have California's production scale. But Oregon's wine culture takes pride in its small, boutique-like wineries.

Washington State, though a distant second to California, is the second-largest wine grape-growing state in the United States, with over 650 wineries and counting. Merlot is the most widely planted grape variety in Washington.

Washington's *Vitis vinifera* vines are unique for one reason: In the mid-1800s, an American root louse called *Phylloxera* spread to Europe and ravaged the grapevines. French wine production fell 72 percent, and it looked like the end of European wine culture. Eventually, European vines were grafted to

resistant American non-*vinifera* rootstocks, thus saving the industry. But the twist in this tale is that *Phylloxera* hates sandy soil and icy winters—both found in eastern Washington—and thus many of the vines there remain on ungrafted European *vinifera* **rootstock**. Whether or not this affects the quality of the wine remains a matter of debate.

Western Washington's AVA is the Puget Sound, near Seattle, and it shares Oregon's maritime influence and penchant for Pinot Noir. A two-hour drive to the east is Washington's largest AVA, Columbia Valley, containing the subappellations Yakima Valley and Walla Walla Valley. It shares the same latitude of Bordeaux, but there ends the climatological resemblance. It is warm, dry, sunny, and continental here, ideal conditions for Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah.

Yakima is the historical center of Washington's wine industry, with a climate reminiscent of the Australian outback. Walla Walla is the more famous of the two areas. It receives twice the amount of rainfall as the rest of the Columbia Valley. Winemakers there are less dependent on irrigation. The area is known for Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Even the toughest critics admire Washington's Bordeaux-style blends; Robert Parker, one of the foremost critics of Bordeaux, gave the Betz Family Vineyard 2007 Père de Famille Cabernet blend 95 out of 100 points.

Compared to California Merlot, Washington's is less jammy, with higher acidity and lower alcohol, all attributable to a colder climate. Their Syrahs are very exciting; when made in the Rhône style, they can display red raspberry and blackberry notes with black pepper, spice, vanilla, olive, toast, and smoke. They have full body and excellent balance and finish. ■

### An Unfair Advantage?

The U.S. Department of Health defines “moderate consumption of alcohol” as one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men. Why the difference? Our bodies process alcohol differently, and women on average have less muscle mass than men. However, women seem to have a more developed sense of smell, and there are far more female hypertasters than male ones. So who is getting the better end of the bargain?

## Important Terms

**clonal selection:** A vine variety propagated by cuttings from a specific plant.

***Phylloxera:*** The North American root louse that devastated European grapevines in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**rootstock:** The root and stalk of a grapevine to which cuttings are grafted.

## Tasting Notes

	Oregon Pinot Gris	Italian Pinot Grigio	Oregon Pinot Noir
<b>Grape</b>	Pinot Gris	Pinot Grigio	Pinot Noir
<b>Region or Subregion</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Washington Merlot</b>	<b>California Merlot</b>	<b>Washington Syrah</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Merlot or Merlot blend	Merlot or Merlot blend	Syrah
<b>Region or Subregion</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

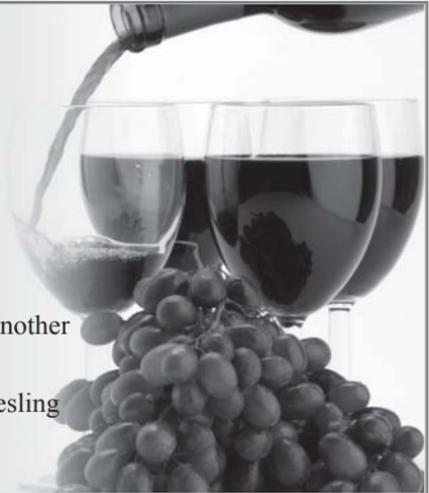
## Other U.S. Regions, Mexico, and Canada

### Lecture 19

**What I love about these regions and wines is that they are the future. Most of these wineries are started by families, maybe just like yours and mine, who have a dream to create something new, something they wish to share with us.**

#### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A New York wine, preferably a Finger Lakes Riesling or Long Island Chardonnay
- A Texas wine—if possible, both a Cabernet and a Syrah
- A red Virginia wine
- A Red Ass Rhubarb wine—or another fruit wine
- An Idaho wine, preferably a Riesling
- An Inniskillin icewine



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**W**ine grapes are grown in every single one of the United States and in several Canadian provinces and Mexican states. These regions are homes to true wine pioneers, experimenting with varieties, techniques, and terroir to produce something new and wonderful.

In the United States, the top three states in terms of the number of wineries after California, Washington, and Oregon are New York, Virginia, and Texas, so we will focus on them first.

New York's main wine regions are the Long Island on the Atlantic coast and the Finger Lakes region of western New York. The Hargrave family planted the first *Vitis vinifera* grapes on Long Island in 1973; almost 40 years later,

Long Island has over 3,000 acres under vine. With its maritime climate and relatively southern latitude, it has a longer growing season than anywhere else in New York and can therefore grow late-ripening grapes such as Merlot. Long Island also does well with Chardonnay, creating wines with New World ripe, upfront fruit, good complexity, and a long finish. Some Long Island wineries ferment with wild yeasts, which lend their wines uniqueness.

The Finger Lakes region's first vineyards were started by Dr. Konstantin Frank, a Russian viticulturist who immigrated to the United States in 1951. The climate in this region is similar to Germany, with cool, wet weather and steep slopes. Thus these winemakers specialize in dry Rieslings; Gewürztraminers; and late-harvest, botrytized, sweet Rieslings. The Finger Lakes and the Hudson Valley of New York are also the home of French-American **hybrid** grapes such as Seyval Blanc and Vidal Blanc.

The Hudson Valley's first *vinifera* grapes were planted by French Huguenots settlers in the 1600s, and this region claims to have the oldest active winery in America—Brotherhood, founded in 1839.

Virginia, too, has been growing grapes since colonial times, with the first plantings at Jamestown. Thomas Jefferson struggled with *vinifera* plantings without success. But today, Virginia has six AVAs—one of them Jefferson's estate, Monticello. Most of Virginia's wine is grown in one of three areas: north and west of Washington DC; central Virginia, around Charlottesville (near Monticello); and in the Shenandoah Valley, west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.



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Canada's Niagara Peninsula has become renowned for its Icewines.

In Virginia, the growing season is warm and humid. Chardonnay and Bordeaux varieties are planted here, as well as very tannic varieties such as Touriga Nacional, Tannat, and Petit Verdot. You will also find wines made from **Norton** grapes, arguably the only indigenous American grape variety making premium-quality wine.

Here, Bordeaux varieties get very deep and opaque. Although moderate in aromatics, they still display New World upfront fruit. They are full-bodied, with bright acidity, chocolaty texture, and firm, gripping tannins. If you can get a hold of one, Norton is a unique and worthwhile experience—dark, robust, and very high in health-promoting anthocyanins.

Texas is the fifth-largest wine-producing state in the U.S., and missionaries made wine here a century before vines were planted in California. The main grape was **Mission**, a black grape, probably of Spanish origin, that we also see planted under other names in South America. In the early 1900s, Prohibition took its toll on Texas's industry, but a resurgence began in the 1970s. Today, Texan winemakers are known for their experimentation—even making wine from jalapeños!

The Texas High Plains AVA has calcareous, sandy loam soil that adds finesse to the wines and a high elevation that retains fresh acidity. In the Escondido Valley AVA in the Trans-Pecos region, in the west of the state, the University of Texas is the largest wine producer in the state, in partnership with a Bordeaux company named Cordier. Syrah and Cabernet do well in these regions.

Beyond these regions, keep an eye out for wines from unexpected places, like New Mexico, Idaho, Missouri, or South Dakota. You could make some excellent finds. New Mexico makes great-value sparkling wines, and Idaho, which shares part of the Columbia Valley with Washington, makes terrific whites and is branching into reds. And don't limit your definition of "wine" to "grape wine." Many U.S. producers are experimenting with wine made from other fruits, especially berries, and even vegetables like rhubarb and pumpkin. They are usually sweet and are great entry-level wines.

Mexico's vineyards, like those in Texas, date back to the Conquistadores and Spanish missionaries. Their production is low because wine consumption is minimal in Mexico. However, their climate is similar to California's, and their most successful varieties, unsurprisingly, are Petite Sirah and Zinfandel.

Canada's vineyards only took off in the 1990s, when trade restrictions banning import of *vinifera* were dropped. The majority of its wine grapes are grown in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia and the Niagara Peninsula in Ontario.

In British Columbia, the Okanagan Valley is one of the world's most northern wine regions but is technically a desert and therefore very sunny, warm, and dry, with maritime influence from a chain of lakes. There are over 80 wineries here, and they are most successful with aromatic whites such as Sauvignon Blanc and Alsatian varieties—Riesling, Gewürztraminer, and Pinot Gris.

Niagara's climate is similar to Burgundy and produces good Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Riesling, but their premier wines are **Icewines**, which compete with the best of Europe's Eisweins. Canadian Icewine is made from some *vinifera* varieties or from Vidal hybrids. While Vidal Icewine is less aromatic than that made from Riesling, it has wonderful stone fruit notes and can even smell like ice. They are sweet and concentrated on the palate, with good complexity and a long finish. Their only disadvantage is that their acidity, although well-balanced, is not as high as in a Riesling, and thus Vidal Icewine cannot age as long. ■

### Important Terms

**hybrid:** A grape bred from combining *Vitis vinifera* with another *Vitis* species.

**Icewine:** The legal Canadian term for an ice wine.

**Mission grape:** A black grape variety imported to North America by Spanish missionaries for making sacramental wine.

**Norton grape:** *Vitis aestivalis*, the only native North American grape making premium wine.

### Tasting Notes

This lecture's wines are all about discovery. If you cannot find wine from these specific regions, look for a wine from your home state or province, or from somewhere you like to visit. And be sure to throw a non-grape wine into the mix.

	New York Wine	Virginia Wine	Texas Wine
Grape			
Region			
Color			
Aromas			
Acid/Sweetness			
Body			
Finish/Length			

	Idaho Wine	American Fruit Wine	Canadian Icewine
Grape			
Region			
Color			
Aromas			
Acid/Sweetness			
Body			
Finish/Length			

# Sampling Argentina and Chile

## Lecture 20

**Sommeliers will offer wines from Chile and Argentina by the glass, and they are incredible values for the money at all price points.**

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Sauvignon Blanc from Chile
- A Sancerre
- A Carmenère from Chile
- A Cabernet Sauvignon from Chile
- A Torrontés from Argentina
- A Malbec from Argentina



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Chile is a long, narrow country on the southwestern coast of South America, situated between the Pacific Ocean and Andes Mountains and fairly isolated from the rest of the continent. This isolation protected them from *Phylloxera*, so most of their vines are on *vinifera* rootstocks. Most of Chile's wines are produced between 32 and 38 degrees south latitude, about equivalent to Spain and Texas in the Northern Hemisphere. They get a great deal of sunshine but not a great deal of heat or rain, thanks to the moderating Humboldt Current.

The Maipo region, near the capital of Santiago and the Maipo River, is divided into the Alto Maipo, the central Maipo, and the coastal Maipo. The region has attracted the attention and investment of several high-end European winemakers, including the Super Tuscan producer Antinori and Moët & Chandon Champagne.

One of the varieties grown here is Sauvignon Blanc, which makes pale, aromatic wines with upfront citrus fruit, floral notes, and grassy tones. (In

fact, this grassy, green note is a benchmark for all Chilean wine.) They are light-to-medium in body with crisp acidity. Note, however that many Chilean Sauvignon Blancs may include small amounts of other Sauvignon varieties, such as Sauvignon Vert/**Sauvignonasse** and Sauvignon Gris, thanks to some careless **mass selections** in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Casablanca—one of the coolest grape-growing regions in Chile—is known for white wines in general and Sauvignon Blanc in particular. Its climate is similar to Carneros in California. Although winter frost is a major concern, its proximity to the equator gives it a long growing season. Its Chardonnays take on tropical fruit aromas and have fresh acidity.

Rapel has several subregions, such as Colchagua, where the highest concentration of Chile's flagship grape—Carmenère—is grown. Originally a Bordeaux variety, Carmenère was overtaken by Merlot in its home region, and thus more Carmenère vines were exported to the New World. It is worth tasting it side by side with a Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon to understand its characteristics.

Carmenère is typically deep ruby and slightly opaque, with moderate aromas. It is similar in flavors to Merlot, although it has more meaty, savory notes and, compared to a Cab, not much herbaceousness. It is full-bodied and round on the palate, with fairly low acidity and lower tannins, especially compared to a Cab. Thus it is often aged in new oak to give the tannins a boost.

## Ampelography

The field of identifying and classifying grape vines is called **ampelography**. Ampelography compares vines for similarities and differences—the color and shape of the leaves, the number of leaf sinuses—as well as performing DNA and other chemical testing. Although the science goes back to ancient Rome, it became important in the industry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, after so many exchanges of cuttings and rootstocks took place between Old World and New.

But for all of Chile's quality, they cannot match Argentina for quantity. Argentina is the fifth-largest wine-producing nation in the world. It also has some of the world's highest-elevation vineyards, which makes them cool but gives excellent drainage, while the extra ultraviolet radiation helps the grapes develop tannins.

The vineyards of Salta are on average over a mile high, with a maximum elevation of 10,000 feet above sea level. Although its overall production is tiny, it is home to the powerfully aromatic white Torrontés grape, Argentina's flagship white. This straw-colored wine can be confused for Muscat in its aromatic intensity and aromas, although in addition it has lemon and coriander tones. For a white wine, it is very full-bodied, round, and generous on the palate, with high alcohol. Salta's Torrontés wines have better acidity than those from other regions, which can get quite blousy.

Argentina's most important, highest-producing region is Mendoza. It is lower in altitude than Salta but is still nearly a mile high. The climate is continental, with low annual rainfall and alluvial soils that need irrigation. Its major grape is Malbec, a Bordeaux variety. Malbec is inky and opaque, with moderate intensity and notes of dark berries or plum and sometimes mocha. It can have a bramble or woody note, adding to its complexity. Here it develops moderate acidity and concentrated flavors. Like other Bordeaux varieties, it is full bodied, with firm tannins. Perhaps one of Argentinean Malbec's best features is its moderate price—well worth an experimental bottle or two.

Other Argentinean specialties to look out for are wines made from Bonarda grapes, especially Bonarda-Syrah blends; wine, brandy, and vermouth from the San Juan region; and Río Negro Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Another South American grape less known to the casual wine drinker is Tannat. It is grown in Argentina, but it is making a name for itself in Uruguay, particularly in the region of Madiran. Uruguay's overall production is tiny—about on par with New Zealand, which we'll visit in a later lecture—but if you can find a Uruguayan Tannat, it's worth trying. ■

## Important Terms

**ampelography:** The study and practice of grape vine identification and classification.

**mass selection:** A propagation of the qualities of an entire field or vineyard from a large selection of cuttings.

**Sauvignonasse (or Sauvignon Vert):** A white grape variety often mistaken for Sauvignon Blanc.

## Tasting Notes

The wines of Chile and Argentina are sommelier favorites for their excellent value at any price point. You should get to know their flagship grapes as well as their Old World transplants.

	Chilean Sauvignon Blanc	Sancerre	Carmenère
<b>Grape</b>	Sauvignon Blanc or Sauvignon Blanc blend	Sauvignon Blanc	Carmenère
<b>Region or Subregion</b>		Loire Valley, France	
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon</b>	<b>Torrontés</b>	<b>Argentinean Malbec</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon	Torrontés	Argentinean Malbec
<b>Region or Subregion</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

# The Best of Australia and Tasmania

## Lecture 21

**You don't see too many Australian Pinot Noirs in stores or restaurants because of the preconceived notion that Australia is too hot for Pinot Noir. I guarantee you it's not.**

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Riesling from the Eden or Clare Valley
- A Sémillon or Sémillon blend from the Hunter or Barossa Valley
- An oaked Chardonnay from any region
- A Shiraz from Western Australia
- A Rhône Valley Syrah
- A Cabernet Sauvignon from Coonawara



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**H**ang around with Chardonnay lovers long enough and you are likely to hear three descriptions over and over: fruity, buttery, and oaked. These are the hallmarks of New World Chardonnay, and no one in the New World does Chardonnay better than Australia. When it comes to wine, in fact, Australia does it all—white, red, sparkling; sweet and fortified; wines that age; wines at every price point; every noble variety and then some. If you haven't found an Australian wine you like, you simply haven't tried enough of them.

The first *Vitis vinifera* vines planted in Australia came not from Europe but from the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. They were planted in Britain's Australian penal colony by its first governor. But the Australian wine industry as we know it now really came together in the 1970s when a group of winemakers created a 25-year plan to become one of the world's top wine exporters. They accomplished their goal in only 15 years, and by 2005, Australia was the sixth-largest wine-producing nation in the world. And their techniques have influenced the entire world, thanks to the flying

winemakers who visited Europe in the 1990s to share their knowledge and skills.

New South Wales is Australia's most populated state, although not its largest producer of wine. Its northern **Geographic Indication** (or GI) of Hunter Valley has an excellent climate for dry, unoaked, long-lived Sémillons. Outside the Hunter Valley, you see oaked Sémillons that have richer body, tasting less of beeswax and more of a lemony vanilla custard. Elsewhere in New South Wales, Verdelho grapes are grown. These are a traditional component of Madeira, but in Australia they are made into a dry wine with stone fruit and floral notes and a hint of lime.

Victoria has the highest concentration of GIs, and you likely tried a Victoria wine when tasting the Australian sticky in Lecture 8. Glenrowan and Rutherglen are the best-known regions for fortified wines. Further south, around the city of Melbourne, are several cool, maritime regions around Port Phillip Bay where Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are grown. No surprise, then, that this is where Moët & Chandon have set up their Australian sparkling wine operation. The best regions for these grapes are the Yarra Valley and the Mornington Peninsula. They have delicate body, a higher acidity, and more modest alcohol, with incredible finesse.

A short flight from Melbourne is the Australian island state of Tasmania, whose wine regions start at about 41 degrees south latitude. It experiences wind gusts called the **Roaring Forties** that hurdle through the 40–50 degrees south latitude. It is much cooler than the comparable Northern Hemisphere latitude—where we find Oporto, Portugal—and does well with the cool-climate varieties of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, and Riesling (its best-known varietal). French Champagne houses Moët and Roederer have interests here as well.

In South Australia, we find the hilly, high-altitude regions of the Eden and Clare valleys, which are the best known GIs for Australian Riesling. Aside from the classic Riesling character and New World upfront fruit, these wines are known to develop that Riesling diesel note early. They can also be quite austere. (Compare your tasting notes from this Riesling to those from Lectures 11 and 15.)

But the wine that Australia is best known for around the world is Shiraz. This signature style of the Rhône Syrah grape has enormous, jammy upfront fruit compared to its French cousin. It sometimes shows a Eucalyptus note, because the winds pick up oils from nearby Eucalyptus trees and sprinkles it on the grapes. (This type of process is likely how Rhône Syrah acquires its olive and rosemary notes, too.) Australian Shiraz sees a lot of American oak, so you will get vanilla, coconut, and sometimes dill notes. Shiraz's tannins are coarser than a Rhône Syrah's, and the Shiraz has higher alcohol as well. Now that you are familiar with both styles of this noble grape, you can make your purchasing decisions accordingly.

Barossa Valley, next to Eden Valley, is famous for its powerful Shiraz, although it is also a producer of and voluptuous Riesling and Sémillon. Their Shiraz is very deep, concentrated, and rich in raspberry fruit, with a chocolatey texture, velvety tannins, and hints of Eucalyptus. Its most famous winery is Penfolds Grange, which makes Shiraz at every price point, from entry level to bottles commanding thousands of dollars at auction. Barossa also makes the GSM—Grenache, Shiraz, and Mourvèdre blends—we mentioned in Lecture 12. Another good value region for Shiraz is McLaren Vale. Because of the proximity to the water, wine from this region will have a little less body than a similar wine from Barossa.

The Limestone Coast, so named because of its soil, has six GI regions, most notably Coonawara Cabernet Sauvignon does very well here. Like other New World Cabs, they are deep ruby, slightly opaque wines with



**Australian Shiraz can show Eucalyptus notes when these trees grow near the vines.**

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black current and other dark fruit notes. Compared to a Chilean Cab, you get Eucalyptus rather than herbaceous notes. They can be very concentrated and luscious, with warm alcohol and nice acidity.

Finally, in Western Australia we find the GIs of Swan Valley and Margaret River. The Margaret River has a stronger maritime influence than any other region in Australia. Their Shiraz is not as **hedonistic** as Barossa's and displays more black pepper notes. This region is also known for high-quality Cabernet Sauvignon. ■

### Important Terms

**Geographic Indication (GI):** Australia's regional wine designation system.

**hedonistic:** A wine that is round, big, and voluptuous in texture and flavors.

**Roaring Forties:** The dramatic winds that sweep the island of Tasmania, across the 40-degree latitudes.

### Tasting Notes

Australia is truly a world unto itself when it comes to wine, producing an amazing variety at consistently good value. This is just a small sampling of what the country has to offer.

	<b>Riesling</b>	<b>Sémillon</b>	<b>Oaked Chardonnay</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Riesling	Sémillon or Sémillon blend	Chardonnay
<b>Region or Subregion</b>	Eden Valley or Clare Valley, Australia	Hunter Valley or Barossa Valley, Australia	
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Shiraz</b>	<b>Rhône Syrah</b>	<b>Cabernet Sauvignon</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Shiraz	Syrah	Cabernet Sauvignon
<b>Region or Subregion</b>	Western Australia	Rhône Valley, France	Coonawara, Australia
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

# Wines of New Zealand and South Africa

## Lecture 22

New Zealand wines are dense and rich and concentrated, but they have something reminiscent of the Old World to them.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc
- A Sancerre
- A New Zealand Pinot Noir
- A South African Steen (also called Chenin Blanc)
- A South African Pinotage
- A South African Cabernet Sauvignon or Syrah



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**T**he cork-versus-screw cap battle continues to rage among wine lovers and wine producers. But as mentioned in Lecture 4, the difference is one of oxidation: Cork is slightly porous and allows a wine to oxidize as it ages, while a screw cap is an airtight seal. So is the wine in question meant to be aged, or is it meant to be consumed in its youth? If the latter, a screw cap, while perhaps unromantic, may be best for that wine. New Zealand producers use screw caps on about 93 percent of their wines. Not coincidentally, over three-quarters of New Zealand's production is white wine—and youthful, fruity white wine at that.

Comprised of two islands lying about 1,000 miles southeast of Australia, New Zealand has about half the population of New York City and an agricultural economy based mostly in the dairy trade. As elsewhere, missionaries were the first to plant grapevines in New Zealand, beginning in about 1819. However, *Vitis vinifera* has only been widely planted since the early 1970s.

New Zealand has a cool climate and is great for grapes for three reasons: the cool latitude, the maritime influence, and the mountain ranges that keep the eastern regions sunny and dry. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Chardonnay are grown on the warmer North Island, near Auckland. The Gisborne region on the North Island's east coast is the home of Chardonnay in particular. These wines take on tropical and stone fruit notes of pineapple, melon, and peach. This region also grows aromatic varieties such as Gewürztraminer, Chenin Blanc, and Riesling.

To the south is Hawkes Bay, which is warmer and drier than Auckland or Gisborne despite being further from the equator. This region has many microclimates and a unique, gravelly soil. In particular, the soils around Gimblett Road, in an area called **Gimblett Gravels**, are similar to Bordeaux's gravel and Châteauneuf-du-Pape's galets, retaining the day's heat to warm the vines at night. Some of the best Bordeaux blends and Syrahs come from here, and some even replicate the classic Old World minerality while still displaying New World upfront fruit.

Marlborough, at the northern tip of the South Island, is New Zealand's largest wine-producing region, with a cool but sunny climate. Unoaked Sauvignon Blancs from Marlborough are famous around the world. Ones from Martinborough, just across the Cook Strait on the North Island, produces more delicate Sauvignon Blancs, but they still show the classic New Zealand style. Compared to Sancerre, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc is more aromatic and more herbaceous, with similar fruit notes. Both are elegant, but the Sancerre shows a bit more finesse, while the New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc is rounder on the palate and higher in acidity and alcohol.

Martinborough, Marlborough, and the South Island region of Central Otago (which is the most southerly grape-growing region in the world) also produce high-quality Pinot Noir. These aromatic reds with rich, upfront, mouth-filling strawberry and cherry fruit see some oak, which adds complexities of vanilla and toast. They have soft, supple tannins, refreshing acidity, and a fairly long finish. Compared to a California version, these wines show more fresh fruit, less jammy fruit. Compared to one from Oregon, a New Zealand Pinot Noir will be a bit more delicate and crisply acidic, yet less so than a Burgundy Pinot.

South Africa's wines are remarkable for how they bridge the Old World and the New. *Vinifera* vines were first planted here by Dutch traders and settlers in the mid-1600s. A dessert Muscat from Constantia, near Cape Town, became famous in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Today, South Africa is one of the 10 top wine-producing nations in the world.

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**You will likely find that high-end South African Bordeaux blends are a great mix of both the Old World and the New.**

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The KWV cooperative was set up in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to correct overproduction, instability, and rampant grower bankruptcy. Through political connections and tax advantages, they came to oversee the entire industry. Their monopoly was broken after apartheid ended. Now a private company, KWV

is still a major player in the South African wine trade, conducting important research and advising the Wine of Origin (or WO) system.

South Africa has a maritime climate with rainy winters and a cool coast buffered by an Antarctic current. About 97 percent of the wine is produced in the Western Cape, which is used on labels as a multiregional designation. Aromatic whites such as Muscat and Sauvignon Blanc are the most-planted grapes, although Chardonnay is being planted more and more.

Chenin Blanc, originally from the Loire, is South Africa's flagship variety and is sometimes called **Steen** here. The wines range from moderately to very aromatic, with pear and tropical fruit notes—guava being the benchmark. They can show chalky minerality, which is unusual for a non-European wine. With medium body and good acidity, they are rounder and riper than their Loire counterparts, with warmer alcohol. They are made dry and sweet, still and sparkling, and may even see some oak.

About 27 miles (or 44 kilometers) inland is the Stellenbosch region, home to the Oenological and Viticultural Research Institute and University, where South Africa's flagship red, Pinotage, was created in 1925. A **cross** between Pinot Noir and Cinsault (but not really resembling either in the glass), it makes wines with deep color, moderate aromatic intensity, and notes of ripe,

dark berries and plum. Its benchmark aroma is an ashy minerality that is strongly reminiscent of an Old World wine. Pinotage has a medium to full body, bright acidity, dense tannins, and French oak notes. Although a highly polarizing, love-it-or-hate-it wine, it is undoubtedly a New World classic.

Stellenbosch is even better known for high-end Cabernet Sauvignon. The warm climate and granitic/sandstone soils are well-suited to Bordeaux varieties. The wines show strong black current notes, some bell pepper and mineral, and some woody/bramble notes, along with French oak notes (vanilla, toast, spice, and cedar). You may even get violets, reminiscent of Margaux wines. On the palate, they are full-bodied, rich, and concentrated, with gripping tannins and a chocolaty texture. They have good aging potential; younger vintages will drink better with decanting.

Syrah/Shiraz production has expanded dramatically in the past decade or so, from about 1 to 10 percent of plantings and rising. The inland regions of Worcester and Robertson produce noteworthy examples. You will see them in both the Rhône Syrah and Australian Shiraz styles. ■

### Important Terms

**cross:** A grape bred from two varieties of the *Vitis vinifera* species.

**Gimblett Gravels:** The characteristic soil of New Zealand's Hawkes Bay region.

**Steen:** South Africa's unique name for Chenin Blanc.

### Tasting Notes

The wines of New Zealand and South Africa have one thing in common: their ability to bridge the Old World and the New. From this sampling, note how upfront fruit and mineral notes combine in wines that represent the best of both Worlds.

	<b>New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc</b>	<b>Sancerre</b>	<b>New Zealand Pinot Noir</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Sauvignon Blanc	Sauvignon Blanc	Pinot Noir
<b>Region or Subregion</b>		Loire Valley, France	
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

	<b>Steen</b>	<b>Pinotage</b>	<b>South African Cabernet Sauvignon or Syrah</b>
<b>Grape</b>	Chenin Blanc	Pinotage	
<b>Region or Subregion</b>			
<b>Color</b>			
<b>Aromas</b>			
<b>Acid/Sweetness</b>			
<b>Body</b>			
<b>Finish/Length</b>			

# Becoming a Knowledgeable Wine Buyer

## Lecture 23

The people who work in wine stores, especially boutique wine stores, are passionate about wine. ... They would love to share their favorites and discuss wines with you.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- Two bottles of the same wine (preferably a Pinot Noir or something aromatic), one opened 24 hours before viewing the lecture, one opened as you start the lecture
- A copy of *Wine Spectator*, *Wine Advocate*, *Wine Enthusiast*, or *Food & Wine*
- A new favorite wine to enjoy while you watch



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In this lecture, we turn the knowledge you have gained during this course into strategies for choosing wines for yourself and others in restaurants, wine stores, grocery stores, and online. We also look at how to store wine and when to open a wine.

The likes and dislikes you discovered during this course are now your basis for buying; your next task will be narrowing the sometimes overwhelming field by using three strategies: asking for help, understanding ratings and recommendations, and setting a budget.

One of the biggest mistakes people make when choosing wines in a wine store is not asking for help. Perhaps we, as customers, feel intimidated or self-conscious, or perhaps we fear being gouged. But most of the time, people who work in wine stores—especially boutique wine stores—are passionate about wine and want you to have a great experience. These salespeople are living resources who can help you keep expanding your knowledge and make new and exciting discoveries.

Another way to build your knowledge base is to carry a small tasting notes journal, both when you are out tasting and out buying. Keeping track of regions, varieties, and vintages you liked will help you make better decisions without the benefit of tasting first. Those decisions will be even easier if you learn to dissect and analyze labels using the rules we have outlined for different regions throughout the course.

Finally, you should take advantage of free tastings and newsletters offered at wine and grocery stores.

Salespeople in grocery stores will likely be less knowledgeable than their wine-store counterparts, unless you happen to talk to the buyer. But often you will find **shelf talkers**—cards that offer tasting notes, food pairings, and ratings from major critics or magazines—to guide you.

Just how much weight should you give to critics' reviews? That depends on both the critic and your own preferences. Some critics are authorities on specific regions or varieties, and each will have his or her own set of quality parameters and give a different priority to each. It will take some reading and tasting to find a critic whose priorities match yours, but it is worth the effort. But in general terms, names that the trade generally follow include Robert Parker for Bordeaux, the magazine *Gambero Rosso* for Italian wines, and Allen Meadows—the Burghound—for Burgundy. The two magazines whose reviews you can follow with confidence are *Wine Spectator* and *Wine Enthusiast*.

Buying for someone else can be trickier, but knowledge is always the first step. Don't be afraid to ask a person about their tastes, but you can also pick up clues from their day-to-day behavior. Do they drink their coffee black? They might like a big, bold, tannic red like a Cab or Malbec. Do they load their coffee up with sugar and cream? A fruity, sweeter white might be more to their taste. What if they skip the coffee and drink iced tea with lots of lemon? Try something with bold, crisp acidity. And so forth.

Context counts, too. A bottle of bubbly is always appropriate for a celebration, whether it's Champagne or another sparkler. Or an unusual dessert wine, like

a Sauternes or Tokaji, can be an unexpected treat to mark a unique occasion.

One decision you will want to make before you enter the store is budget. Not only will it help you resist overspending, it will give you more realistic expectations of how the wine will taste. No one in a shop will be shocked or offended if you start with a price range; they want you to be satisfied with your purchase.

When you shop online, make sure that the shipping policy is clear. Many sites have very slow delivery—a week, or even many weeks. Also, beware of phantom inventory—wine deals that aren't really available so that you end up buying a different wine.

Many of these same principles apply to buying in restaurants. The sommelier's job is to help you find the perfect wine. In most cases, they have tried every wine on the restaurant's list, and they will always be happy to share their knowledge. Give them some guidelines to your tastes (or your guest's) and a price range, and they will steer you toward a good pairing.

You have probably had a waiter or sommelier bring you a bottle and pour you a tiny taste for your approval. This is *not* a second chance to decide whether or not you like the wine. The purpose is to check the wine for flaws, such as **cork taint** or too much oxidation. If the wine is flawed, it can be replaced free of charge; if you simply change your mind, you will be charged for the bottle. (If you are interested in understanding more about faults, Le Nez du Vin makes a faults kit.)



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**Wine store sales staff can help you expand your knowledge and find the perfect bottle.**

How long are you supposed to age your wines? Not all wines get better with age; in fact, most wines are intended to be consumed within the first few years after the vintage. Only a small percentage of them can last longer: classified growths and sweet wines in Bordeaux, quality wines in Burgundy, vintage Champagne, vintage Port, Madeira, and so on.

As a wine ages, it takes on different aromas. The primary fruity aromas turn into what we call secondary and tertiary aromas—dried fruit, spice notes, and finally leathery aromas. The wine's body becomes less tannic and concentrated and becomes more silky and lighter in body. If you know you like your wines fruity and rich, then choose wines from a more youthful vintage and drink them young. A wine is said to be past its peak when there aren't any flavors left to balance the wine's acid, tannin, and alcohol.

To properly age wines, you need to store them at the proper temperature and humidity, either in your refrigerator or, if you're keeping them a long time, a special storage unit. Once a bottle is open, you must put it in the refrigerator and drink it within a few days. If you prepared ahead for this lecture and left a bottle open overnight, open the second bottle now and compare the two wines. You should be able to taste the difference. ■

### Important Terms

**cork taint:** An unpleasant, musty aroma in wine caused by trichloroanisole, or TCA, infection.

**shelf talker:** The cards on a store's wine display that offer tasting notes, ratings, and so forth for that wine.

## Tasting Notes

How did 24 hours of oxidation affect your wine?

	Freshly Opened	One Day Later
Grape		
Region		
Color		
Aromas		
Acid/Sweetness		
Body		
Finish/Length		
Other Notes		

# Wine for Any Occasion and Any Food

## Lecture 24

It was a food pairing that stirred my passion for wine, and understanding pairings can help bring your enjoyment of both food and wine to new heights.

### WINES FOR THIS LECTURE:

- A Champagne
- A Pinot Noir
- A Cabernet Sauvignon
- A ruby Port

### FOODS FOR THIS LECTURE:

- Sliced roasted chicken from the deli or homemade roasted chicken
- Sliced roast beef from the deli or prepared filet mignon
- French fries or potato chips
- Spicy barbecue sauce
- Salted almonds
- Chocolate



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**Y**ou now know how your palate works, how to properly taste wine, how to identify varieties and regions in the glass, how to predict what others may like, and how to make good buying decisions. In this lecture, you will learn the basics of how to pair wine and food for the better enjoyment of both.

Food and wine pairing is not easy, and the only road to expertise is experience. You may spend a lifetime trying and never quite master pairing, but the upside is that every gap in your knowledge is a new experience waiting to happen.

The two main actions in food and wine pairing are complementing and contrasting, and you complement and contrast the three things food and wine have in common—weight, texture, and flavors.

Both food and wine have weight (in wine, we call it body). You want to match, or complement, the weight of the food with the weight of the wine. For example, most seafood is delicate, most red meats are heavy, and most white meats fall somewhere in between. Roast chicken will overwhelm a Champagne, but it will be overwhelmed by a Cabernet Sauvignon. Match body with body.

Texture, on the other hand, can be complemented or contrasted. Cabernet Sauvignon is the classic pairing for red meat because they complement each other in texture—both are rich and full bodied. By contrast, a Pinot Noir would be too light, and the meat would make the wine taste dilute. The rule “red wine with red meat” is an oversimplification; the texture of the wine is important.

However, remember the herb-crusted salmon and Sancerre that I told you started my journey into the wine industry? That is an example of contrasting textures. Salmon is a fatty, weighty fish, and Sancerre is a delicate Sauvignon Blanc. They don’t match in texture, but the contrast between oil and acid enhances the experience of both.

Believe it or not, this same contrast makes Champagne the perfect partner for French fries or potato chips. The acid in the wine cuts through the oil from the potatoes, and the starch of the potatoes draws your attention to the autolytic character of the Champagne.

But what if you have, say, delicate fish served in a fatty cream sauce? Then you will have to choose: Do you want the cleansing sensation and sweetness enhancement from a high-acid white like a Sauvignon Blanc, or do you want

to bring out the texture and flavors of the cream with, say, an oaked, lees-stirred Chardonnay? Both will work beautifully.

Oaked Chardonnay and cream sauce is a classic example of complementing flavors. In particular, Chardonnay that has gone through malolactic fermentation will match, say, an Alfredo sauce in buttery, creamy notes. Oaked wines in general also match smoked foods; try, for example, an American-oaked Shiraz from Australia with a richly smoked holiday ham.

There are a number of classic dishes worldwide that pair meat with fruit, such as turkey and cranberry, pork chops and apple sauce, and lamb and mint jelly, just to name some Western examples. Think about the fruit notes in a particular grape variety and the sort of meat you might pair with it: The red-berry flavors of Pinot Noir, for instance, work with poultry and pork. So much for “white wine with white meat”!



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**Steak works best with a high-tannin wine like a Cab.**

Keep in mind when complementing flavors that they should also match in intensity; a Barossa Shiraz might work well with pork in theory because of those red fruit notes, but the intensity of the flavors in the wine would overpower the chicken or pork and leave you with tasting just the fruit.

You can contrast flavors as well, such as pairing fruit and spice. Try to imagine what sort of wine would go with a spicy curry or Szechuan dish. You could try a powerful Syrah, such as an Hermitage, or a California Zinfandel, but the spice (and the accompanying salt) will focus your palate entirely on the alcohol, and the fruit goes away. Heat enhances heat. You need to think even bigger: Try an off-dry Riesling or Alsatian Gewürztraminer.

When it comes to bad pairings, there are bad pairings, and then there are *bad* pairings, some of which, unfortunately, are all too common. Take the classic

Valentine's Day combination of Champagne and chocolate—you probably couldn't make a worse match if you tried! Taste your Champagne and think about delicate body, high acidity, fine bubbles, and complexity. Now taste your chocolate—weighty, rich, and buttery. Now taste the Champagne again. What happened? The bodies don't match, and the flavors match a little too well—the sugar in the chocolate overwhelms the Champagne and makes it sour.

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**You've heard of the good, the bad, and the ugly ... well, some bad pairings are ugly.**

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A better choice with chocolate, especially dark chocolate, is ruby Port. The slight bitterness of the chocolate is offset by the sweetness of the Port. The rich, concentrated, dark fruit in the Port is a wonderful match for the chocolate's flavors, and the Port's high alcohol is mellowed by the chocolate's sweetness, so the flavors linger and dance on your tongue. Next Valentine's Day (or other romantic occasion), save the Champagne for some oysters, and match the chocolate with ruby Port.

Acidic foods can be the hardest to pair, thanks to most wines' high acidity. Even in restaurants with pairing menus, you won't find wine suggestions for your salad, thanks to the vinegar and citrus flavors so common in dressings. A fruitier vinaigrette that is higher in oil can balance the acids and lessen your perception of them. This is also the concept behind pairing bold Tuscan reds, like Sangiovese, with tomato sauces. The acids, weight, texture, and flavors balance each other out.

The combination of salt and spice in a food can intensify the perception of alcohol and knock out fruit flavors. But salt alone can actually enhance them. Try some salted almonds with the Cab; you will likely find the tannins too intense. But try it with something fruitier, like a Gamay or Beaujolais, and the fruit will pop out. Salty cheese and sweet wines is another pairing of the same type.

We could keep going—and going, and going—but these basics will get you started. The next time you have guests for dinner or for a wine tasting, try some of these pairing tips. ■

## Tasting Notes

How did the pairings suggested in this lecture work for you? Remember, everyone's palate is unique; you may find you prefer something a little different from what was mentioned here. But the best way to learn is to try it all.

### Champagne

- With chicken? \_\_\_\_\_
- With French fries or potato chips? \_\_\_\_\_
- With chocolate? \_\_\_\_\_

### Pinot Noir

- With red meat? \_\_\_\_\_
- With white meat? \_\_\_\_\_

### Cabernet Sauvignon

- With red meat? \_\_\_\_\_
- With white meat? \_\_\_\_\_
- With barbecue sauce? \_\_\_\_\_
- With salted almonds? \_\_\_\_\_

### Ruby Port

With chocolate? \_\_\_\_\_

## Wines Used in This Course

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The following wines were tasted by Ms. Simonetti-Bryan during the lectures in *The Everyday Guide to Wine*. This is provided for information only, not as a shopping list. These specific wines may or may not be available in your area, so you should start with the more generic list provided with each lecture guide when making buying decisions.

### **Lecture 3: Winemaking—From Vineyard to Harvest**

- Domaine L. Chatelain Chablis, Burgundy, France
- Jacob's Creek Reserve Chardonnay, Barossa Valley, Australia

### **Lecture 4: Winemaking—From Harvest to Bottle**

- St. Supéry Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley, California
- Robert Mondavi Fumé Blanc, Napa Valley, California
- Campo Viejo Reserva Rioja, Spain
- Valserrano Gran Reserva Rioja, Spain

### **Lecture 5: The Whites—Riesling to Chardonnay**

- Dr. Loosen Erdener Treppchen Spätlese Riesling, Mosel, Germany
- Jacob's Creek Reserve Riesling, Barossa Valley, Australia
- Domaine des Grandes Perrières Sancerre, Loire Valley, France
- Brancott Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand
- Domaine L. Chatelain Chablis, Burgundy, France
- De Martino Legado Reserva Chardonnay, Chile

### **Lecture 6: The Reds—Pinot Noir to Cabernet**

- Brancott Pinot Noir, New Zealand

- Cave de Tain Crozes-Hermitage, Rhône Valley, France
- Château Bellevue Bordeaux, France
- De Martino Legado Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon, Chile

**Blind Tasting White:**

- Brancott Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand

**Blind Tasting Red:**

- Frog's Leap Merlot, Rutherford, Napa Valley, California

**Lecture 7: Champagne and Other Sparkling Wines**

- Piper-Heidsieck NV Brut Champagne, France
- Perrier-Jouët 2000 Brut Fleur de Champagne, France
- Freixenet NV Cordon Negro Brut Cava, Spain
- Santi Nello NV Prosecco di Valdobbiadene, Italy
- Villa Lanata 2008 Moscato d'Asti, Italy
- Pearly Bay NV Celebration White Sparkling Wine, South Africa
- Piper Sonoma NV Brut, Sonoma Valley, California
- Banfi Rosa Regale NV Brachetto d'Acqui, Italy

**Lecture 8: Port, Sherry, and Other Fortified Wines**

- Sandeman Founders Reserve Ruby Porto
- Sandeman 10-Year-Old Tawny Port
- Sandeman Don Fino Sherry
- Lustau Dry Amontillado Los Arcos Sherry
- Osborne Sweet Oloroso Cream Sherry
- Broadbent Rainwater Medium Dry Madeira
- Campbells Rutherglen Muscat, Australia

## **Lecture 9: What to Drink with Dessert**

- Disznókő 5 Puttonyos Tokaji Aszú, Hungary
- Kracher Eiswein, Austria
- Bellini Vin Santo del Chianti, Italy
- Château Suduiraut Sauternes, Bordeaux, France
- Feudo dei Severino Moscato Passito al Governo di Saracena, Italy

## **Lecture 10: French Regions—Bordeaux and Loire**

- Domaine Toussaint Vouvray
- Domaine des Grandes Perrières Sancerre
- Domaine de la Semellerie Chinon
- Château Oliver Pessac-Léognan Grand Cru Classé de Graves
- Château Pichon-Longueville-Baron Pauillac
- Château Trotte Vielle Premier Grand Cru Classé Saint-Émilion

## **Lecture 11: French Regions—Burgundy and Alsace**

- Domaine L. Chatelain Chablis
- Louis Jadot Clos de la Roche Grand Cru
- Louis Jadot Pinot Noir Bourgogne
- Louis Jadot Beaune Premier Cru
- Louis Jadot Chambertin-Clos-de-Bèze Grand Cru
- Patrick Javillier Mersault Les Tillets
- Domaine Marcel Deiss Gewürztraminer
- Domaine Marcel Deiss Pinot Gris
- Georges Dubœuf Juliéna Cru du Beaujolais

**Lecture 12: French Regions—Rhône, Languedoc, Provence**

- Domaine Barville Châteauneuf-du-Pape
- Clos Saint Michel Châteauneuf-du-Pape
- La Gravelière Tête de Cuvée Côtes du Rhône
- Cave de Tain Hermitage
- Château de Ségriès Tavel
- Domaine Fontanyl Côtes de Provence Rosé
- Mas Belles Eaux Les Coteaux Languedoc

**Lecture 13: Wines of Northern Italy**

- Vietti Castiglione Barolo
- Vietti Tre Vigne Barbera d’Asti
- Tenuta La Marchesa Saula Gavi
- Pighin Pinot Grigio Grave del Friuli
- Barone Fini Merlot
- Ca’ Rugate Soave Classico San Michele
- Masi Costasera Amarone Classico

**Blind Tasting White:**

- Patrick Javillier Mersault Les Tillets

**Blind Tasting Red:**

- Quinta do Noval 2007 Vintage Porto

**Lecture 14: Wines of Southern Italy**

- Barone Ricasoli Castello di Brolio Chianti Classico
- Tenuto San Guido Sassicaia

- I Nobili del Vesuvio Lacryma Christi
- Tormaresca Bocca di Lupo Aglianico
- Tormaresca Torcicoda Primitivo
- Kailá Nero d'Avola

## **Lecture 15: The Tastes of Germany and Austria**

### **Germany**

- Hans Schiller Liebfraumilch, Rheinhessen
- Eifel-Pfeiffer Trittenheimer Apotheke Spätlese Riesling, Mosel
- Gerd Anselmann Dornfelder, Pfalz

### **Austria**

- Anton Bauer Trocken Riesling, Berg
- Winzer Krems Sandgrube 13 Wachauer Von den Terrassen Grüner Veltliner, Wachau
- Winzer Krems Sandgrube 13 Kellermeister Privat Trocken Kremser Zweigelt, Kremstal

## **Lecture 16: The Tastes of Spain and Portugal**

### **Spain**

- Don Oleganio Albariño Rías Baixas
- Ramón Bilbao Crianza Rioja
- Ramón Bilbao Gran Reserva Rioja
- Mas Perinet Priorat
- Panarroz Jumilla
- Basa Blanco Rueda

## Portugal

- M2 de Matallana Ribera del Duero
- Cedro do Noval Vinho Regional Duriense

## Lecture 17: U.S. Regions—California

- Frog’s Leap Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley
- Château Lynch-Moussas Pauillac AC Grand Cru Classé, Bordeaux, France
- Sequoia Grove Chardonnay, Carneros
- Cakebread Cellars Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley
- Frei Brothers Reserve Merlot, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma Valley
- BearBoat Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma Valley
- St. Francis Pagani Vineyard Old Vines Zinfandel, Sonoma Valley

## Lecture 18: U.S. Regions—Washington and Oregon

- Olsen Family Vineyards Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon
- Barone Fini Pinot Grigio, Valdadige, Italy
- Belle Vallée Cellars Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon
- Betz Family Vineyard La Serenne Syrah, Columbia Valley, Washington
- Apex II Merlot, Columbia Valley, Washington
- St. Francis Merlot, Sonoma Valley, California
- Covey Run Gewürztraminer, Columbia Valley, Washington

## Lecture 19: Other U.S. Regions, Mexico, and Canada

- Channing Daughters L’Enfant Sauvage Chardonnay, The Hamptons, Long Island, New York

- Linden Vineyards Hardscrabble Red, Northern Virginia
- Chrysalis Norton, Northern Virginia
- Becker Vineyards Syrah, Hill Country, Texas
- Ste. Chapelle Riesling, Columbia Valley, Idaho
- Prairie Berry Red Ass Rhubarb, South Dakota
- Inniskillin Vidal Gold Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Canada

## **Lecture 20: Sampling Argentina and Chile**

### **Chile**

- De Martino 347 Vineyards Reserva Sauvignon Blanc
- Michel Redde Sancerre
- De Martino Alto de Piedra Single-Vineyard Carmenère
- De Martino Legado Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon

### **Argentina**

- Fabre Montmayou Phebus Torontés
- Graffinga Centenano Reserve Malbec

## **Lecture 21: The Best of Australia and Tasmania**

- Thorn-Clarke Terra Barossa Single-Vineyard Riesling, Eden Valley
- Tyrell's Wines Sémillon, Hunter Valley
- Thorn-Clarke Terra Barossa Single-Vineyard Chardonnay, Eden Valley
- Jacob's Creek Centenary Hill Shiraz, Barossa Valley
- Cave de Tain Crozes-Hermitage, Rhône Valley, France
- Jacob's Creek St. Hugo Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra

## **Lecture 22: Wines of New Zealand and South Africa**

### **New Zealand**

- Craggy Range Single-Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, Martinborough
- Craggy Range Single-Vineyard Pinot Noir, Martinborough

### **South Africa**

- KWV Steen
- KWV Pinotage
- Spier Private Collection Cabernet Sauvignon

### **France**

- Michel Redde Sancerre, Loire Valley

## **Lecture 23: Becoming a Knowledgeable Wine Buyer**

- BearBoat Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma, California
- Baltos Dominio de Tares Mencía, Bierzo, Spain

## **Lecture 24: Wine for Any Occasion and Any Food**

- Tattinger NV Brut, Champagne, France
- BearBoat Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma, California
- Louis M. Martini Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, California
- Noval Black Porto, Douro Valley, Portugal

## Glossary

**acidity:** The level of acid in a wine, which is perceived as sourness. High-acid wines might be described as bright, crisp, racy, or austere; low-acid wines are sometimes called blousy. Early-harvest grapes have more acidity than late-harvest grapes.

**American Viticultural Area (AVA):** A geographically, climatologically determined U.S. wine-growing region. It is the only legal classification system for U.S. wines.

**ampelography:** The study and practice of grape vine identification and classification.

**anosmia:** An inability to smell. A person may have an anosmia to a specific scent or category of scents or may have general anosmia.

**anthocyanin:** The pigment that gives red wine its color, which is found in the skin of the grape. The thicker the grape's skin, the more color and opacity it delivers to a wine. Anthocyanins are vulnerable to acid and oxygen, so the grapes' acid and the age of the wine also affect its color. In very old wines, anthocyanins can clump and precipitate out of the wine as sediment.

**appassimento:** A technique of drying grapes on bamboo mats. The curvature of the bamboo allows the juice of burst or rotten grapes to siphon off, protecting the rest from damage. This is used in particular for Italy's Amarone wines.

**Appellation Contrôlée (AC):** The French system of classifying wine by region; sometimes called Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (where "d'Origine" can be replaced by the region name on a label, i.e., "Appellation Chablis Contrôlée"). This was one of the first (and is the prototypical) modern wine-classification systems in the world.

**aromatics:** The formal term for the scents you perceive in a wine.

**autolysis:** The breakdown of dead yeast inside a bottle of sparkling wine, which lends the wine toast and/or biscuit aromas (described as autolytic character in tasting notes). It is the result of extended lees contact and becomes more noticeable the longer the lees contact during its second fermentation.

**balance:** The harmonious—or not-so-harmonious—interaction of a wine’s fruit, acid, tannin, and alcohol. Good balance is one of the markers of quality.

**barrique:** An oak barrel with a 225-liter capacity. *See also tonneau.*

**bâtonnage:** *See lees stirring.*

**berry:** The winemaker’s term for an individual grape.

**black frost:** A late-winter frost so severe that it freezes the vine buds and turns new shoots to powder. A severe frost can destroy an entire vintage.

**Blanc des Blancs:** A Champagne or sparkling wine made exclusively from light-skinned grapes. For true Champagne, this almost always means Chardonnay.

**blind test:** A format for wine tasting where the tasters have no information about the wines other than what they can determine with their senses.

**bodega:** The Spanish term for wine producer or wine cellar.

**botrytis:** *See Botrytis cinerea.*

**Botrytis cinerea:** The noble rot fungus, which concentrates sugars inside a grape. It typically infects thin-skinned varieties grown in cool, wet climates (such as German Riesling), especially in a late harvest. Wines made from botrytized grapes are said to have a botrytic note—an aroma or flavor of honey, apricot, and/or almonds.

**botrytized:** *See Botrytis cinerea.*

**bouquet:** *See nose.*

**bramble:** A woody or earthy note found in wine.

**Brett:** A note of earthiness or plastic/Band-Aid aroma caused by contact with *Brettanomyces* yeast in barrels or other wood in the winery.

**Brix:** The unit of measure for the amount of dissolved sugar within a grape, developed by German engineer Adolf Ferdinand Wenceslaus Brix. It is measured by refractometer and used to determine ripeness. The Brix scale is mostly used in the United States; other regions use the Baumé or Oechsle scale.

**broad:** A wine that is both intense in aroma and full in body.

**brut:** The driest level of a sparkling wine. A “brut nature” wine has not received any sweetening dosage and has less than three grams of sugar per liter. Extra brut and brut may have received dosage but still taste extremely dry.

**cassis:** Black currant, a common note in Cabernet Sauvignon.

**chaptalization:** The addition extra sugar to must before fermentation to increase the alcohol content of the final product. Although common in Germany, wines of the highest German designation, QmP, may not employ chaptalization.

**Charmat method:** *See tank method.*

**Claret:** The traditional British term for red Bordeaux wines.

**Classico:** An Italian DOC or DOCG wine that has been produced in the area of the style’s origin. The term is actually older than the DOC laws and was first used in the original Chianti region.

**classification:** A system of organizing wines by region and/or quality. Although various regions have classified vineyards since the Renaissance, Bordeaux's 1855 classification was the first modern variation and has been the model for all others worldwide. In France, for example, the quality classification system is the Appellation Contrôlée; in Italy, it is the Denominazione di Origine Controllata; and most European nations have a system similar in name. Most New World nations classify by region only.

**climat:** A French term for a specific vineyard designation that is not a legal cru or appellation.

**clonal selection:** A vine variety propagated by cuttings from a specific plant. *See also* **mass selection**.

**cloying:** In wine tasting, a syrupy, clinging texture.

**coarse:** The roughness of a wine. *See also* **finesse**.

**complexity:** The number of different aromas and flavors in a wine. Generally speaking, wines with greater complexity are of better quality.

**continental:** A land-locked growing region that is typically cooler and drier, and has greater seasonal temperature extremes than a region at the same latitude near a large body of water. *See also* **maritime**.

**cork taint:** An unpleasant, musty aroma in wine caused by trichloroanisole, or TCA, infection.

**cross:** A grape bred from two varieties of the *Vitis vinifera* species, such as Pinot Noir and Cinsault as the parents of Pinotage. *See also* **hybrid**.

**cru:** Literally, “growth”; a level within a French wine-classification system, especially Bordeaux or Burgundy. It can also refer generically to a vineyard.

**cuvée:** In the process of making sparkling wine, the blend of *vins clairs* that is then bottled (in the traditional method) or placed in stainless steel tanks (in the tank method) for the second fermentation. (In other, less-controlled contexts, *cuvée* can refer to a particular lot from a vintage or a particular blend of wines.)

**decant:** To pour a wine into a wide-mouthed glass container before serving to increase its exposure to oxygen.

**Denominação de Origem Controlada (DOC):** The Portuguese regional classification system for wine, comparable to France's Appellation Contrôlée.

**Denominación de Origen (DO):** The Spanish regional classification system for wine, comparable to France's Appellation Contrôlée.

**Denominación de Origen Calificada (DOC):** The highest level of Spain's DO classification system. *See* **Denominación de Origen**.

**Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC):** The Italian regional classification system for wine, comparable to France's Appellation Contrôlée.

**Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG):** The highest level of Italy's DOC classification system. *See* **Denominazione di Origine Controllata**.

**diacetyl:** The chemical responsible for a creamy or buttery note in a wine. *See also* **malolactic fermentation**.

**disgorgement:** The removal of the plug of yeast precipitates from the neck of a bottle of Champagne or sparkling wine. *See also* **riddling**.

**diurnal temperature variation:** The difference between average day and nighttime temperature; an important aspect of terroir.

**domaine:** In Burgundy, a vineyard; on a label, this word is an indication that the producer grows its own grapes.

**en primeur:** An annual barrel tasting and auction of a single vintage of wine—in other words, a futures market. *En primeur* is particularly important in the Bordeaux trade.

**estufagem:** The practice of storing barreled Madeira in heated rooms for aging, replicating the heat the barrels experienced on sea voyages to the tropics. The best-quality Madeiras are heat-aged for a minimum of three months.

**feminine:** Refers to a wine with a softer tannic structure.

**fermentation:** The conversion of sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide by yeast:  $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11} + \text{yeast} = C_2H_5OH + CO_2$ . If some carbon dioxide is trapped when the wine is bottled, the wine will be fizzy or sparkling.

**finesse:** The smoothness of a wine; the opposite of coarse. It is one of the markers of quality. The concept of a wine's finesse is subtle and nebulous and is among the harder characteristics for a beginning taster to master.

**fining:** A process of filtering must or wine by adding a chemically “sticky” substance (traditionally, egg whites) that traps and removes particulates.

**finish:** The final impression a wine leaves in the mouth after the swallow; sometimes used interchangeably with length. An appropriate finish is one of the markers of quality.

**flor:** A yeast that forms a film over a fermenting Fino Sherry. Flor adds aromas to the wine and protects it from oxidation.

**flying winemakers:** A group of Australian winemakers who brought new techniques to the Old World in the late 1980s–early 1990s.

**fortified:** A wine that has been microbially stabilized by the addition of grape-based spirits. Invented by the Spanish as a method of preserving wine on long sea voyages, the technique was soon adopted by the Portuguese. Sherry (from Spain) and Port (from Portugal) are the best-known fortified wines, but they are made all over the world.

**foxy:** An aroma found in most (though not all) wines made from non-*vinifera* grapes, especially North American *Vitis labrusca*; it literally resembles animal fur.

**French paradox:** The hypothesis that red wine consumption decreases the incidence of cardiac disease. The idea was popularized in the United States by a segment on *60 Minutes*.

**frizzante:** The Italian term for a slightly sparkling wine.

**full bodied:** A wine that feels full or thick in the mouth. Full-bodied wines usually have greater alcoholic strength.

**funneling:** Using the process of elimination during a blind tasting to determine a wine's variety and region from its characteristics.

**galet:** The large, rounded stones found in the soil in the Châteauneuf-du-Pape region that retain heat very well and reflect that heat onto the low-trained vines during the day and the night.

**garagiste:** A French term for a microwinery—literally, a person who makes wine in the garage.

**garrigues:** The herb fields of the Rhône Valley that are said to give their wines herbal aromas.

**Geographic Indication (GI):** Australia's regional wine designation system.

**Gimblett Gravels:** The characteristic soil of New Zealand's Hawkes Bay region, similar to the gravel of Bordeaux and the galets of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, which may account for the Old World-type minerality sometimes found in New Zealand's wines.

**GSM:** The wine-trade term for a blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvèdre.

**halbtrocken:** Literally, "half dry," the German/Austrian term for an off-dry or slightly sweet wine.

**hedonistic:** A wine that is round, big, and voluptuous in texture and flavors.

**hybrid:** A grape bred from combining *Vitis vinifera* with another *Vitis* species, such as *Vitis aestivalis* (the North American Norton grape). *See also* **cross**.

**hypertaster:** A person who has a particularly acute sense of taste. Such people often prefer sweeter, milder flavors.

**Icewine:** The legal Canadian term for an ice wine.

**Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT):** The middle level of Italy's DOC system. *See* **Denominazione di Origine Controllata**.

**indigenous yeast:** *See* **wild yeast**.

**joven:** The Spanish term for a young wine.

**Kimmeridgian chalk:** The soil of northern Burgundy that lends mineral character to its wines.

**lactones:** The chemicals in oak responsible for a coconut-like flavor in a wine.

**lagar** (pl. *lagares*): The Portuguese term for a large stone trough in which grapes are stomped. This traditional winemaking method is believed to lead to higher-quality wines because the sensitive human foot can sense extraneous stems, stones, and other matter, and the stomper can remove it before the must reaches the tank.

**lees**: The dead yeast cells and other compounds found at the bottom of a fermentation tank. If left in contact with the wine for long, they can add autolytic notes to the wine.

**lees stirring**: Deliberate agitation of the lees. The process can add complexity and creamy texture to a wine, and it reduces wine-oak contact, reducing in turn the extraction of tannins from the oak. Called *bâtonnage* in French.

**legs**: *See tears.*

**length**: How long the flavors of a wine linger after the wine is swallowed. Long length is one of the markers of quality.

**light bodied**: A wine that feels light or thin in the mouth. Light-bodied wines are generally less alcoholic.

**malic acid**: An acid sometimes found in wine; it has a flavor reminiscent of Granny Smith apples. Warmer climates produce grapes with less malic acid. A winemaker can also reduce this acid deliberately by incorporating malolactic fermentation into the winemaking process.

**malolactic fermentation**: The conversion of malic acid to lactic acid via *Lactobacillus* bacteria. This converts the apple-like flavors in a wine to buttery or creamy ones. The chemical responsible for the flavor is diacetyl.

**maritime**: A wine-growing climate near a body of water of sufficient size to moderate the annual temperature extremes of the region. The water is often an ocean or sea, but a sufficiently large river (as in many of France's wine-growing regions) can have a similar effect. *See also* **continental**.

**masculine:** Refers to a wine with a more gripping tannic structure.

**mass selection:** A propagation of the qualities of an entire field or vineyard from a large selection of cuttings. *See also* **clonal selection**.

**Master of Wine (M.W.):** Qualification conferred by the Institute of Masters of Wine, a London-based professional organization promoting cross-disciplinary wine trade education. It is the highest non-degree qualification in the wine world.

**merle:** The French word for blackbird and origin of the name Merlot.

**methode champenoise:** *See* **traditional method**.

**methoxypyrazine:** The chemical compound that gives wine a grassy, herbal, or vegetable aroma.

**microclimate:** The particular combination of weather conditions in an extremely tiny region, possibly as small as a section of a row of a vineyard.

**mineral:** A wine aromatic that is reminiscent of flint, metal, ash, or the scent of earth after a spring rain. It is a typical note in Old World wines but rare in wines made elsewhere.

**Mission grape:** A black grape variety imported to North America by Spanish missionaries for making sacramental wine.

**mousse:** The French term for the bubbles in a sparkling wine.

**must:** The unfiltered liquid that is the product of crushing grapes. It contains juice, skins, stems, seeds, and so forth and will be filtered later in the fermentation process.

**muted:** A wine that is low in aromatics; also called neutral.

***négociant-manipulant* (NM)**: A Champagne house that makes wine but does not grow grapes itself. It is not an indicator of quality, only of method. *See also récoltant-manipulant.*

**neutral**: *See muted.*

**noble grape varieties**: The seven most prolific and adaptable varieties of wine grape in the world, including Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah/Shiraz.

**noble rot**: *See Botrytis cinerea.*

**nontaster**: A person with a muted sense of taste. Such people often like flavors of heat, spice, sourness, and bitterness.

**nonvintage (NV)**: A wine produced from grapes harvested over several years. This is most often found in sparkling wine and fortified wine production.

**nose**: The aromas perceived in a particular wine; also called bouquet.

**NV**: *See nonvintage.*

**off dry**: A wine with between 0.6 and 1.4 percent residual sugar—that is, fermentation is stopped before all of the sugar in the must is consumed. They are very slightly sweet.

**oxidation**: The chemical reaction between wine and air that can activate a wine's aromatics and alter its color but can also damage or degrade a wine. The purpose of decanting a wine and of swirling a wine glass is to improve oxidation in the short term. This is also one of the effects of aging in oak, which is a slightly porous material. Wines can also become oxidized through porous corks, leading some producers of wines meant to be drunk young (such as a Sauvignon Blanc or a Beaujolais Nouveau) to switch to bottles with screw caps.

**palate:** In wine tasting, the combined sensory experience of taste, smell, and texture of a wine in the drinker's mouth. Terms like "middle palate" refer to where in the mouth a particular texture or flavor is experienced.

**palate fatigue:** A condition where, after tasting too many different wines, they all begin to taste the same. It can be remedied with palate-cleansing water or foods (such as plain white bread) and/or by taking a short break from tasting.

**Passito:** The Italian term for dried grape wine.

**perfume:** Any floral aroma found in a wine.

**phenolic:** A bitter flavor in wine. *See* **polyphenols**.

**Phylloxera:** The North American root louse that devastated European grapevines in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It destroys *Vitis vinifera* rootstock indirectly by giving opportunistic fungal and microbial disease to infect weakened roots. Many *Vitis* species in eastern North America were resistant to these infections, so the European vineyards were eventually salvaged by planting non-*vinifera* roots and grafting traditional European *vinifera* cuttings onto them.

**pip:** The winemaker's name for a grape seed.

**pipe:** A Portuguese wine cask capable of holding about 550 liters of wine.

**polyphenols:** A category of chemical compounds found in wine that includes tannins and other flavors, as well as resveratrol, which may contribute to the health benefits seen in the French paradox.

**porrón:** A Spanish-style decanter with a spout. The spout allows multiple drinkers to drink straight from the decanter without their lips or teeth touching it.

**puttonyos**: The unit of measure of sweetness in Tokaji, based on the ratio of dried to fresh grapes.

**Qualitätswein**: The highest quality designation of German wine, usually indicated on labels with the abbreviation QbA or QmP.

**quality**: An objective parameter that is independent of a taster's preference. *See* **balance**, **complexity**, **finesse**, **length**, and **finish**.

***Quercus suber***: The scientific name for the Portuguese cork oak.

**quinta**: Portuguese for “farm,” especially a vineyard.

**raisinated**: Grapes dried or partially dried on the vine, which usually produce sweet, intense wines.

***récoltant-manipulant (RM)***: A Champagne house that makes wine from grapes they grow themselves. It is not an indicator of quality, only of method. *See also* ***négociant-manipulant***.

**refractometer**: An instrument for measuring the ripeness of grapes still on the vine. It measures how much the sunlight passing through a grape is refracted, or bent, as an indicator of the amount of dissolved sugar in the pulp.

**region**: In winemaking, a commonly recognized (and sometimes legally defined) geographical area, generally believed to affect the character of the grapes grown there. *See also* **terroir**.

**Reserve** (a.k.a. **Réserve**, **Reserva**, and **Riserva**): A bottling designation that had different meanings in different regions. In the United States, it has no legal significance and can mean anything from an experimental blend or technique to a small quantity to a marketing flourish. In other regions, particularly in Europe, it may have a legal definition to do with winemaking technique, aging in bottle or barrel, or nonvintage blending.

**residual sugar:** The amount of sugar in a wine that is left unfermented. A typical dry wine contains less than 0.2 grams/liter (2 percent) residual sugar; by comparison, Port wine, in which the winemaker deliberately stops fermentation (*see* **fortified**), contains 10 percent residual sugar. Residual sugar is different from sugars added after fermentation is complete (*see* **dosage**).

**resveratrol:** The polyphenol compound believed to be responsible for the French paradox by reducing high cholesterol and other harmful blood lipids. It is found in different levels in different grape varieties—there is more in Pinot Noir than in Cabernet Sauvignon, for example—and more in cool-climate wines than in warm-climate ones. Raisins and grape juice are also resveratrol sources.

**Rhône Rangers:** A group of California winemakers who experiment with Rhône-style Syrah wines.

**riddling:** The process of precipitating yeast out of Champagne or sparkling wine by placing bottles neck-down in a tilted rack and turning them until the precipitates gather in the neck. *See* **disgorgement**.

**Roaring Forties:** The dramatic winds that sweep the island of Tasmania across the 40-degree latitudes.

**rootstock:** The root and stalk, or woody section, of a grapevine to which cuttings are grafted. The variety of grape is determined by the grafted cuttings, not by the root variety or species.

**Sauvignonasse (or Sauvignon Vert):** A white grape variety often mistaken for Sauvignon Blanc.

**schist:** A crystalline metamorphic rock that comprises much of the soil of the Douro Valley, where Port grapes are grown, and a handful of other small European regions. It absorbs heat and reflects sunlight very well, aiding in ripening the grapes.

**sediment:** A precipitate of grape-skin particles, dead yeast, tannic compounds, and so forth that forms particularly in older wines. It is more common in red wines and is particularly significant in vintage Port, because many of these compounds are vital to the aging process and are left in deliberately by the winemaker. Wines meant to be drunk young are often filtered and do not create sediment.

**shelf talker:** The cards on a store's wine display that offer tasting notes, ratings, and so forth for that wine.

**solera:** The system of blending nonvintage fortified wines (such as Sherry and Port) to produce year-on-year consistency.

**sommelier:** A French term for a waiter who specializes in wine and food-and-wine pairing; also called a wine steward. It is not a formal qualification but a position title.

**spumante:** The Italian term for a fully sparkling wine.

**Steen:** South Africa's unique name for Chenin Blanc.

**sticky** (a.k.a. **stickie**): A very sweet Australian dessert wine.

**structure:** The balance of tannin, alcohol, and acid in a wine. Wines with strong structures can age the longest.

**Super Tuscan:** A high-quality Italian wine made from French, especially Bordeaux, grape varieties. It is an IGT-level wine by Italian law but is of outstanding quality and can be shockingly high priced. The prototype Super Tuscan was Sassicaia, first released in the mid-1970s.

**sur lie:** The French term for a wine aged on the lees.

**Süssreserve:** The German/Austrian term for adding juice to a wine after fermentation. *See also* **dosage**.

**tank method** (a.k.a. **Charmat method**): A sparkling wine-making technique that includes second fermentation in stainless steel tanks, rather than bottles. *See also* **traditional method**.

**tannin**: One of the polyphenols found in wine, it is responsible for the impression of bitterness and a velvety or drying texture on the palate. Tannins are mostly found in grape skins and stems, and thus red wines are usually more tannic than whites.

**tartaric acid**: The primary acid in wine grapes. It will sometimes precipitate out of a wine as tiny white crystals.

**tears**: The streaks that form inside a wine glass when the wine is swirled. Often mistaken for a mark of a wine's quality, strong legs are actually a mark of high alcohol.

**terroir**: Perhaps the most controversial term in winemaking, referring to the combination of local factors where the grapes are grown—climate, topology, soil content, water content, nearby vegetation, and so forth—and their perceived impact on the taste of a wine. While the effect of climate on grapes is indisputable, the impact of other factors is heavily debated. Nonetheless, it is the basis of the near-universal use of regional classification systems for wine.

**thin**: A wine that is both muted in aroma and light in body.

**tonneau**: An oak barrel with a 900-liter capacity. *See also* **barrique**.

**traditional method** (a.k.a. *methode champenoise*): The most common method for producing sparkling wine, which includes second fermentation in bottles. As the name implies, this is the older method and is used in Champagne production. *See also* **tank method**.

**trocken**: The German/Austrian term for dry wine.

**underripe**: A wine with fruit flavors that are too green, sour, or astringent.

**upfront:** The aroma or flavor noticed right away when tasting a wine (i.e., a wine may have an “upfront fruit” character).

**vanillin:** The chemical compound in oak that adds a vanilla-like flavor to wine.

**varietal:** A wine named for the dominant (or only) grape variety from which it is made. *See* **variety**.

**variety:** A type of grape (i.e., Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, etc.). This is often incorrectly referred to as a varietal.

**véraison:** The onset of grape ripening, when the berries become larger, darker, and softer. The process is extremely rapid and coincides with an increase in sugar and decrease in acid within the berry. Thus it is the first signal to a winemaker that harvest time is approaching.

**vigor:** The quality of a grapevine’s stalks, vines, and leaves, which can affect sugar concentration in the berries. Generally speaking, overly vigorous green growth will starve the grapes of flavor, while vines with no vigor may indicate an unhealthy plant.

**vin clair:** The wine produced in the first stage of the sparkling wine process. These bubble-free wines are blended before the second fermentation. *See also* **cuvée**.

**vintage:** The year or season that produced the grapes in a particular wine. *See also* **nonvintage**.

**Vitis aestivalis:** The Norton grape, considered the only North American species capable of making premium wine (specifically, free of foxy aromas).

**Vitis labrusca:** A North American grape species that makes good table and juice grapes (such as Concord) but makes wines with an unpleasant, foxy character.

**Vitis vinifera:** The scientific name for the native European wine grape.

**volatile acidity:** The concentration of acetic acid (i.e., vinegar acid) found in a wine. It is often a sign of excessive oxidation, although in small concentrations, it can add a refreshing note to wines, called a lift.

***Weingut:*** The German term for a winery.

**wild yeast:** Also called indigenous yeast, the yeast already present on the grapes' skins or in the air at the winery, which are sometimes used in wine fermentation. Using wild yeast lends a wine unique character, but the fermentation process can be less predictable. Some winemakers destroy the wild yeasts and add a specific strain, some use entirely wild yeasts, and some use a combination.

**winery:** The modern term for the place where wine is made. The grapes may or may not be grown on the same property (that is, a winery may be part of a vineyard or may be a separate or independent operation).

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## Notes

## The Everyday Guide to Wine Tasting Sheet

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Wine	Color	Aromas	Palate	Quality Assessment
1				
Additional comments:				
2				
Additional comments:				
3				
Additional comments:				
4				
Additional comments:				
5				
Additional comments:				
6				
Additional comments:				

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Wine	Color	Aromas	Palate	Quality Assessment
1				
Additional comments:				
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Additional comments:				
6				
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