



BEGINNER VARIETALS

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RED VARIETALS

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Cabernet Sauvignon is the primary grape of the wines of Bordeaux. These wines are the benchmark that so many try to imitate- so Cabernet Sauvignon has traveled from Bordeaux to every other wine region in the world! Cabernet Sauvignon is like a jet setting celebrity- it has been everywhere, when it is involved the price goes up, and it always leaves a big impression.

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Pigment	Home	Grows here
Med+	Med+- High	High	High	Bordeaux	California, Tuscany, Spain, Washington, Chile, Australia, South Africa, Spain, Portugal, Greece, China, Argentina, Lebanon

Characteristic flavors	Black cherry	Cedar
	Vanilla	Chocolate
	Black currant	Cigar box
	Herbs	Pencil shavings
	Blackberry	Tobacco
	Mint	Black pepper
	Blueberry	Tea
	Lilac	Eucalyptus
	Red currant	Coffee
	Toffee	Cocoa
	Cassis	

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03401>

MERLOT

Merlot needs a publicist, as she has gotten a bad rap lately. The traditional blending partner of Cabernet Sauvignon in the wines of Bordeaux these wines are sought after and imitated throughout the wine world. The recent film 'Sideways' has had a huge influence on wine preferences- causing Pinot Noir is be lauded more than ever and Merlot to be dismissed. I like to think of Merlot as the girl at the party that you should get to know- but is overlooked at first. Once you get to know her you will realize she created the artwork on your favorite album, is an editor at a magazine you love, and directed a film you admire. Point is- you may not have noticed it but she helped to make all the things/wines you love.

Merlot is the most widely planted grape in Bordeaux, and dominates the blend in Right Bank wines.

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Pigment	Home	Grows here
Low	High	Med	Med	Bordeaux	Right bank Bordeaux, France, Washington, NE Italy, California, Tuscany

Characteristic flavors	Jammy	Chocolate
	Fleshy mid-palate	Spice
	Supple	Violets
	Ripe fruit	Plum
	Chewy tannins	Black fruits

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03405>

CABERNET FRANC

Cabernet Franc is primarily used as a blending partner in the wines of Bordeaux. It is one of the six varietals allowed in Bordeaux blends. On the right bank of Bordeaux more Cabernet Franc is planted than Cabernet Sauvignon. In France's Loire Valley it can shine on its own, as in the wines of Chinon. It is known as Bouchet in Bordeaux's Right Bank, and also known as Bouchy, Breton, and Bouchet in the Loire. Often compared to Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc is lighter, more fragrant, and ripens earlier. Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc are the parents of Cabernet Sauvignon.

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Pigment	Home	Grows here
Med-High	Med-High	Med	Med	Bordeaux	Bergerac, Madiran, Loire, California, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa

Characteristic Flavors	Fresh mushrooms	Sweet herb
	Fall leaves	Mulberry
	Violet	Moss
	Hummus/potting soil	Tobacco
	Wild Strawberry	Wet tree bark
	Cocoa	Tea cranberry

http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/20070805_1

MALBEC

This is one of the six varietals blended to make Bordeaux wines. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot tend to dominate the blend while Petit Verdot, Malbec, and Carmenere are either sprinkled in or not included at all. Malbec is the main grape of the Cahors region in France. It was brought to Argentina in 1868 and has experienced enormous success there.

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Pigment	Home	Grows here
Low	High	High	High	Bordeaux	Cahors, Argentina, Loire, Bergerac, Midi

Characteristic Flavors	Red plums	Black currants
	Dried cherries	Black cherry
	Spicy	Blackberry
	Juicy	Violets
	Velvet texture	

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/malbec>

PINOT NOIR

Pinot Noir is one demanding high maintenance grape. She easily gets too cold, too hot, her skin is fragile, she needs some rain- but not too much. While that may sound like too much work in the vineyard- a few tastes of a delicious Pinot Noir and you will know that it was worth all the efforts. With that great risk comes the great reward of something unforgettable. These wines are all about nuance and delicacy. Pinot Noir is the grape responsible for all the great red wines in Burgundy. There are two styles of Pinot Noir: Sweet style: Simple flavor profile, fruit drive, raspberries, cherries, strawberries, delicate and light, floral, violets, lilac, silk, taffeta, spice, supple tannins

Savory style: Complex flavor profile, organic, mushrooms, forest, earth, smoke, barnyard, full bodied, weighty, exotic, incense, sandalwood, spice, satin, brushed cotton, flowers, moderate tannins
Pinot Noir is known as Spatburgunder in Germany, Pinot Nero in Italy, and Blauer Spatburgunder in Austria. This grape is prone to mutation and there are endless clones of Pinot Noir- including Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc. It is also the parent of both Chardonnay and Gamay.

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Pigment	Home	Grows here
High	Med	Low-Med	Low	Burgundy	Champagne, California, Oregon, New Zealand, Germany, Australia, Austria

(PINOT NOIR CON'T)

Characteristic Flavors	Raspberries	Violets
	Cherries	Toast
	Strawberries	Lilac
	Blackberries	Clove/cinnamon
	Plum	Truffles
	Earth	Smoke
	Sandalwood	Incense
	Barnyard	Wet forest floor
	Leather	Meaty/gamy

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03402>

SYRAH

Syrah is the main varietal of the wines of the Northern Rhone, including the legendary Cote Rotie. Sometimes Syrah is known as Shiraz, particularly in Australia and California. This same grape can produce wines of two different styles:

Fruit driven style: Fruit, blackberry jam, aromatics, vanilla bean, baked earth, smoke, chocolate

Spice driven style: Black pepper, rosemary, lavender, leathery pony, musk, game, Mexican mole sauce

DNA analysis has shown that Syrah is the offspring of French varietals Dureza and Mondeuse Blanche.

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Pigment	Home	Grows here
Med	High	High	High	Rhone	Australia, California, South Africa

Characteristic Flavors	Smoke	Mineral
	Game	Mint
	Tar	Leather
	Toast	Blackberry
	Pepper	Sweat
	Raspberry	Baked earth
	Chocolate	Spice
	Herb	Lavender
	Must	Anise
	Char	Jam
	Black olives	Rosemary

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03407>

GRENACHE

Grenache is the primary grape in Chateauneuf-du-Pape, Cotes du Rhone, and other Southern Rhone wines. It is commonly blended with Syrah and Mourvedre in its native Rhone Valley, but also in California and Australia. On the Italian island of Sardinia this varietal is known as Cannonau, and in Spain it is known as Garnacha. Grenache is frequently made into a rose, and can also be made into a fortified dessert wine.

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Pigment	Home	Grows here
Low	High	Low	Low	Rhone	Spain, Southern France, California, Australia

Characteristic Flavors	Strawberry	Black pepper
	Ethyl acetate	Cranberry
	Sour cherry	Alcohol

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03408>

GAMAY

Every year right before Thanksgiving Beaujolais Nouveau floods the market with the first wine made from that year's harvest. Gamay is the grape used to make this fresh, light, candied concoction. This annual celebration of the harvest is fermented by a quick carbonic maceration. It thrives in the Southern Burgundy region of Beaujolais. Gamay is the child of Pinot Noir and Gouais Blanc. There are two 'styles' of wine Gamay can make:

Gamay (Beaujolais) style: fresh fruit flavors, red fruit, delicate, light, floral, perfumed, nervy, high acid, best when young

Pinot Noir style: Ripe fruit flavors, black fruits, deep, earthy, spicy, minerals, soft, supple, rich, age-worthy

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Pigment	Home	Grows here
High	Low-Med	Low	Low	Beaujolais	Loire

Characteristic Flavors	Lily of the valley	Orange peel
	Raspberry	Iris
	Cranberry	Banana
	Rose	Strawberry
	Cherry	Violets

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/gamay>

ZINFANDEL

Zinfandel is a quintessential American varietal- it really only grows in California, it loves alcohol, and goes great with BBQ! Zinfandel would never walk into a room quietly with an air of mystery- HE would stand in the doorway, all eyes would turn, and there would be theme music playing as if to announce him. This is a big bad ass grape and the wines will knock you down if you are not careful.

Most wine grapes in the world have a French origin. Zinfandel is truly American, and it's exact roots have been the subject of much debate. Zinfandel and Italy's Primitivo are two clones of the same varietal. The origin of Zinfandel is Croatia, and it was probably brought to the Eastern United States in the early 1830's. The Gold Rush of the 1840's brought this grape out to California. Zinfandel is typically aged in American Oak (what a patriotic grape) and is very long lived, with many vines over 100 years old!

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Pigment	Home	Grows here
Med	High	Med	High	California	California

Characteristic Flavors	Raspberry	Black raspberry
	Blackberry	Raisin
	Black pepper	Candied fruit
	Nutmeg	Clove
	Cinnamon	Cedar
	Anise	Sandalwood
	Tar	Vanilla
	Jam	Spice

http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/20071209_1

SANGIOVESE

Sangiovese's name is derived from Latin 'sanquis jovis' meaning 'blood of Jupiter.' This is the dominant grape of Italy's Chianti.

Sangiovese has many clones- here are a few:

Sangiovese Grosso (big Sangiovese) small berried

Sangiovese Piccolo (small Sangiovese) large berried

Prugnolo- (purple/prune colored berry) Vino Nobile di Montepulciano

Brunello- (little brown one- brown berried) Brunello di Montalcino, Rosso di Montalcino

(SANGIOVESE CON'T)

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Pigment	Home	Grows here
High	Med	Med	Low	Tuscany	

Characteristic Flavors	Fresh cherry	Thyme
	Toast	Dried cherry
	Sun baked earth	Dried orange peel
	Wood	Spice
	Charcoal	Leather chocolate
	Clove	Black cherry
	Licorice	Sour strawberry
	Mulberry	Tobacco
	Chestnuts	

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03410>

NEBBIOLO

Nebbiolo derives its name from the Latin 'nebbia' meaning 'fog,' due to late ripening in autumn and the fog that shrouds the Piedmont foothills. Barolo, known as 'the King,' and Barbaresco, known as 'the Queen' are made from this noble grape. Nebbiolo is really at home in North western Italy, especially Piedmont, and has not shown to reach great heights anywhere else.

Nebbiolo is known as Spanna in Piedmont and Chiavennasca in Lombardy.

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Pigment	Home	Grows here
High	High	High	Low-Med	Piedmont	Northwestern Italy

Characteristic Flavors	Tar	Bitter chocolate
	Truffles	Roses
	Cocoa	Iris
	Twigs	Violets
	Forest floor	Autumn

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03413>

TEMPRANILLO

This is the primary grape of Spain's Rioja wines. Grown in Rioja, and throughout Spain, this varietal is known as Tinto Fino, Tinta de Toro, or Tinto del Pais in the Duero Valley; Ojo de Liebre in Penedes, and Cencibel in Valdepenas. In Portugal it is known as Tinta Roriz and is one of the main grapes in Port production. The name Tempranillo is derived from the Spanish 'temprano' meaning 'early' as this grape is known to ripen several weeks before most other Spanish grapes.

Acid	Alcohol	Tannin	Extract	Home	Grows here
Low	Med	High	Low	Rioja	Spain, Portugal, Argentina, France, US, Chile

Characteristic Flavors	Leather	Earthy
	Cherry	Black Currants
	Tobacco	Spice
	Dusty	Herbs
	Vanilla	Red berries

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03409>

WHITE VARIETALS

CHARDONNAY

Chardonnay is responsible for the great white wines of Burgundy. It reflects terrior very well and can be quite a chameleon. There are two main styles of Chardonnay:

Old World: Citrus, lemon, grapefruit, granny smith apples, butter, nutty, honey, minerals/flint, little oak, high acid, long lived

New World: Tropical fruit, banana, pineapple, apple pie/cobbler, butterscotch, caramel, smoky/toasty, praline, burnt sugar, vanilla, ginger, nutmeg, heavy oak, low acid, short lived

I think of Chardonnay like a great model- you can put any variety of makeup, hair style, and clothing on her and she will look like you want her to look. In Champagne, Chardonnay is one of the three main grapes used in a typical blend. A Blancs de Blancs is made entirely from Chardonnay.

Synonyms for Chardonnay are Klevner in Germany and Feinburgunder and Morillon in Austria. Chardonnay is the offspring of Pinot Noir and Goulais Blanc.

Acid	Alcohol	Aromatic	Extract	Home	Grows here
Low-High	Med-High	No	High	Burgundy	Champagne, Portugal, Germany, Austria, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile, Spain, Italy, Everywhere...

Characteristic Flavors	Flint/stone	Green apple
	Citrus	Pears
	Melon	Nuts
	Pineapple	Honey
	Banana	Peach
	Apricot	Ginger
	Butter	Vanilla
	Smoke	Oak
	Burnt sugar	Butterscotch
	Caramel	Nutmeg

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03404>

SAUVIGNON BLANC

Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon form the basis on Bordeaux's white wines. It is also responsible for Pouilly Fume and Sancerre from France's Loire Valley. Sauvignon Blanc likes a cool climate and can become flat in acidity and flavor in warmer climates. In different places it has a distinct characteristic:

Loire- pungent, smoky, mineral

Bordeaux- grassy, herbal, oregano, thyme

New Zealand- grapefruit, citrus, asparagus, jalapeno

California- fig, melon

New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc has made quite an impact since arriving onto the world wine scene in the 1980's. Fume Blanc is a term Californians typically call a barrel aged Sauvignon Blanc. This is a unique style as most Sauvignon Blanc is fermented in stainless steel or neutral oak.

Acid	Alcohol	Aromatic	Extract	Home	Grows here
High	Med	Yes	Med	Bordeaux	Loire, New Zealand, California, Italy, South Africa, Australia, Austria, Germany, Chile

(SAUVIGNON BLANC CON'T)

Characteristic Flavors	Melon	Pear
	Bell Pepper	Fig
	Hay	Grass
	Pineapple	Cat Pee
	Musk	Lemon
	Celery	Toast
	Kiwi	Lemon grass
	Stone	Grapefruit
	Gunflint	Asparagus
	Gooseberry	Nuts
	Herbs	Lemon-lime
	Jalapeno	

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03406>

SEMILLON

This thin skinned grape is susceptible to Noble Rot, and is the basis for the great sweet wines of Sauternes. In Bordeaux Semillon is typically blended with Sauvignon Blanc with Muscadelle allowed as well.

Acid	Alcohol	Aromatic	Extract	Home	Grows here
Low	High	No	High	Bordeaux	Bordeaux, Sauternes, Australia, South Africa

Characteristic Flavors	As a table wine:	
	Pear	Citrus
	Lanolin	Wax
	Nuts	Honey
	Flowers	Minerals
	As a dessert wine:	
	Melons	Peach
	Pineapple	Apricot
	Tropical Fruit	Nectarine
	Citrus	Butterscotch
	Honey	Vanilla
	Caramel	Flowers
	Mineral	Nuts
	Spice	

http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/20061018_1

CHENIN BLANC

Chenin Blanc is a versatile grape making still, sparkling, dry, and sweet wines. It can be affected by Noble Rot which concentrates the flavors into a dessert wine.

Sweet Chenin- Fruit driven, apples, pears, melons, apricots, honey, honey roasted nuts, crème fraiche
 Dry Chenin- Nutty and lactic, hazelnut, wheat berries, straw flower, toasted brioche, clotted cream, buttermilk, minerals and citrus

Chenin Blanc is the grape responsible for Vouvray, Savennieres, and Quarts de Chaume. Chenin Blanc is known as Steen in South Africa.

Acid	Alcohol	Aromatic	Extract	Home	Grows here
High	Med	Yes	High	Loire	South Africa, New Zealand, US, Australia, South America

(CHENIN BLANC CON'T)

Characteristic Flavors	Lactic-	
	Crème fraîche	Clotted cream
	Sour cream	Buttermilk
	Plain yogurt	
	Nuts/grains-	
	Almond	Marzipan
	Straw flowers	Nuts
	Hazelnut	Toasted bread
	Ripe grain	Grains
	Fruit-	
	Lemon	Pear
	Melon	Dried flowers
	Apple	Orange peel
Apricot	Fruit	

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03411>

RIESLING

Reflects soil type/terroir:

Blue Slate- minerals and green apple

Red Slate- Peach and smoke

Volcanic soil- Mango, papaya, tropical fruits

Reflects climate:

Cool Climate- lean, reserved, high acid, bone dry to sweet, citrus fruit and apples, multifaceted

Warm Climate- opulent, full bodied, round, bone dry to sweet, tropical fruit/juicy fruit

The following are False Synonyms

Grauer Riesling= Rulander (Pinot Gris) (Germany)

Gray Riesling= Trousseau

Emerald Riesling= Muscadelle and Riesling cross

Cape Riesling, Paarl Riesling, and Clare Riesling= Crouchen Blanc

Welschriesling= unrelated grape grown in Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Italy

Italian Riesling= Welschriesling

Schwarz Riesling= Pinot Meunier or Mullerrebe (Germany)

*White Riesling or Johannisberg Riesling are synonyms for true Riesling

Acid	Alcohol	Aromatic	Extract	Home	Grows here
High	Low	Yes	High	Germany	Alsace, Austria, New Zealand, US, Australia

Characteristic Flavors	Apple	Peach Stone	Minerals	Slate
	Hyacinth			
	Passion fruit	Lime Taragon	Grapefruit	Fennel
	Grapefruit			
	Pineapple	Honey Orange blossom	Kiwi	Lemon
	curd Talc			
	Honeysuckle	Apricot	Ginger	Jasmine
	Juicy fruit gum			Flint

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03403>

PINOT GRIGIO

Also known as Pinot Gris in Alsace, this varietal is named after its grey ('gris') pulp. Its skin varies from grey-blue to brown-pink. A mutation of Pinot Noir, this grape can vary in acidity, alcohol, flavor, and extract. In Germany it is known as Rulander and Grauburgunder. Pinot Gris is one of the noble grapes of Alsace, which means it can be used in Grand Cru wines.

(PINOT GRIGIO CON'T)

Acid	Alcohol	Aromatic	Extract	Home	Grows here
Low-High	Low-High	No	Low-High	Alsace	Northern Italy, Germany, Oregon, California

Characteristic Flavors	Apple	Lemon
	Butter	Pear
	Almond	Chalk
	Mineral	Flint
	Steel	Orange Blossom
	Honey	Honeysuckle
	Peach	Cream

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/jrs03412>

VIOGNIER

Viognier is a wine for romantics. It has wafting aromas of flowers, honey, and must. It almost disappeared: In the mid 1980's there was only 80 acres of it planted in the entire world (the romantic near tragedy of a love that almost wasn't). It has a hedonistic perfume and a luscious body. It is easy to make bad Viognier since the acids are naturally low. If you pick too early the perfume will be short and undeveloped, but if you pick too late it will be too heady and alcoholic. They say timing is everything in life and in love.

In Cote Rotie and Australia Viognier is often co-fermented with Syrah. Recent DNA evidence suggests a relationship between Nebbiolo and Viognier. It makes sense if you think of the floral perfume commonality.

Acid	Alcohol	Aromatic	Extract	Home	Grows here
Low	High	Yes	Yes	Northern Rhone	Southern France, Australia, California.

Characteristic Flavors	Grass	Peach
	Honey	Gooseberry
	Apricot	Ginger
	Citrus	Honeysuckle
	Orange peel	Lemon grass
	Musk	Tangerine
	Passion fruit	Guava
	Kiwi	Mango

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/viognier>

GEWURZTRAMINER

Gewurztraminer takes it's name from the German word for spice ('gewurz') and the town of Tramin in Northern Italy. In Alsace it is one of the four noble grapes and can produce Grand Cru wines. Gewurztraminer is all about perfume and exotic spices. It is a teinturier grape- which means it's pulp is pink/red. Typically wine grapes, both red and white, have a clear pulp. The pink/red pulp gives the white wines made from Gewurztraminer a deeper golden hue.

Acid	Alcohol	Aromatic	Extract	Home	Grows here
Low	High	Yes	High	Alsace	Germany, Austria, Northern Italy, New Zealand

Characteristic Flavors	Nutmeg	Rose
	Citrus peel	Ginger
	Lychee nut	Sandalwood
	Mace	Cardamom
	Bayberry	Allspice
	Grapefruit	Pine

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/gewurztraminer>

MUSCAT

Muscat is believed to be the grape that all other have descended from. Yeah, you heard that correctly- every wine grape you love is here on Earth because a long time ago Muscat existed. There are more than 200 clones of this ancestral varietal. The primary clones are Muscat Blanc a Petits Grains, Muscat of Alexandria, Muscat Ottonel, and Muscat Hamburg.

The name Muscat is derived from its bee attracting scent. Pliny the Elder described a sweet wine with strong aroma- an 'uva apiana' or 'grape of the bees.' There is a link possible from the Latin word 'musca' meaning 'fly' ('mosca' in Italian and 'mouche' in French).

Muscat is quite diverse making still, sparkling, dry, and sweet wines. Two types can be described as follows:

Unfortified: Fresh grapes, fresh white raisins, mango, apricot, honeysuckle, citrus, orange blossom, rosewater

Fortified: Concentrated must, fresh white raisins in rum, dried mango, dried apricot, crystallized honey, citrus peel, orange zest, rose petal

Acid	Alcohol	Aromatic	Extract	Home	Grows here
Med-High	High	Yes	High	France	Spain, Portugal, Austria, Australia, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, US

Characteristic Flavors		
	Musk	Apricot
	Burnt caramel	White raisin
	Honey	Mango
	Orange blossom	Mousy/earthy
	Honeysuckle	Citrus
	Rosewater	Fresh grapes
	Peach	Gardenia
	Lime blossom	

<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/ocw/CH2276.html>