

Grapes of the World - Part 1

Most wines take their name from the variety of grape used to make it. However obvious that fact may be to highly trained viticulturists, the uneducated in wine will have just learned something new from reading this article. I encourage you to keep reading and learn more about the wines you've heard about and maybe even drank at one time or another during your life.

This three-part article series will discuss the many grapes of the world.

Chardonnay - This grape is native to France and is grown all over the world for both sparkling wines and table wines. This is the primary grape grown in the Val de Marne of Champagne and is also grown in northern California, New York State, Pennsylvania, Washington State, and Virginia. Chardonnays are often aged in oak barrels and may pick up a vanilla overtone in aroma and flavor when fermented in this manner. Chardonnay wines are typically served chilled and match well with chicken or any type of dish that uses a heavy cream or buttery type of sauce.

Chenin Blanc - This grape is native to the Loire Valley Region located in west central France. It is also grown in California and South Africa (referred to as "Steen" in South Africa). This type of wine usually develops a delicate, fruity flavor. Because of the high volume of Chenin Blanc wines produced, this type of wine is usually inexpensive.

Gewurztraminer - This grape is noted for its floral fragrance and spicy flavor. Native to Italy, Gewurztraminer is also successfully grown in France, California, Germany and New Zealand. Crops tend to fair better in cooler climates. This type of wine is often paired with spicy foods.

Johannisberg Riesling - This grape does better in cooler climates and is known for its high resistance to frost. Production is typically sparse with Riesling wines. Riesling is grown successfully in California, Washington, Germany, and other northern European growing regions. Wines produced from Riesling are universally rare, expensive, and long-lived.

Muscat - Known as Moscatel in Spain and Moscato in Italy, the Muscat grape is prized for its bold aroma and flavor values. This type of grape is grown heavily in southern France and its big crops produce wines that are sweet and very floral.

Palomino - This grape is native to Spain where it is used to produce fine Sherries. Palomino is also successfully grown in California, South Africa, and Australia. In California, Palomino is often referred to as Golden Chasselas.

Sauvignon Blanc - Grown in the Graves district of Bordeaux and the eastern Loire Valley, this grape produces fine wines that are typically smoky in aroma with an earthy aftertaste. If grown in a cooler climate, Sauvignon Blanc can produce a grassy aftertaste. This is a large crop grape and its wines are usually inexpensive. This grape is produced in northern California where it is referred to as Fume Blanc. Sauvignon Blanc is often paired with seafood.

Scheurebe - This grape was developed in Germany and is a cross between Riesling and Sylvaner. Wines produced from the Scheurebe grape are aromatic and very fruity. They are often described as having a "hint of blackberry". This is a rare grape grown almost exclusively in Germany.

Semillon - This grape is used to produce table wines and is often identified with Sauternes table wines produced in Bordeaux, France. This is a resilient grape that ripens in early season and is less likely to be damaged by frost or rain. Although Semillon is successfully grown in California and Washington, the acreage is severely limited.

Sylvaner - This grape is primarily grown in Germany and northern Europe. It can also be found in the wine producing region of Alsace, France. The aroma and flavor of Sylvaner are similar (but not nearly as potent) to Johannisberg Riesling. This is a high acidity wine that is naturally sweet, and is sometimes made into a dessert wine.

About the Author

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