

WINE

G U I D E



Where Is It From?

A LOOK AT WHERE DIFFERENT WINES ORIGINATE

While nearly every wine is made from the same basic type of grape that was cultivated thousands of years ago, local variations of that grape — along with different soil, sunlight and climate — mean the same types of wine can taste noticeably different depending on where they come from.

ARGENTINA produces more wine than any other South American country. The vast majority of its production is in the central part of the nation, where Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Chardonnay thrive.

AUSTRALIA shares many “New World” wine traditions with the United States, but its location in the southern hemisphere means harvest happens six months earlier. The most popular grapes grown in Australia are Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay and Semillon.

AUSTRIA has produced wine since the Celtic times, even before the Romans invaded. Grüner Veltliner is most closely associated with it.

CALIFORNIA is the center of the winemaking culture in the United States. The first winery in Napa Valley dates back to 1861, but it didn't emerge as a global-scale wine producer until the 1990s.

CHILE, with its vineyards protected by the Andes Mountains, has an excellent climate for growing grapes. Bordeaux wines are most successful.

FRANCE has long been the world capitol of winemaking, a tradition that continues today. No other country has shaped wine culture as much as France, with the world's most beloved wines all carrying the names of French regions: Bordeaux, Burgundy, the Rhône, Champagne, the Loire and Alsace. It also has some of the strictest laws and most longstanding traditions regarding the production of wine.

GERMANY, with its northern European climate, seems like a far from ideal place to grow wine, but one particular kind thrives here: Riesling. Like France, Germany has strict laws about labeling and grading wines.

ITALY produces more wine than any other country, including France. Since its local varieties are often less elite, meant for ordinary table meals, it doesn't get as much attention as France. Wine is grown in 20 different regions covering the entire nation, making it one of the most diverse wine producers, too.

NEW ZEALAND is a small country, although its wine output is quickly growing. It is best known for Sauvignon Blanc, but it also exports Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

PORTUGAL is most famous for its Mateus label and selection of Port wines, and today it exports a large amount of wine for such a small nation. It also produces Chardonnay and Merlot.

SOUTH AFRICA has an excellent climate for growing wine, and all the popular varieties are grown here. It has a unique hybrid, Pinotage, that was created in the 1920s.

SPAIN has one of the world's oldest winemaking cultures, but it became more European in style with the influx of French settlers in the 1700s. Today it has more than 4 million acres of vineyards.

Corks vs. Screws

A LOOK AT WINE TOPS

It's a ceremony as old as wine itself: popping the cork on your favorite bottle.

While natural corks are certainly the most traditional way to seal a wine bottle, they're not the only one.

DRAWBACKS

The big downside of using natural corks is that they can sometimes cause the wine to spoil. A chemical called trichloroanisole (TCA) occasionally occurs, making the wine smell like mold and ruining the entire bottle.

Fortunately, there are solutions. The wine industry has increasingly been looking to technology to solve this age-old problem.

SYNTHETIC CORKS

One solution is using synthetic corks that don't produce TCA, and hence won't cause the wine to spoil.

The upside is that you can still pop the cork on the bottle, which always feels like the right way to open a wine.

But synthetic corks have their problems, too. Some types of them

can be very difficult to pull and even harder to put back into the neck. Some are made of material so dense that it's tough to get a corkscrew pushed into them.

The good news is that synthetic corks are improving all the time. Newer materials are getting closer to mimicking the properties of natural cork without risking spoilage that can happen with the real thing.

SCREW TOPS

Some daring wineries are even experimenting with a new type of top: the screw-on variety.

While, admittedly, this takes away some of the traditional pomp and pageantry of popping the top on a bottle of wine, it is incredibly convenient and seals the bottle perfectly. It's a tried-and-true way to deliver a proper drink.

Wineries in Australia and New Zealand have been the quickest to adopt screw tops, while American wineries have been more cautious.

European wineries have largely been resistant to change, sticking with tradition instead.



Wineries: A Growing Trend

NEW LOCATIONS OPENING ACROSS AMERICA

America's wine culture was once thought to be centered around one place: Napa Valley. Today, though, wineries are among the nation's fastest growing industries from coast to coast.

Between 1979 and 2010, there has been a 1,152 percent increase in the number of wineries in America. Yes, more than 1,000 percent!

That dramatic growth in the wine industry is evident in most parts of the country, where new wineries are opening up and small, local vineyards are offering distinct, modern takes on this very old industry.

Why all the growth?

CULTURE

A big reason is that wine culture itself is growing.

Many people today enjoy drinking, sharing and collecting wine as a hobby. They will learn all about different varieties of wine, grow a taste for their favorite vintage and explore the many different flavors from around the world.

Exploring wine is a social event, too. Not only do people often drink wine in social settings — both big parties and small, intimate gatherings with friends and loved ones — but they can talk about wine and share what they've learned with other wine lovers.



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Wineries are a fast-growing industry in America as wine lovers treat it like a lifestyle experience or an event, not just a drink.

TOURISM

Another big reason for wine's resurgent popularity is that it makes for great tourism.

Wineries have become major tourist destinations across America, which is great from a business perspective. If you have friends or relatives coming from out of town,

there's a good chance you might spend time at a local winery. And those out-of-town dollars add up.

It's also popular for local or regional tourists. You might enjoy a wine tasting, exploring all the different types available in your own hometown. Some people enjoy taking day trips, too, to see how

wine is grown in vineyards near their home.

EAT LOCAL

Finally, locally grown wine has become a big draw as more Americans are concerned with where and how their food is produced.

Instead of relying on heavi-

ly processed foods made by multi-national companies, many people are turning to local farmers in an attempt to eat more wholesome foods.

The same thing applies to local wines. When you know where the wine came from, and perhaps even the person who created it, that makes the experience even richer.

A Barrel of Flavor

WHY THE CONTAINER MATTERS WHEN AGING WINE

After the grape variety chosen, perhaps the biggest factor in a wine's taste is the barrel it is aged within.

Barrels are also a major part of a wine's complexity, adding overtones of flavor that don't exist from the wine on its own.

While the majority of wine barrels are made of oak, that's where the similarities end. And everything about that barrel — from the way it is constructed, to the temperature it's stored at, to the length of time wine is allowed to age in it — will impact the flavor of the finished wine that reaches your table.

You should also know that barrel making is a true art. The people who make them, called coopers, not only have to painstakingly shape the wooden staves to be liquid-tight, but they also have to heat or "toast" the wood perfectly for the right flavor. The longer it is toasted, the more of those toasty flavors of maple, vanilla or spice will be transferred into the wine itself.

WOOD TYPE

The first factor that affects wine is the type of wood the barrel is made from.

Where the oak comes from can have a significant impact on the taste it imparts to the wine. American oak, for example, tends to add slightly more bitter flavors to the wine like dill or sometimes

coconut. French oak, in comparison, is more likely to add notes of spice or vanilla. Their popularity and distinctive flavor is one reason French oak barrels often command twice the price of American oak.

SIZE & SHAPE

The physical dimensions of a barrel will also impact the flavor of a wine.

Traditionally, wine barrels will hold about 60 gallons, which is the amount two people can carry reasonably. It's also the size that offers the right amount of surface

area for most wines to taste right.

Smaller barrels will have proportionally more wood in contact with the wine. Larger barrels will have proportionally less surface contact.

AGING

The age of the wood itself, along with how much time the

wine is allowed to remain in the barrel, is the last major factor that impacts the flavor of wine.

Some wines will ferment up to three years in a barrel, adding stronger aromas and more intense notes. Others can age as little as 10 months. The difference depends on the type of wine and how heavy a flavor it has.

The age of the wood matters because new oak tends to impart more flavors than old oak. It has more substances that leech into the wine, and those substances are eventually used up. Wine barrels are often used more than once, but they can't be used forever as they lose their effectiveness for adding the right notes during fermentation.



The Low-Down on Merlot

A LOOK AT THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR RED WINE

Its fresh, fruity flavor has helped Merlot explode in popularity since the 1990s, becoming the biggest selling red wine in the world. Some of the most exclusive and expensive wines are Merlot-based, too.

And here in America, Merlot has emerged as an incredibly popular drink that is grown extensively in Washington State and California, among other places.

Fortunately for wine lovers, Merlot can also have a wide variety of flavor profiles depending on where it comes from and how it is made.

While all Merlots are based on the flavors of red fruits such as cherries, plums or raspberries, they can take on tones of spice, vanilla, cedar or smoke when they ferment in oak.

In fact, because they have such a pleasant, fruity flavor, Merlots are among the best selections for people just starting to explore red wines. Their medium body and low tannin content makes them ideal for most people.

FOOD PAIRINGS

The same traits that make Merlot so popular to drink also make it easy to pair with dishes.

Like most red wines, Merlot works well with red meats such as beef, but it's also flexible enough to be used with poultry or pork. Salads and pastas are commonly paired with Merlot to let its fruity flavor shine through.

HISTORY

Merlot is actually a newcomer to the wine lover's spotlight.

The Merlot grape dates back to very early in France's history, but it wasn't officially recognized as a distinct variety of grape until the 19th century.

Merlot is most closely associated with the Bordeaux region of France, and today it is grown more than any other grape in the country.

Why all the popularity?

Much of it stems from a scientific study that reported the health benefits of red wine in the 1990s.

Because Merlot is among the most approachable of red wines, with its easy-to-love taste, it was the variety of choice for wine lovers who wanted the heart benefits of drinking red wine after the study was publicized.



Take the Acid Test

FIND OUT WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT WINE'S ACIDITY

People who appreciate wine know that the acid level is one thing that gives every wine a distinct flavor. An acidic wine will often taste “crisp,” like biting into a tart apple in the fall.

If you think you know a lot about the acidity of wine — or just want to learn more — then take this true-or-false quiz. We call it the “acid test.”

1. White wines generally taste more acidic than red wines.

True
False

2. After 30 seconds, the acidic flavor in a wine will get stronger, almost like an aftertaste.

True
False

3. Red wines with a heavy body tend to have high acidity.

True
False

4. Sweetness and acidity can often balance each other out in a wine.

True
False



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Acidity can add crispness to a good wine, one of the characteristics that makes every variety and vintage unique.

5. The taste buds that detect acidity are found toward the center of your tongue.

True
False

6. New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc is associated with a high level of acidity.

True
False

7. Champagne is considered a classy drink because of its low level of acidity.

True
False

ACID TEST ANSWERS

- 1. True
- 2. False
- 3. False
- 4. True
- 5. False
- 6. True
- 7. False

Matching the Flavors

PAIRING CRAFT BEER WITH FOOD CAN BE REWARDING

Many people are familiar with wine pairings — the process of choosing foods and wines that complement one another's flavors — but that same principle can also be applied to beer selections for a rewarding, classy dining experience.

Craft beers, in particular, are perfect for pairing with food because they come in such a wonderful variety of flavors and can be part of a learning process for you and your guests. Introducing and exploring new, locally brewed beer can be a lot of fun over dinner.

The trick is knowing how to find the right combination.

MATCH INTENSITY

Beers with a strong flavor profile, such as India pale ale, doppelbock or imperial stout, can easily overpower bland or mild food. It's best to find dishes with big, bold flavors to mesh with the beers, such as a spicy curry chicken with IPA or roasted beef with Scotch ale. Some, like barley wine, are so strongly flavored that it's best to serve them with intensely flavored cheeses instead of a meal.

On the flip side, it's good to pair light beers with more delicate foods. Blonde or cream ale pairs well with chicken, salmon or a salad, while witbier is a classic with seafood. A medium-bodied porter can bring out the flavor of barbecue or roasted meat, as can a weizenbock or dark lager.

NOTICE SWEETNESS

When picking the food to pair with beer, be especially careful about using sweet dishes.

While a sugary side dish might be perfectly fine with a sweet stout or helles, many beers have an inherent bitterness that can become unpleasant with sweet foods. In general, the more bitter your beer, the less sweet your food should be to keep the beer's flavor in balance.



Just like with wine, great beers can be paired with the right foods to heighten the sensory experience.