

Grapes of the World – part 3

Grenache - This black grape is Native to Spain where it is called Grenacha. It is used for the production of red table wines and is widely grown in France and California. This vine grows best in hot and dry regions. It produces wines that vary in color from a light rose to an inky black.

Merlot - This grape is an important blending variety for the great Bordeaux chateaux wines of southwestern France. Merlot wine has become quite popular in the United States, with many new vineyards developed in California and Washington. This grape produces a full bodied wine with lots of black fruits and chocolate aromas and flavors.

Pinot Noir - Grows best in northern Burgundy in east central France. Although also produced in both California and Oregon, only Oregon has developed a good reputation with this grape. Pinot Noir typically has a low-yield production and produces a light-bodied, light-colored wine that has a distinctive coffee-like bouquet. Pinot Noir is regularly regarded as one of the greatest of the black varieties that carries the burden of being one of the hardest to produce. This grape is the most sensitive of grapes and is quite susceptible to frost, disease, and mildew.

Nebbiolo - From prestigious wine-growing regions of northern Italy, this gray-blue grape produces wine that is tart, heavy, and carries a hint of raspberries in the bouquet. Less distinct wine made from Nebbiolo is full of fresh red fruit and violets. The older and better forms have notes ranging from truffles to black fruits to an ethereal rose quality. California vineyards have attempted to grow Nebbiolo but have been unable to match its Italy-grown qualities.

Syrah - Known as Shiraz in Australia, Syrah is thought to be named after a city in Persia where it is believed to have originated. This grape produces full, rich wines that are intense in both color and flavor. In warmer climates, such as Australia, the grapes produce sweeter and riper tasting wines. This grape is the most widely planted grape in Australia where it is sometimes blended with Cabernet Sauvignon or even with Mourvedre. Syrah produces a fine, red table wine.

Touriga Nacional - This is considered the best of the grapes that are blended for the fortified wines known as Port. Touriga Nacional produces wines that are both heavy in red fruits and structure. It is used for Port production in the United States, Chile, Argentina, and Australia.

Barbera - Although grown around the world, this grape is grown at its best in the Piedmont and Lombardy regions of Italy. Wine produced from this grape is a great match for full flavored foods that use a tomato sauce. It is believed that Barbera produces more than half of all the wine found in Italy.

Gamay - This is a premiere, blue-skinned grape grown in France. It produces a light-bodied table wine (the better vineyards can yield a richer red table wine). Wines made from Gamay are generally meant to be consumed within two years of bottling.

Durif - Developed in the late 1800's by a French nurseryman named Dr. Durif, the vine found its most suitable climate in California. Wines produced from Durif are full flavored and often have black currant overtones. Durif wines are best served with roast beef, stews, and full flavored cheeses. In California, it is often mistakenly identified as Petite Syrah.

About the Author

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