

Champagne & Sparkling Wines

The exceptional sophisticated wines of France's Champagne region, made exclusively from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier grapes, are the world's most renowned sparkling wines. However, California's finest now rank in line with many of Champagne's most venerable Houses. Both in France and in the U.S.A., the best wines are made by the Methode Champenoise the traditional, labor-intensive, and expensive process which creates the effervescence through a natural second fermentation of the wine in the bottle.

The wines range in sweetness from dry (*Brut*), medium-dry (*Extra - Dry*), semi-dry / sweet (*Sec*), to sweet (*Demi-Sec*).

Chardonnay

Chardonnay, the Great White Grape, is grown throughout the world. In the Burgundy region of France, only the Chardonnay grape can be used for the entire appellation - controlled communal white wines. In the United States, Chardonnay from all over California has long been recognized as among the World's finest white wines. More recently, exceptional Chardonnay has been produced in the Pacific Northwest and on the East Coast. The styles of chardonnay are dependent on their growing climate.

The cooler climates such as Chablis and Champagne in France and the Northwest regions of the United States produce a fruity, crisp, slightly acidic wine. Warmer climates, like California and Burgundy, produce wines that are fuller bodied, rich, buttery and less acidic.

Sauvignon Blanc

In France, Sauvignon Blanc is the predominant grape in the white wines of the Bordeaux (*Graves and Entre-Deux Mers*) and of the Loire (*Pouilly Fume, Sancerre, and Muscadet*). The White Bordeaux and Muscadet are very dry, light, crisp and clean - perfect complements to shellfish and other delicate seafood. Sancerre is dry but with fresh fruit overtones and Pouilly Fume exhibits the dry, smoky oak finish from which its name is derived.

From California, the two French styles are maintained and are differentiated by the labeling of either Sauvignon Blanc (*dry, crisp, fresh and herbal*) or Fume Blanc (*dry, oakey and flinty*).

Pinot Grigio

A dominant grape varietal from many regions of Italy, the Pinot Grigio produces a light, fresh, delicate fruity style wine. A terrific change of pace, Pinot Grigio can be enjoyed as an aperitif or a perfect match with seafood or fowl.

Pinot Noir

This noble vinifera varietal, overwhelmingly successful for centuries in producing exceptional red wines from the Burgundy region of France, has been mastered in American soil and climatic conditions. A delicate grape, which needs a cool climate, just the right amount of sun and sweet soil, Pinot Noir can produce a full and rich red wine with great completely complexity of flavor and a velvety texture. The wines are less tannic and slightly fruitier than Cabernet, allowing them to be consumed younger and expanding the range of foods for which they are suited.

Gamay

The lightest, easiest drinking and most refreshing of the world's red wines have always come from the Beaujolais region of France, and are always made 100% from the Gamay grape. Fresh and fruity, with the appeal of vine ripe raspberries, the wine is equally at home as an afternoon aperitif served chilled, as it is a pleasant dinner wine.

Cabernet Sauvignon

Acknowledged for centuries as the King of Red Wine Grapes, Cabernet Sauvignon such as the world's most highly prized red wine grape. It is responsible for the great wines of Bordeaux and reds of California.

The wines are usually full-bodied, rich, tannic and intensely colored and flavored, with a variety of flavor overtones: spice, berry, peppers, vanilla, mint, etc... The wines of Bordeaux (*predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon blended with varying amounts of Merlot and Cabernet Franc*) are generally somewhat softer and smoother than their American counterparts. From California, intensity and varietal character are the hallmarks of the most renowned cabernet.

Merlot

Originally used as a blending grape to round out and soften the Cabernet Sauvignon, the Merlot has firmly established itself as an elegant, individual varietal. Merlot's attraction is that the tannins are softer, the texture more supple and the aroma more forward and fruity than the Cabernet Sauvignon. These characteristics make the varietal suitable for earlier consumption than a Cabernet.

Zinfandel

The Zinfandel grape, now becoming widely popular in the United States, is totally indigenous to California and thrives in its rich alluvial soils. Zinfandel characteristically has deep *intense fruit (black raspberry, cherry, and cassis)* and is enhanced by overtones of peppercorn and/or tobacco. The wines from Sonoma are lighter with berry like fruit, whereas Napa Zinfandel has more depth of intense fruit, pepper corn, tobacco and is slightly more tannic. White Zinfandel, a fruity-flavored white wine that is slightly sweet and ranges in color from light to dark pink is another style of Zinfandel.

Nebbiolo

The Nebbiolo grape is the most famous grape of the Piedmont region of Italy. Barolo and Barbaresco are both produced entirely from Nebbiolo, which results in a very dry, full-bodied wine complemented with high levels of tannins and alcohol. With an aroma of roses, tar and ripe strawberries and a deep ruby color, it is a natural complement to meats or heavy sauces.

Sangiovese

The main red grape of Chianti, the Sangiovese grape is Italy's most important grape. In Chianti, the Sangiovese can range in style from dry, soft and fruity to a highly structured and age worthy wine, the Chianti Classico Riserva. The Sangiovese clone, Sangiovese Grosso is the grape of the Brunello di Montalcianos, an intense, concentrated and tannic wine. The Super Tuscans are a more recent development of blending two grapes, generally Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese to produce a big wine of warm fruit and high tannins, this is a truly unique wine..

Syrah / Shiraz

The syrah grape, shiraz in Australia, is native to the Rhone Valley in France although it's lineage can be traced back to ancient Persia. Syrah/Shiraz produces robust wines with great color and tannins. In France, it is blended with other varietals to round it out producing the renowned Chateauf-neuf-Du-Pape. In Australia, shiraz is their most popular grape and styles range from velvety and earthy to brambly and rummy sweet with a peppery finish. California has recently started to produce syrah in a more recognized Rhone style similar to the French.