

TRAINING PART 3

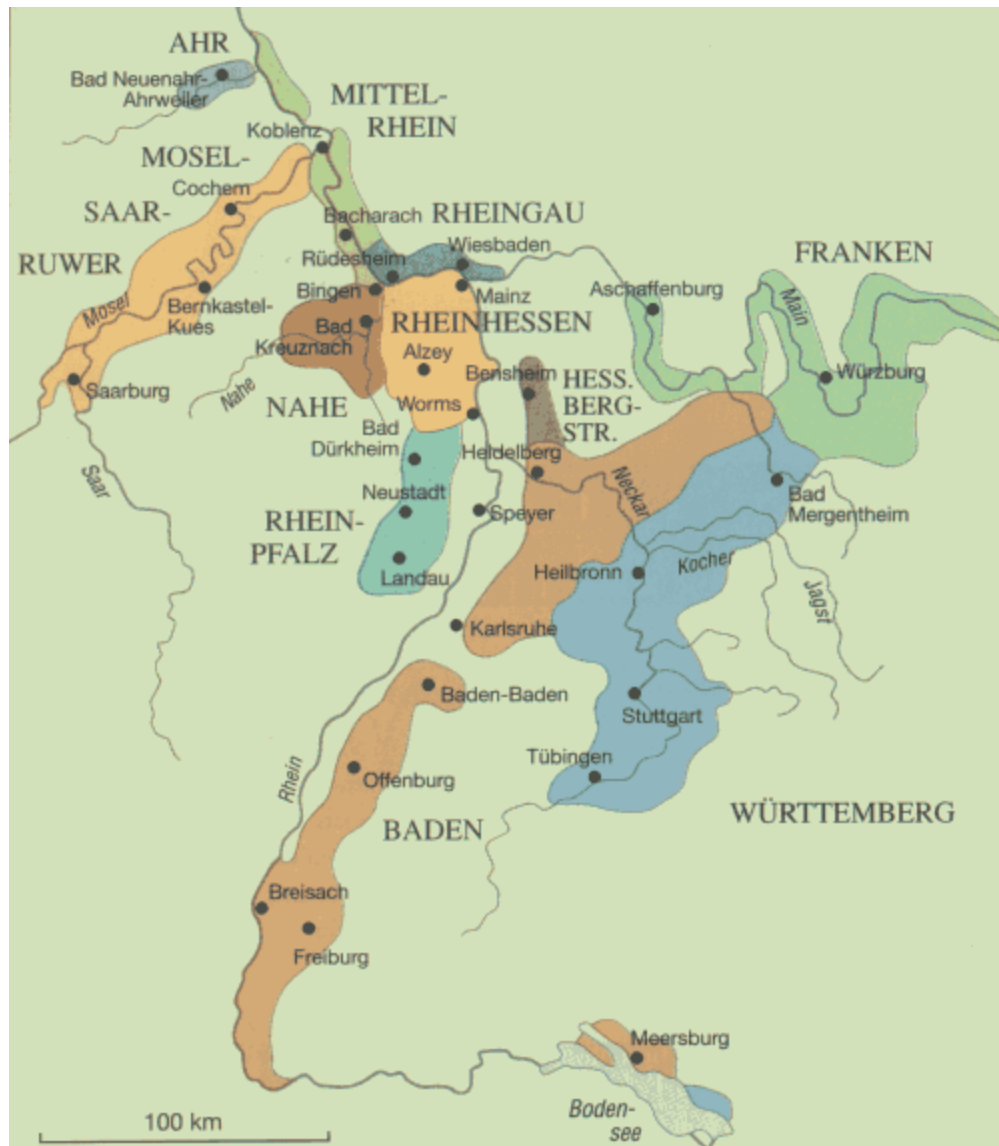
MCHUMOR.com by T. McCracken



"Do you have any wine
from the Ming dynasty?"

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**GERMANY
ALSACE
AUSTRIA
ITALY
SPAIN
ROSE
GREEK WHITES**



Germany

Originating in German soil, today Riesling is Germany's leading grape variety, known for its characteristic "transparency" in flavor, presentation of *terroir* and its balance between fruit and mineral flavours. In Germany, Riesling normally ripens between late September and late November, and late harvest Riesling can be picked as late as January.

An important event took place in 1775 at Schloss Johannisberg in Rheingau, when the courier delivering the harvest permission was delayed for two weeks, with the result that most of the grapes in Johannisberg's Riesling-only vineyard had been affected by noble rot before the harvest began. Unexpectedly, these "rotten grapes" gave a very good sweet wine, which was termed Spätlese, meaning late harvest. From this time, late harvest wines from grapes affected by noble rot have been produced intentionally. The subsequent differentiation of wines based on harvested ripeness, starting with Auslese in 1787, laid the ground for the Prädikat system, laws introduced in 1971 which defined the various

designations still in use today.

Three common characteristics of German Riesling are that they are rarely blended with other varieties and usually never exposed to oak flavor (despite some vintners fermenting in "neutral" oak barrels).

In Germany, sugar levels at time of harvest are an important consideration in the wine's production with *Prädikat* levels measuring the sweetness of the wine. Equally important to wine growers is the balance of acidity between the green tasting malic acid and the more citrus tasting tartaric acid. In cool years, some growers will wait until November to harvest in hopes of having a higher level of ripeness and subsequent tartaric acid.

Before technology in wineries could stabilize temperatures, the low temperatures in winter of the northern German regions would halt fermentation and leave the resulting wines with natural sugars and a low alcohol content. According to local tradition, in the Mosel region the wine would then be bottled in tall, tapered, and green hock bottles. Similar bottles, although brown, are used for Riesling produced in the Rhine region.

Riesling is also the preferred grape in production of *Deutscher Sekt*, German sparkling wine. Riesling wines from Germany cover a vast array of tastes from sweet to off-dry *halbtrocken* to dry *trocken*. Late harvest Rieslings can ripen to become very sweet dessert wines of the *beerenauslese* (BA) and *trockenbeerenauslese* (TBA) class.

German wine classification is sometimes the source of confusion. However, to those familiar with the terms used, a German wine label reveals much information about the wine's origin, minimum ripeness of the grapes used for the wine as well as the dryness/sweetness of the wine.

Ripeness Classifications of German wines (any grape varietal): In general, the ripeness classifications of German wines reflect minimum sugar content in the grape (also known as "potential alcohol" = the amount of alcohol resulting from fermenting all sugar in the juice) at the point of harvest of the grape. They have nothing to do with the sweetness of the wine after fermentation, which is one of the most common misperceptions about German wines.

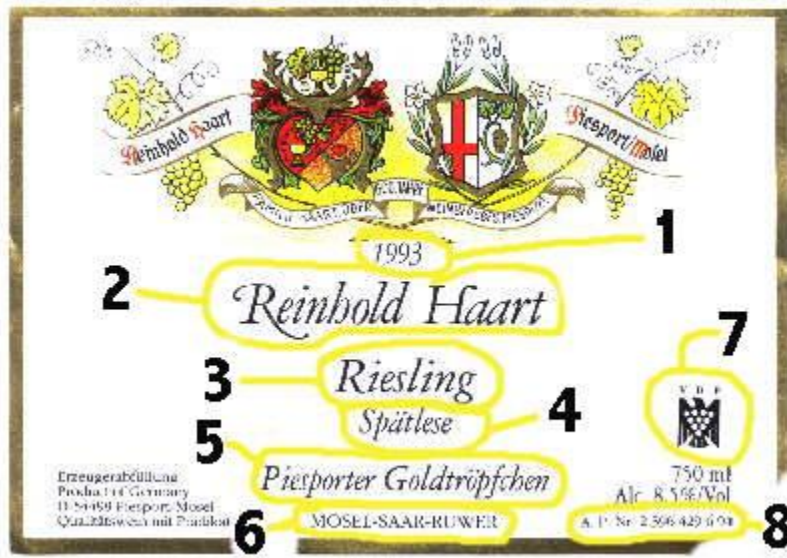
- **Deutscher Tafelwein** (German table wine) is mostly consumed in the country and not exported. Generally used for blended wines that can not be *Qualitätswein*.
- **Deutscher Landwein** (German country wine) comes from a larger designation and again doesn't play an important role in the export market.
- **Qualitätswein bestimmter Anbaugebiete** (QbA) wines from a defined appellation with the exception of *Liebfraumilch*, which can be blended from several regions and still be classified as *Qualitätswein*.
- **Qualitätswein mit Prädikat** (QmP) wines made from grapes of higher ripeness. As ripeness increases, the fruit characteristics and price increase. Wines of these categories can not be chaptalized. All these categories within *Prädikatswein* are solely linked to minimum requirements of potential alcohol. While these may correlate with harvest time, there are no legally defined harvest time restrictions anymore.
 - **Kabinett** wines are made from grapes that have achieved minimum defined potential alcohol levels. Those minimum requirements differ by region and grape varietal. Essentially, *Kabinett* is the first level of reserve grape selection.
 - **Spätlese** wines ("late harvest") are made from grapes that have achieved minimum defined potential alcohol levels. Those minimum requirements differ by region and grape

- varietal. Essentially, Spatlese is the second level of reserve grape selection.
- **Auslese** wines ("select harvest") are made from grapes that have achieved minimum defined potential alcohol levels. Those minimum requirements differ by region and grape varietal. Essentially, Auslese is the third level of reserve grape selection.
 - **Beerenauslese** wines ("berry selection") are made from grapes that have achieved minimum defined potential alcohol levels. The concentration of the grape juice may have been facilitated by a fungus *Botrytis*, which perforates the skin of the grape forcing water to drip out and all remaining elements to concentrate. Due to the high potential alcohol level required for this category of ripeness, these wines are generally made into sweet wines and can make good dessert wines.
 - **Trockenbeerenauslese** wines ("dry berries selection") are made from grapes of an even higher potential alcohol level, generally reachable only with the help of *Botrytis*. The grapes used for Trockenbeerenauslese have reached an even more raisin-like state than those used for Beerenauslese. Due to the high concentration of sugar in the raisin-like grape, these wines can only be made in a sweet style and make extremely sweet, concentrated and usually quite expensive wines.
 - **Eiswein** (ice wine) wine is made grapes that freeze naturally on the vine and have to reach the same potential alcohol level as Beerenauslese. The grapes are harvested and pressed in the frozen state. The ice stays in the press during pressing and hence a concentrated juice flows off the press leading to higher potential alcohol levels which in turn generally result in sweet wines due to the high potential alcohol. The taste differs from the other high-level wines since *Botrytis* infection is usually lower, ideally completely absent.

On wine labels, German wine may be classified according to the residual sugar of the wine. **Trocken** refers to dry wine. These wines have less than 9 grams/liter of residual sugar. **Halbtrocken** wines are off-dry and have 9-18 grams/liter of residual sugar. Due to the high acidity ("crispness") of many German wines, the taste profile of many halbtrocken wines fall within the "internationally dry" spectrum rather than being appreciably sweet. **Feinherb** wines are slightly more sweet than halbtrocken wines. **Lieblich** wines are noticeably sweet; except for the high category Prädikatsweine of type Beerenauslese and above, lieblich wines from Germany are usually of the low Tafelwein category. The amount of German wines produced in a lieblich style has dropped markedly since the style went out of fashion in the 1980s. In recent years, the Verband Deutscher Prädikatswein (VDP), which is a private marketing club founded in 1910 (see www.vdp.de), has lobbied for the recognition of a vineyard classification, but their effort have not yet changed national law.

There are also several terms to identify the grower and producers of the wine.

- **Weingut** refers to a wine producing estate.
- **Weinkellerei** refers to a bottling facility, a bottler or shipper.
- **Winzergenossenschaft** refers to a winegrowers' co-operative wine.
- **Gutsabfüllung** refers to a grower/producer wine that is estate bottled.
- **Abfüller** refers to a bottler or shipper.



1. The Vintage

2. The Winery / Estate

3. The Varietal

4. The Ripeness Level of the Grapes Used

5. The Vineyard

6. The Growing Region or Appellation

7. VDP Logo

8. The government approval number or the AP #

Using the above label as an example, the AP number contains the following information: 2 596 429 6 94 - The first digit, 2, represents the village in which the wine was tasted. 2 in this case designates the village of Bernkastel. The following three digits, 596, represent the village where the estate is located, in this case 596 designates the village of Piesport. The third set of digits, 429, represent the grower identification number, Haart's id number is 429 (this number is directly linked to the village number). The second to last digit, 6, is simply a number representing the order in which the estate presented its wine to the tasting panel. The last group of digits, 94, represent what year the wine was presented for approval, in this case 1994.



(France)

Alsace wine is produced in the Alsace region in France and is primarily white. These wines, which for historical reasons have a strong Germanic influence, are produced under three different *Appellations d'Origine Contrôlées* (AOCs): Alsace AOC for white, rosé and red wines, Alsace Grand Cru AOC for white wines from certain classified vineyards and Crémant d'Alsace AOC for sparkling wines. Both dry and sweet white wines are produced, and are often made from aromatic grape varieties. Along with Austria and Germany, it produces some of the most noted dry Rieslings in the world, but on the export market, Alsace is perhaps even more noted for highly aromatic Gewürztraminer wines. Because of its Germanic influence, it is the only region in France to produce mostly varietal wines, typically from similar grapes as

used in German wine.

The geography of the wine growing area in Alsace is determined by two main factors, the Vosges mountains in the west and the Rhine river in the east. The vineyards are concentrated in a narrow strip, running in a roughly north-south direction, on the lower eastern slopes of the Vosges, at altitudes of 175–420 m. Those altitudes provide a good balance between temperature, drainage and sun exposure under Alsace's growing conditions. Because of predominantly westerly winds, the Vosges mountains tend to shelter Alsace from rain and maritime influence, and the region is therefore rather dry and sunny.

Almost all wines are white, except those made from the Pinot Noir grape which are pale red, often rosé, rarely red. Sparkling wines known as Crémant d'Alsace are also made. Much of the white wines of Alsace are made from aromatic grape varieties, so many characteristic Alsace wines are aromatic, floral and spicy. Since they very seldom have any oak barrel aromas they tend to be very varietally pure in their character. Traditionally all Alsace wines were dry (which once set them apart from German wines with which they share many grape varieties), but an ambition to produce wines with more intense and fruity character has led some producers to produce wines which contain some residual sugar. Since there is no official labelling that differentiates completely dry from off-dry (or even semi-sweet) wines, this has occasionally led to some confusion among consumers. It is more common to find residual sugar in Gewürztraminer and Pinot Gris, which reach a higher natural sugar content on ripeness, than in Riesling, Muscat or Sylvaner. Usually there is a "house style" as to residual sugar, i.e., some producers only produce totally dry wines, except for their dessert style wines. Almost all production in Alsace is of AOC wine, since there is no *Vin de pays* region which covers Alsace. Thus, the only alternative to producing AOC wine is to declassify it all the way down to *Vin de table*, which generally means that neither grape varieties, region of origin or vintage may be identified. However, this solution is mostly avoided since *edelzwicker* and *gentil* may be blended from several varieties, i.e. varieties that exceed the AOC rules in the concerned season.

There are two late harvest classifications, Vendange Tardive (VT) and Sélection de Grains Nobles (SGN). *Vendange Tardive* means "late harvest" (which in German would be *Spätlese*), but in terms of must weight requirements, VT is similar to Auslese in Germany. *Sélection de Grains Nobles* means "selection of noble berries", i.e. grapes affected by noble rot, and is similar to a German Beerenauslese. For both VT and SGN, Alsace wines tend to be higher in alcohol and therefore slightly lower in sugar than the corresponding German wines. Therefore, Riesling VT and Muscat VT tend to be semi-sweet rather than sweet, while Gewürztraminer and Pinot Gris tend to be rather sweet already at VT level. But as is the case with sweetness in other Alsace wines, this depends to a large extent on the house style of the producer.

Today over a fifth of Alsace's vineyards are covered with Riesling vines, mostly in the Haut-Rhin district. This is partly from difference in the soil with the clay Alsatian soil being more dominantly calcareous than the slate composition of Rheingau. The other differences come in winemaking styles, with the Alsatian preferring more French-oriented methods that produce wines of higher alcohol content (normally around 12%) and more roundness due to longer time spent in neutral oak barrels or steel tanks.

Rieslings d'Alsace tend to be mostly very dry with a cleansing acidity. They are thick-bodied wines that coat the palate. These wines age exceptionally well with a quality vintage aging up to 20 years. This is beneficial since the flavours in an Alsace wine will often open up after three years, developing softer and fruitier flavours. Riesling is very suitable for the late harvest *Vendange Tardive* and the botrytized *Sélection de Grains Nobles*, with good acidity keeping up the sweetness of the wine.



AUSTRIAN WINE

Austrian wines are mostly dry white wines (often made from the Grüner Veltliner grape), though some sweeter white wines (such as dessert wines made around the Neusiedler See) are also produced. About 30% of the wines are red, made from Blaufränkisch (also known as Lemberger, or as Kékfrankos in neighbouring Hungary), Pinot Noir and locally bred varieties such as Zweigelt. Four thousand years of winemaking history counted for little after the "antifreeze scandal" of 1985, when it was revealed that some wine brokers had been adulterating their wines with diethylene glycol. The scandal destroyed the market for Austrian wine and compelled Austria to tackle low standards of bulk wine production, and reposition itself as a producer of quality wines.

As can be seen from the table, Grüner Veltliner is the dominant white grape in Austria, producing generally dry wines ranging from short-lived wines to Spätleses capable of long life. Neuburger was supposedly found as flotsam in the Danube in the 1850s, but is now known to be a cross between Silvaner and the ancient Roter Veltliner. It's worth noting that Pinot gris is known as Ruländer in Austria, and sometimes as Grauburgunder; Pinot blanc is known as Weißburgunder or Weissburgunder. Riesling plays a much smaller role than in Germany, but the relatively small amount grown is used for some of Austria's most appreciated dry white wines.

Zweigelt (Blaufränkisch x St. Laurent) and Blauburger (Blaufränkisch x Blauer Portugieser) were bred at Klosterneuburg in the 1920s and now account for nearly half of Austria's red wine. The former can be made into powerful wines for ageing, the latter is easier to grow and is generally blended; both are also made into a lighter style for drinking young.

National Classification

The existing system was based on the German system during World War II, but was modified after 1985.

- **Tafelwein** - can come from more than one region
- **Landwein** - A Tafelwein that comes from just one region.
- **Qualitätswein** - Comes from a single wine district.
- **Kabinett** - Qualitätswein with no chaptalisation, residual sugar <9g/litre, alcohol <12.7%.
- **Prädikatswein** - covers the range from Spätlese to Eiswein, to which nothing can be added - no must, no chaptalisation.
 - **Spätlese**
 - **Auslese**
 - **Beerenauslese**
 - **Ausbruch** grape juice or late harvest wine may be added to assist the pressing operation.
 - **Trockenbeerenauslese** completely botrytised grapes
 - **Eiswein** - further concentrated by being harvested and pressed when frozen.
 - **Strohwein** or **Schilfwein** made from grapes dried on straw mats.

Wachau Classification

The "Vinea Wachau Nobilis Districtus" has three categories, all for dry wines:

- **Steinfeder** ('Stone feather' - named after a grass that grows in the vineyards) - maximum 11.5% alcohol, mostly for local quaffing.
- **Federspiel** (named after a falconry device) - 11.5% to 12.5% alcohol and a minimum must weight of 17° KMW, roughly equivalent to Kabinett.
- **Smaragd** (named after an 'emerald' lizard that lives in the vineyards) - minimum 12.5% alcohol, with a maximum 9g/litre residual sugar; some of the best dry whites in Austria.

Wachau

This narrow valley of the Danube around Melk is reminiscent of the great wine areas of the Rhine, with steep terraces that produce world-class Grüner Veltliner and Riesling wines. Climatically and geologically it marks the transition from the Alps to the Hungarian plains, leading to a diverse array of microclimates and terroir, with the river moderating the effects of the cold Alpine winds. As mentioned above, the Vinea Wachau Nobilis Districtus still clings to its own classification of Steinfeder, Federspiel and Smaragd, reserved for wines that are made 100% from Wachau grapes.

Kremstal

Downstream of the Wachau lies the Kremstal region, centred on the town of Krems. The valley opens out a little, the climate is a little warmer allowing more red wine to be produced, but otherwise Kremstal is quite similar to the Wachau.

Kamptal

To the north of Krems lies Langenlois, which is the main town of Kamptal, the valley of the river Kamp. The sandstone slopes are so steep that only a thin layer of soil is retained, and exposure to the sun is high. Riesling thrives on these steep slopes; closer to the Danube the valley broadens and more red grapes are grown.

Carnuntum

The deep soils between Vienna and the Neusiedlersee are rapidly establishing a reputation for well-balanced red wines made from Zweigelt and Blaufränkisch. Being close to Vienna and full of history, the area is a popular area to visit.

Neusiedlersee

The east side of the Neusiedler See is also known as Seewinkel, 'corner of the lake'. The shallow Neusiedler See (Lake Neusiedl) is one of the few places on earth where noble rot attacks grapes reliably every year. This means that botrytised dessert wines can be made more easily, and hence sold more cheaply, than in other areas famous for this style of wine. Increasingly, red wine is also being made in this region.

Wien

There are 621ha of vineyards within the city limits of the Austrian capital. Vines were grown within the city walls of Vienna in the Middle Ages, although they have now been pushed into the outskirts. Riesling, Chardonnay and Pinot Blanc are grown on the limestone soils towards Klosterneuburg, whereas red grapes do better on the rich soil to the south of the city. Field blends known as Gemischter Satz are common here, and most wine is drunk young in the city's heurigen.

Gruner Veltliner

(GREW-nuhr Felt-LEEN-ehr)

Lean towards Green

The name may be intimidating but the grape is nothing but. This variety is increasing in popularity as more people discover its delicious qualities. Most wines made from Gruner Veltliner are from Austria, where it's the most planted grape variety. Gruner means green in German, not because the grape is green, but because its used to create fresh wines that are best drunk young.

Notable Facts

A wine made from Gruner Veltliner typically has a perfumed nose, with hints of peach and other citrus and, most notably, hints of white pepper - white pepper is usually what distinguishes Gruner Veltliner best. Wines from this grape are typically dry with high acidity. It's generally light to medium bodied but can be made in a richer, full-bodied style. The wines of Gruner Veltliner are high in acid and extremely versatile with food. Some winemakers in Austria are making sweet wines with the grape as well.



MEDITERRANEAN WHITES

Italian appellation system

Italy's classification system has four classes of wine, with two falling under the EU category *Quality Wine Produced in a Specific Region* and two falling under the category of 'table wine'. The four classes are:

Table Wine:

- *Vino da Tavola* (VDT) - Denotes simply that the wine is made in Italy. The label usually indicates a basic wine, made for local consumption.
- *Indicazione Geografica Tipica* (IGT) - Denotes wine from a more specific region within Italy. This appellation was created in 1992 for wines that were considered to be of higher quality than simple table wines, but which did not conform to the strict wine laws for their region. Before the IGT was created, "Super Tuscan" wines such as Tignanello were labeled *Vino da Tavola*.
- *Denominazione di Origine Controllata* (DOC)
- *Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita* (DOCG)

Both DOC and DOCG wines refer to zones which are more specific than an IGT, and the permitted grapes are also more specifically defined. The DOC system began in 1963, seeking to establish a method of both recognizing quality product and maintaining the international and national reputation of that product. The main difference between a DOC and a DOCG is that the latter must pass a blind taste test for quality in addition to conforming to the strict legal requirements to be designated as a wine from the area in question. After the sweeping wine laws of 1992, transparent rules were made regarding requirements for DOCG entry, imposing new limits regarding the production of grapes per hectare and minimum natural alcohol levels, among others.

Bianco (White)

- Arneis - A crisp and floral variety from Piedmont, which has been grown there since the 15th century.
- Catarratto - Common in Sicily - this is the most widely planted white variety in Salaparuta.
- Fiano - Grown on the southwest coast of Italy, the wines from this grape can be described as dewy and herbal, often with notes of pinenut and pesto.
- Garganega - The main grape variety for wines labeled Soave, this is a crisp, dry white wine from the Veneto wine region of Italy. It's a very popular wine that hails from northeast Italy around the city of Verona. Currently, there are over 3,500 distinct producers of Soave.
- Malvasia Bianca - Another white variety that peeks up in all corners of Italy with a wide variety of clones and mutations. Can range from easy quaffers to funky, musty whites.
- Moscato - Grown mainly in Piedmont, it is mainly used in the slightly-sparkling (*frizzante*), semi-sweet Moscato d'Asti. Not to be confused with *moscato giallo* and *moscato rosa*, two Germanic varieties that are grown in Trentino Alto-Adige.
- Nuragus - An ancient Phoenician variety found in southern Sardegna. Light and tart wines that are drunk as an aperitif in their homeland.
- Pigato - A heavily acidic variety from Liguria, the wines are vinified to pair with a cuisine rich in seafood.
- Pinot Grigio - A hugely successful commercial grape (known as *Pinot Gris* in France), its wines are characterized by crispness and cleanness. As a hugely mass-produced wine, it is usually

delicate and mild, but in a good producers' hands, the wine can grow more full-bodied and complex. The main problem with the grape is that to satisfy the commercial demand, the grapes are harvested too early every year, leading to wines without character.

- Ribolla Gialla - A Greek variety introduced by the Venetians that now makes its home in Friuli,, these wines are decidedly old-world, with aromas of pineapple and mustiness.
- Friulano - A variety also known as Sauvignon Vert or Sauvignonasse, it yields one of the most typical wines of Friuli, full of peachiness and minerality with a pleasant bitter almond finish. The wine was previously known as Tocai but the name was changed by the EC to avoid confusion with the Tokay dessert wine from Hungary.
- Trebbiano - This is the most widely planted white varietal in Italy. It is grown throughout the country, with a special focus on the wines from Abruzzo and from Lazio, including Frascati. Mostly, they are pale, easy drinking wines, but trebbiano from producers such as Valentini have been known to age for 15+ years. It is known as Ugni Blanc in France.
- Verdicchio - This is grown in the areas of Castelli di Jesi and Matelica in the Marche region and gives its name to the varietal white wine made from it. The name comes from "verde" (green). The white wines are noted for their high acidity and a characteristic nutty flavour with a hint of honey.
- Vermentino - This is widely planted in northern Sardinia and also found in Tuscan and Ligurian coastal districts. Wines are particularly popular to accompany fish and seafood.
- Passerina - mainly derives from Passerina grapes (it may even be produced purely with these), plus a minimum percentage of other white grapes and may be still, sparkling or passito. In its still version, one appreciates the acidic profile, which is typical of these grapes, as well as the delicate aromas.
- Pecorino (grape) - Native to Marche and Abruzzo, it is used in the Falerio dei Colli Ascolani and Offida DOC wines. It is low-yielding, but will ripen early and at high altitudes. Pecorino wines have a deep, rich, aromatic and nutty character.

Other important whites include Carricante, Coda de Volpe, Cortese, Falanghina, Grechetto, Grillo, Inzolia, Picolit, Traminer, Verduzzo, and Vernaccia.

Non-native varieties that the Italians plant include Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer (sometimes called *traminer aromatico*), Petite Arvine, Riesling, and many others.

WHITE WINES OF PIEDMONT

- **Roero Arneis** No blending allowed. Grown in the Roero region just north/west of Alba across the Tanaro river. Arneis is said to mean “rascal” in Piemontese and produces a floral, citrus, crisp wine that was used to soften red Nebbiolo wines years ago (not allowed any more). Great as an aperitivo (aperitif) or to accompany fish and light pasta dishes.
- **Favorita**
- Made from the grape Favorita it's own variety however closely related to Vermentino. This late-ripening grape produces a dry wine of medium acidity and minerality that can age longer than Arneis. When aged in oak (rare) can become quite round/soft on the palate.
- **Cortese** Cortese is best known in the wines from the Gavi DOC in south eastern Piemonte; Italy's most expensive white. Pale-lemon white in colour and fragrant and steely but less aromatic than Arneis. The best are capable of medium term ageing when they can achieve a honeyed richness
- **Erbaluce di Caluso** No blending allowed. Grown around the town of Caluso just north/west of Turin (Torino). Produces high acid, herbal, crisp, dry and sparkling wines along with very

interesting “passito” sweet ones. The dry wines can be used throughout a meal.

- **Moscato d’Asti** Made from 100% Moscato Bianco (Muscat), the famous grape that makes both frizzante (lightly sparkling), low alcohol sweet wines and spumante (Méthode champenoise) dry wines.
- **Chardonnay** Love it or hate it Chardonnay is widely available and often the house white. In Piemonte it is usually straightforward, unpretentious, unoaked and cheap. However be prepared for the occasional surprise as there are some very classy ones available.

WHITE WINES OF FRIULI

Friuli-Venezia Giulia wine (or Friuli wine) is wine made in the northeastern Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Once part of the Venetian Republic and with sections under the influence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire for some time, the wines of the region have noticeable Slavic and Germanic influences. There are 11 *Denominazione di origine controllata* (DOC) and 3 *Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita* (DOCG) in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia area. The region has 3 *Indicazione Geografica Tipica* (IGT) designations *Alto Livenza, delle Venezie* and *Venezia Giulia*. The area is known predominantly for its white wines which are considered some of the best examples of Italian wine in that style. Along with the Veneto and Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol, the Friuli-Venezia Giulia forms the Tre Venezie wine region which ranks with Tuscany and Piedmont as Italy's world class wine regions.

GRAPES AND WINES

Over 30 different grapes varieties are grown in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia including international varieties such as Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot as well as local varieties like Refosco dal peduncolo rosso, Schioppettino, Friulano, Ribolla gialla and Verduzzo. Of the local varieties, Friulano is the most well known and important variety producing crisp, floral wines that develop notes of nuts and fennel as it ages. The grape was widely known as *Tocai Friulano* but in 2006 the European Union banned names that have some similarity or association with the Hungarian wine Tokaji. Now Tocai Friulano is called *Friulano*. The very acidic Ribolla gialla grape was primarily used as a blending component until winemakers started to apply the techniques used with Chardonnay (such as malolactic fermentation) to produce softer, more buttery wines that still retain the crisp, lemon edge of the grape. Wines made from Verduzzo have peach and nutty flavors in their youth but develop more honeyed flavors as the wine ages. The high acidity of the grape works well in sweet production and in regions like Ramandolo it is often dried to make a *passito* wine. The Picolit grape also does well in sweet wines where it can produce elegant, floral wines that have a dry finish. In contrast to the thin, sometimes bland Pinot grigio produced in other parts of the Tre-Venezie, well made examples of Friuli Pinot grigio are known for their fuller body and delicate peach, almond and green apple flavors. Sauvignon blancs are made in a style reminiscent of Sancerre with smoke, herbs and elements of honey and hazelnut. Some of the most expensive Friuli wines are made from the Picolit grape which is prone to grape diseases and mutations which cause the vine to lose its flowers and grape clusters. In most years, less than half of a vineyard Picolit crop will survive and be able to make wine. The light, honeyed dessert wine that it can produce is often in high demand because of restricted supply.

ORANGE WINE

Orange wine can be one of three very different types of wine. It could be wine usually dry wine made from white wine grape varieties that have spent some maceration time in contact with the grape skins. "Orange wine" could also refer to sweet white wine macerated with orange peel.

Typically white wine production involves crushing the grapes and quickly moving the juice off the skins

into the fermentation vessel. The skins contain color pigment, phenols and tannins that are often considered undesirable for white wines while for red wines, skin contact and maceration is a vital part of the winemaking process that gives red wines its color, flavor and texture. Orange wines get their name from the darker, slightly orange tinge that the white wines receive due to their contact with the coloring pigments of the grape skins. This winemaking style is essentially the opposite of rosé production which involves getting red wine grapes quickly off their skins, leaving the wine with a slightly pinkish hue. However, in the case of Pinot gris, among the more popular grapes to apply a skin-contact treatment that is neither red nor white, the diffuse nature of the term becomes illustrated, as both an orange wine and a rosé might achieve a similar expression of pink/orange/salmon-colored wine. The practice has a long history in winemaking dating back thousands of years to the Eurasian wine producing countries of Armenia & Georgia. In recent years the practice has been adopted by Italian winemakers, initially in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia wine region, while there is also production in Slovenia, Croatia, France, Germany, New Zealand, and California. Orange wines were not uncommon in Italy in the 1950s and 1960s, but gradually became obscure as technically correct and fresh white wines came to dominate the market.

CAMPANIA

Falanghina is an ancient grape variety which may have provided a basis for the classical Falernian wine, and has considerable character. It is cultivated on the coast of Campania north of Naples, and frequently consumed in southern Italy along with seafood. The name for the wine appears to derive from the Latin *falangae*, or stakes for supporting the grapes in a vineyard.

SICILY WHITE

Grillo, also known as Riddu, is a white wine grape variety which withstands high temperatures and is widely used in Sicilian wine-making and, in particular, for Marsala. Its origins are uncertain, but it may have been introduced into the island of Sicily from Puglia.

VERMENTINO

Vermentino is a late-ripening white grape variety, primarily found in Italian wine. It is widely planted in Sardinia, in Liguria primarily under the name Pigato, to some extent in Corsica, in Piedmont under the name Favorita, and in increasing amounts in Languedoc-Roussillon. The most famous wine made from Vermentino is probably the DOCG Vermentino di Gallura (and Vermentino di Gallura Superiore) in the north of Sardinia.

GREEK WHITE WINE

- Assyrtiko is a multi-purpose variety which maintains its acidity as it ripens. It is similar in character to Riesling, and is mostly island-based, being a native variety of the island of Santorini, whose old vines have been resistant to Phylloxera.
- Athiri is a lower acid variety and one of the most ancient. Originally from Santorini, it is now planted in Macedonia, Attica, and Rhodes.
- Debina is a white Greek wine grape primarily in the Zitsa region of Epirus. The grape's high acidity lends itself to sparkling wine production.
- Malagousia is a grape growing mainly in Macedonia, with a special aroma leading to elegant full bodied wines, with medium-plus acidity and exciting perfumed aromas.
- Moschofilero is a *Blanc de gris* variety from the AOC region of Mantinea, in Arcadia in the Peloponnese. Its wines offer a crisp and floral character in both still and sparkling styles.
- Robola is most grown in the mountainous vineyards of the Ionian Island of Cephalonia. It has a

smokey mineral and lemony character, excellently complementing seafood.

- Roditis (the "pink" or "rose" grape) is a grape that is very popular in Attica, Macedonia, Thessaly, and the Peloponnese. This variety produces elegant, light white wines with citrus flavors.



SPANISH WHITE WINES

When you consider Spanish wines, what usually comes to mind are the reds from the Rioja and Ribera del Duero areas, the sweet and dry sherries from Jerez (the word *sherry* itself is a vulgarization of the word *Jerez*), and the sparkling wine called cava from the Penedés area south of Barcelona. Ernest Hemingway, no stranger to a mellowing beverage, mentioned Spain's excellent and inexpensive dry rosés on and off in his works, but by and large rosés are under the radar in the United States. Rarely does white wine come to mind – and that's a shame. Spain, as the country with the world's most total acreage devoted to vineyards, is home to an array of white wines ranging from the exotic, food-friendly albariño to the more neutral, clean, crisp viura and verdejo to the more familiar chardonnay and sauvignon blanc.

ALBARINO

Albariño, Spain's signature white wine, is named for a grape grown in Galicia. It is to Spain what Sauvignon Blanc is to New Zealand and pinot grigio is to Italy, even more so in that almost nowhere else in the world is this grape grown. It unquestionably ranks as one of the world's finest, albeit underappreciated, white wine varieties. These qualities — light body, searing acidity, and intense minerality — make you think of bottling an ocean breeze. They allow albariño to pair brilliantly with a plate of seafood, shellfish, or, more specifically, paella. Albariño's home is in Galicia, just north of Portugal, and clearly it enjoys its dominating maritime influence. Galicia is lush and verdant, the landscape more reminiscent of Scotland or Ireland than the rest of the Iberian Peninsula.

Rías Baixas, Galicia's most important wine district, is in the southwest corner of the province, near the Atlantic Ocean. The Miño River, which forms the border between Spain and Portugal, also influences the climate. The thick-skinned Albariño variety thrives in this environment; its sturdy skin helps to prevent fungal diseases, an occupational hazard of damp climates. Across the border, the same grape, known in Portugal as the Alvarinho, is the premium variety in Portugal's better Vinho Verde white wines. As recently as five years ago many winedrinkers had never heard of Albariño or Rías Baixas. Today you can find Albariño varietal wines on many restaurant wine lists and in better wine shops throughout the U.S. Albariño wines seem to fit the tastes of many of today's consumers: the wines are crisp, fresh, aromatic, and medium bodied, with a fairly rich texture and lots of flavor—mainly reminiscent of apple, peach and lemon. They go extremely well with fish and seafood, and yet are sturdy enough to accompany poultry dishes, roast pork and veal.

Albariño accounts for 90 percent of the vine plantings in Rías Baixas. Its principal home is the Salnés Valley sub-zone, its birthplace. The Salnés Valley, the oldest, largest, and most important of five sub-zones, and also the coolest and the wettest, sits next to the Atlantic Ocean. Its annual mean temperature is 55 degrees fahrenheit. The two next most-important sub-zones are Condado do Tea, the second-largest, located in a mountainous area farther inland along the Miño River, and O Rosal, also along the Miño, near the coast. The soil in all three of these sub-zones is granitic and rocky, but rich in minerals. In short, ideal for wine-grape growing, but not much else.

The Condado do Tea zone also features Treixadura, a delicate, intensely scented variety that is added to some Albariño wines. O Rosal grows a little of Loureira, a highly acidic variety that is usually blended with Albariño, but sometimes made as a separate varietal wine. A small amount of red Loureira exists, but it's extremely rare. Over 99 percent of Rías Baixas wines are white. Most Rías Baixas wines contain 85 to 90 percent Albariño, and those that are labeled Albariño are 100 percent of this variety. Most Rías Baixas wines have moderate alcohol, about 12 percent, and most are made without oak aging, although a few are barrel-fermented or barrel-aged. Skin contact before fermentation and malolactic fermentation (ML) are two techniques that winemakers use to create their particular style of Albariño. The wines that have skin contact are the most aromatic, especially when they have not undergone ML, while those that undergo ML tend to be the broadest and the earthiest. Production of wines in Rías Baixas is now five times greater than it was in 1990. In 1980, about five wineries of any size existed there; in 1990, there were 60 wineries, and today there are 190--32 of which sell wines in the U.S. This country is Rías Baixas' most important export market, accounting for about 50 percent of all exported wines. American wine drinkers looking for a white-wine alternative to Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc have rapidly found it in Albariño and Rías Baixas' other white wines.

GODELLO

Godello-based wines have the big fruit of albariño (peaches, citrus, apple), but with an even slightly greater level of acidity. While Galicia's star albariño grape variety has become increasingly well-known internationally, godello continues to fall below most consumers' radar screens; this has served to make godellos excellent values. The best are from Galicia's Valdeorras and Monterrei DOs, as well as in Castilla y León's Bierzo DO.

TREIXADURA

The Spanish name for the Portuguese varietal Trajadura. Treixadura is most often found in the D.O. of Ribeiro in Galicia, in the northwestern corner of Spain. Treixadura is usually blended with one of the other many grapes that grow in this cool region famous for its crisp, dry whites, most notably the varietals Torrontes, Lado, Viura and Albariño. Treixadura is famous for producing wines that are light, finessed and full of citrus fruits and white flowers.

VIURA & VERDEJO

Viura is the most important white grape of the Rioja area in north-central Spain. Rioja is an area far more renowned for its tempranillo-based reds than its whites; some people even think the Spanish word *Rioja* means *red*, but it is actually a contraction of "Rio Oja," a tributary to the Ebro River that runs through the region. Viura makes a far more neutral wine than the aforementioned Albariño, lacking the latter's exotic aromas, flavors, and overall complexity. It has its place, however; if you consider the scorchingly high temperatures typical of the Iberian inland during the summer months, you can readily appreciate its uses.

Verdejo is another indigenous Spanish grape not really cultivated elsewhere. It is grown in Rueda, northwest of Madrid and near the world-class red wine region of Ribera del Duero. Verdejo reminds me most of Sauvignon Blanc. Light in body and crisply refreshing, Verdejo can be called upon to quench your summer thirst and complement a salad or herb-seasoned fish or chicken dish.

GRENACHE BLANC

Grenache Blanc is a variety of white wine grape that is related to the red grape Grenache. It is mostly found in Rhône wine blends and in northeast Spain. Its wines are characterized by high alcohol and low acidity, with citrus and or herbaceous notes. Its vigor can lead to overproduction and flabbiness. However, if yields are controlled, it can contribute flavor and length to blends, particularly with Roussanne. Since the 1980s, it has been the fifth most widely planted white wine grape in France after Ugni Blanc, Chardonnay, Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc.

TXAKOLI

Txakoli or Chacolí is a slightly sparkling, very dry white wine with high acidity and low alcohol content produced in the Spanish provinces of the Basque Country, Cantabria and northern Burgos. It is normally served as an aperitif and drunk within one year of bottling as it cannot be stored for longer. The most common, white, variety has a pale green colour, but there are red and rosé varieties. When served, it is normally poured into tall glasses from a height, often as an accompaniment to pintxos today. It typically has between 9.5-11.5.

Txakoli is produced from indigenous grapes, Hondarribi Zuri and Munemahatsa or Folle blanche. A traditional product of the Basque country, the wine fell off the radar in the 19th century until a local

Basque association, in the 80's, formed a group to bring the wine back to life.

The wine is very high in acidity, which accounts for its slight sparkle, and low in alcohol. The Basque usually drink it in small glasses, as opposed to wine glasses, and serve it with Spanish tapas. The wine is customarily poured in ceremonious fashion with the bottle held high above the glass causing something of a waterfall of wine. This fancy effect is said to make the flavors of the wine burst out instantaneously (hmmmm). In any case, it takes a dexterous bartender to pull this off so don't expect this type of treatment except for in the most traditional of Spanish wine bars.

ROSE WINE

A **rosé** (From French: *rosé*, also known as *rosado* in Spanish-speaking countries or *rosato* in Italy) is a type of wine that has some of the color typical of a red wine, but only enough to turn it pink. The pink color can range from a pale "onion"-skin orange to a vivid near-purple, depending on the grape varieties used and winemaking techniques. There are three major ways to produce rosé wine: skin contact, saignée and blending. Rosé wines can be made still, semi-sparkling or sparkling and with a wide range of sweetness levels from bone-dry Provençal rosé to sweet White Zinfandels and blushes. Rosé are made from a wide variety of grapes and can be found all across the globe. When rosé wine is the primary product, it is produced with the skin contact method. Black-skinned grapes are crushed and the skins are allowed to remain in contact with the juice for a short period, typically one to three days. The must is then pressed, and the skins are discarded rather than left in contact throughout fermentation (as with red wine making). The longer that the skins are left in contact with the juice, the more intense the color of the final wine. When a winemaker desires to impart more tannin and color to a red wine, some of the pink juice from the must can be removed at an early stage in what is known as the *Saignée* (from French bleeding) method. The red wine remaining in the vats is intensified as a result of the bleeding, because the volume of juice in the must is reduced, and the must involved in the maceration becomes more concentrated. The pink juice that is removed can be fermented separately to produce rosé. In other parts of the world, blending, the simple mixing of red wine to a white to impart color, is uncommon. This method is discouraged in most wine growing regions, especially in France, where it is forbidden by law, except for Champagne. Even in Champagne, several high-end producers do not use this method but rather the saignée method.