

WINE CLASS

INTRODUCTION

MARIO'S PLACE

Goals of Wine Education Course

1. *Enjoy & be interested in the pleasures of wines (turn on the “light bulb”)*
2. *To understand what you are tasting, to understand what constitutes quality & how to gauge it*
3. *To be able to communicate it to others*
4. *Understand varietals and regions.*

I. Tasting and evaluating (slow down & pay attention)

(Tools necessary: wine, wine glass {preferably a good one} a nose, taste buds & your attention)

a. Appearance / Cloudy or Clear?

(for reds) light (pink, garnet), medium, dark (full ruby, purple as wine gets older (brick, browning))

- b. Nose: *Swirls wine in glass to aerate (mix air with wine to vaporize aromatic compounds and thus release them) place nose to glass, smell! What comes to mind? Free associate: fruity (what kind of berries, plum, mango, etc...) (chocolate, oakiness, flowers, grass, etc...) Is the impression intense, expressive or closed? Allow a little time, especially with important wines, for the aromas to develop in the glass.*

The entire idea of swirling and sniffing may seem (on the outside) pretentious but the idea is to coax out pleasure & discover hidden layers to a wine.

(note:) Don't wear strong perfume or cologne. Be aware of smells in normal activities & you will get better at smelling wine.

c. Tasting The Wine

The idea is to take a medium sip, hold it in your mouth, draw some air in and move the wine around your mouth. You are not chugging it like a beer or soda.

Palate – the overall impression that a wine gives on your mouth “this wine has a rich palate”.

Your Palate – A tasting Apparatus

Tongue – Front – detects sweetness

Back - bitterness

Sides – acidity (sourness)

Move the wine on your tongue to pick up nuances...

Texture and Weight –

Is the wine heavy or light or medium?

Is it smooth or rough (tannic)?

Is it sharp or round and soft?

Do you like what you tasted? Does it give pleasure? To understand & order / recommend what you like; you must be able to explain it.

How to turn what you taste into words

II. Wine Speak – A language of its own (subjective, romantic, technical, and used incorrectly, pretentious).

- a. **Sweetness** – dry is the opposite of sweet / off – dry means slightly sweet. Sweet or fruity?
- b. **Acidity**-all wines contain acid (tartaric acid is natural to grapes). Some wines are more acidic than others. For whites, acidity is what provides the wines backbone, giving it firmness.
Flabbiness-softness from lack of acidity (soft, round, fat)
A wine that has high acidity is crisp .
A wine with low acid is soft
A wine with too much acidity is shrill, hard, lean, tart
- c. **Tannin**-substance that exists naturally in grape skins, seeds and stems. Red wines are fermented on their skins. This process gives them color and tannin. Tannin (and acidity) preserves the wine for aging. The presence of tannin is indicated by drying-out feeling in the mouth. Tannin is sensed texturally. Tannin is the backbone of the wine the way acidity is for whites. It gives the flesh of wine shape. A wine that is too tannic can be called: Hard, tough, astringent, rough, coarse.
- d. **Body**-impression of the whole wine, the impression of weight and size. The sense of body is largely determined by the level of alcohol. An ounce of any wine will occupy the same space in your mouth and weigh the same as any other, but we are not talking physics here. We are talking about how the wine feels in your mouth. Is it light-bodied, medium-bodied, or full-bodied?
- e. **Flavors**-This is the most obvious. What do you taste? It is impossible to express without having the words at your disposal. General terms: Is it fruity, earthy, herbal, etc...

III. Flavors/Aromas Associated With Wine

Fruit

Whites: *Apple (Green Or Golden?)*
Pear
Pineapple
Melon
Lemon

Orange
Grapefruit
Orange Zest
Quince

Lime
Apricot
Peach (under ripe, or ripe or overripe?)
Nectarine

Non-Fruit

Oak
Toast
Floral (Rose, Jasmine, Or Iris)

Herbs: Mint, Tarragon, Thyme,
Rosemary, "Cut Grass"

Spices: Vanilla, Sandalwood,
Cloves, Cinnamon, Black Pepper,
White Pepper

Reds:

Blackberry
Plum
Black Cherry
Red Cherry
Raspberry
Dried Cherry
Cranberry
Pomegranate
Strawberry
Prune
Raisin
Tomato

Almond
Chocolate
Coffee
Tar (Asphalt)
Tobacco
Leather
Honey
Hay
Smoke
Roast Meat
Raw Burger
Game
Barnyard
Wet Dog
Earth
Petrol
Rubber (Burned)
Mushrooms
Gunflint
Veggies-Asparagus, Bell
Peppers

IV. Possible “Off” Flavors & Aromas

- a. **Corked Wine**- TCA bacteria from cork, ruins wine by giving it a damp, cardboard smell & taste, destroys fruit & dries texture
- b. **Cooked** – Fruit can actually taste cooked from poor storage & poor distribution conditions
- c. **Bacteria Smells** – Wine are alive & in some cases unstable.
- d. **Oxidized** – Exposure to oxygen leaves wine dull & tired, losing the freshness of its fruit.
- e. **Sulfur (SO₂)** – Chemical used to control bacteria, in excess can overwhelm fruit, dominating wine with flavors & aromas of burned matches or natural gas.
- f. **Rot** –
- g. **Vinegar** –

V. Mysterious Concepts

- a. **Balance**: Major components of wine:

1. Sweetness
2. Acidity
3. Tannins
4. Alcohol

Balance is the relationship of these components to each other. A wine is balanced when the components fit together harmoniously, with none sticking out unpleasantly (harsh tannin, sharp acidity, burning from high alcohol, etc...)

Another way to think of it is as the interrelationship between the hard aspects (acid & tannin) and the soft (alcohol & sweetness).

- b. **Length**: Refers tastes across the full palate, does the wine linger? This is a key sign of quality. Some wines are made in an “up front” way, obvious & impressive upon sipping, then fading quickly. A “short” finish is a negative characteristic. A “long” finish is very positive (it bodes well for aging too)(of course, the flavors should all be positive)
- c. **Depth**: The opposite of straight-forward & simple, implies underlying layers of flavor & texture.
- d. **Complexity**: Simple, straight-forward wines are ok but really good wines have extra dimensions (aromas, tastes, textures) that make them really interesting.
- e. **Typicity**: Determining whether a wine is true to its type (does it taste like the grape its from & is it representative of where it’s from?) To evaluate this, you need to know the textbook characteristics of the varietal, as well as having an overview of the broad characteristics, of the major wine regions of the world.

SPARKLING WINE & CHAMPAGNE

1. Sparkling Wine is a category of wine where one of the natural by products of fermentation, Carbon Dioxide, is suspended in the wine.
2. Sparkling wine is produced in almost all wine making countries. The largest & best producers are France, Spain, Italy & California.
3. There are 3 methods used to make sparkling wine
 - a. Methode Champenoise
 - b. Charmat Method
 - c. Transfer Method
4. Only sparkling wines made in French region of Champagne can be called Champagne. A sparkling wine made of the same grapes and the same style but in Italy for example, can be referred to as a Method Champanise, but not Champagne!

CHAMPAGNE AC

- The Champagne region produces the most celebrated sparkling wines in the world. East of Paris, it is the most northerly *AC in France - a place where grapes struggle to ripen fully.
- They are *fermented once, then undergo a second *fermentation in the bottle, which produces carbon dioxide, contained under pressure.
- It is through this ***méthode champenoise** or Champagne method that Champagne acquires tight, crisp, long-lasting bubbles and a yeasty, toasty dimension to its flavour.

GRAPE VARIETIES

Champagne is produced only from

- » Chardonnay
- » Pinot Noir
- » Pinot Meunier

Chardonnay produces light, perfumed Champagne and dominates the vineyards of the Côte des Blancs.

Pinot Noir is carefully pressed to avoid getting any colour in the wine, and the resulting flavour is fuller and meatier than Chardonnay. Pinot Noir is best from the Montagne de Reims area.

Pinot Meunier, the most popular variety, adds fruitiness and perfume and makes the Champagne more approachable.

STYLES OF CHAMPAGNE

- **Non-vintage:** Most Champagne is a blend of two or more *vintages. Quality varies enormously, depending on who has made the wine and how long it has been aged. Most Champagne is sold as *Brut, which is a dry, but not bone-dry style. Interestingly, Extra Dry denotes a style less dry than Brut.
- **Vintage:** Champagne made with grapes from a single vintage. As a rule, it is only made in the best years.
- **Blanc de Blancs:** Champagne made solely from Chardonnay - generally, more creamy and with an emphasis on fruit flavours, lightness and elegance.
- **Blanc de Noirs:** Champagne made entirely from black grapes, either Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, or a combination of the two. These Champagnes have upfront character and less elegance than some.
- **Rosé:** Pink Champagne, made either from black grapes or (more usually) by mixing a little still red wine into white Champagne.
- **De luxe cuvée:** In theory the finest Champagne and certainly always the most expensive, packaged in the fanciest bottles.

Methode Champenoise

1. Harvest Parameter - picked at a lower level of ripeness (lower Brix: i.e. 22-24 Brix for table wine vs 17-19 for sparkling). Thus it has lower alcohol and high acidity. This allows the “secondary fermentation” to occur. The coolest regions are always preferred.
2. Press Grapes – crushing whole clusters vs destemming thus minimizing tannin and color from skins. Gentle first press is done which will yield best juice. Subsequent presses are considered inferior.
3. Fermentation – usually done in stainless steel tanks to create base wine (some use barrels and/or wooden tanks). Warmer fermentation is desirable thus it is rather fast (6 to 10 days). Base (still) wines are filtered to remove yeast & solids.
4. Blending the cuvee – The base wine is tasted and components are selected and blended to create and maintain a “house style”. (The blender must project what the wine will taste like after secondary fermentation and two to four years aging on the yeast). Lots can be vineyard sites or varietals (Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier).
5. Secondary Fermentation “El Tirage”: The blended wine (cuvee) is bottled and mixed with a “liqueur” of yeast and cane sugar dissolved in the wine, and then topped with a metal cap. Secondary fermentation begins and lasts for over a month. The yeast then die (from the alcohol they produced by converting sugar) and break down. This is called Autolysis. The yeast cells breakdown, releasing amino acids, which create a sense of toastiness. This also enables the CO₂ to remain dissolved in the wine. The bottles are left “en triage” for 2 to 4 years in contact with the yeast to develop its signature doughy-yeasty bouquet.

6. Remuage or Riddling – Gravity is used to collect the dead yeast in the neck of the bottle to facilitate removal. The bottle is stored in A-frame racks and turned ¼ turn per day.
7. Disgorgement – Bottles chilled to 25 degrees and held for 1 to 2 weeks to stabilize. The disgorgement takes place at 45 degrees. The bottles are placed neck down in freezing solution of water and salt. The collected yeast sediment in the neck is frozen into a plug. The plug is pushed out by the pressure of the C)2 when upright to 45 degree angle (this is done by a machine and opened).
8. Dosage – adjusting balance by adding cane sugar, or vintage and reserve wine. This adjusts the flavor & balance as well as topping off anything lost during disgorgement.
9. Bottling – corked, wired & finish with foil. The bottle is aged from 3 months to 1 year.

Charmet Process –

Secondary fermentation takes place in tanks, not in bottle and can be completed in weeks, not several years.

Transfer Process –

Secondary fermentation is completed and the wine is aged on the yeast in bottle, the wine is emptied into a tank, clarified, filtered, given a dosage and re-filled into new bottles.

CHARDONNAY

Originated in France

(The wines are known by the appellation, the varietal is not listed)

Burgundy

Montrachet

Batard Montrachet

Bienvenue Montrachet

Chevalier Montrachet

Pugligny Montrachet

Chassagne Montrachet

Meursault

Chablis

Macon (Pouilly Fuisse)

Champagne

Blanc de Blancs (100%)

or blended with Pinot Noir and/or Pinot Munier

Also grown in every major wine producing country but White Burgundy is still the prototype. It is adaptable to many climates and soils and is fairly straightforward to grow.

Flavors and Characteristics

- a) Tends to be full bodied*
- b) Tends toward medium acidity (depending on terroir-climate)*
- c) Fruit – apples (green, golden, red), citrus, & tropical fruits (pineapple, mango – in warmer climates)*
- d) Other flavors – minerality, florality, nuttiness (hazelnut when aging)*
- e) Oak – the Burgundian prototype utilizes oak barrels for aging. Oak imparts aromas and flavors of toast, smoke, vanilla, cream, wood spice, (butter & butterscotch aromas & flavors develop from interaction of wood and malolactic fermentation). The toast & age & size of the barrels (as well as the intensity of the fruit) determine how much flavor will be affected. Some Chardonnay's are made without oak but they are the exception, not the rule.*

Generalizations on Characteristics of

Burgundian Model

vs

New World Chardonnay

Higher acidity (cooler climate)

More minerality

Less obvious oak

Better aging track record

Focus on site rather than technique

Lower acidity (warmer)

Higher alcohol

More obviously fruity

More obvious oak character

Tend not to age well

(with exceptions)

The Learning Curve – “The Cult of Wine Making Exhibitionism”

In California during the Chardonnay boom of the 80's & 90's, there was a tendency to apply Burgundian techniques to our sunnier, warmer climate. In Burgundy, producers are sometimes forced to chapalize (add sugar to the must when the potential alcohol is too low). In California, the problem is opposite: grape sugars rise very quickly at the expense of acidity and tend towards higher alcohol.

Malolactic Fermentation

(The process of transforming the sharper malic acid into the more gentle lactic acid) is crucial to soften wines in Burgundy but when applied in a heavy handed or “willy-nilly” manner to Californian Chardonnays, it robs them of the precious acidity that would keep them fresh & balanced.

Oak Aging

This traditional “vessel” for wine before it is bottled does impact its character. But in the earlier days, its character tended to take on too much of a role. Many consumers grew up on big, super-ripe, “full-blown” California Chardonnay that would be mouth filling, very oaky & fall-apart in a year or two. Picking at high levels of ripeness, + full malolactic fermentation + aging in all new oak tended to make exhibitionistic, rotund wines that had little elegance, balance, nuance or age worthiness. Thankfully, there has been somewhat of a retreat away from this style.

Other Important Winemaking Terms

- a) Lees – sediment that settles of the wine container, made up of dead yeast cells, seeds, pulp, stem, skin fragments, & tartrates (gross & fine lees)*
- b) Racking (soutirage) – the process of removing the wine from its sediment (lees) that has settled at the bottom of the container. Wine is separated from gross lees shortly after fermentation. The fine lees are dealt with at a later time as they settle. Wine is removed from top of container leaving lees on bottom.*
- c) Lees Contact (in barrel) – adds complexity, encourages malolactic fermentation (sur lie)*
- d) Batonnage – Lees stirring, done with a stick (baton), increases the buffering affect between the wine and the barrel (thus is less likely to pick up color and flavor & tannin from the barrel)*

RIESLING

Germany

Regions:

Mosel-Saar-Ruwer

Nahe

Pfalz

Rheingau

Rheinhessen

Classifications based on levels of ripeness & sweetness -

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| a. <i>Tafelwein (Table Wine)</i> | <i>ALSO: Trocken Wine (dry)</i> |
| b. <i>Qualitatswein (QbA)</i> | <i>Halbtrocken (semi-dry)</i> |
| c. <i>*Kabinett (usually off-dry & lighter)</i> | <i>Sekt (sparkling >rare)</i> |
| d. <i>*Spatlese</i> | |
| e. <i>* Auslese</i> | |
| f. <i>Beerenauslese (Dessert Wine)</i> | |
| g. <i>Trockenbeerenauslese</i>
<i>(Dessert wine, very sweet & dense, remarkably long-lived)</i> | |
| h. <i>Eiswein</i>
<i>(made from frozen grapes harvested in Dec-Feb, always dessert wine with strong acidity)</i> | |

Characteristics & Overview –

Riesling is arguably the greatest or at least in the top two greatest of the white grapes. The unfortunate thing is that it is greatly misunderstood. It has amazing ability to (in its finest forms) age and show nuance and express “terroir” (transmitting the soil & climate characteristic into the bottle).

German Riesling usually has some sweetness even if it is in Kabinett form and unfortunately, misguided consumers perceive that as a fault or more accurately is something they should not like. But Riesling is about so much more than sweetness.

Low Alcohol – usually 8% - 11%, can range higher, trocken wines even up to 14%

No Oak –

Stainless steel fermentation & aging. Unlike with Chardonnay, wood is almost never used, thus the wine even more precisely reflects the soil & climate.

The vine is the hardiest in terms of dealing with cold, severe weather. As such, it is no surprise that it has flourished in Northern Europe.

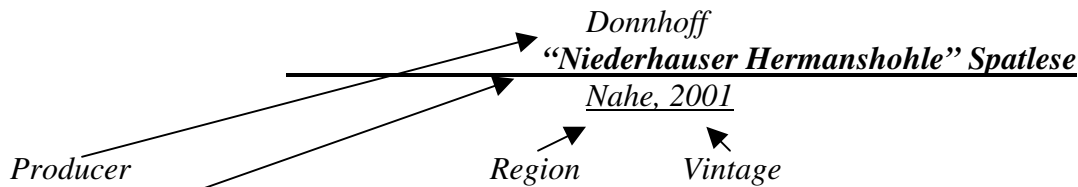
The long, slow ripening period (harvest usually from mid October into November and even later for sweet wines) maximizes the flavor development while preserving acidity.

Aromatic/Flavor Profile –

Fruit – Apples, apricot, nectarine, peach, pineapple, lemon, tangerine, mango, cherry, pear

Other - Slate, mineral, petrol-fusel, stone, pork, smoke, salt, orange blossom, lemonverbena, lemongrass, vanilla, almond, spice, herbs

Reading German Wine Label –



Vineyard – literally Hermanshohle in the village of Niederhaus)

Other Areas of Riesling Greatness: Albeit Dry

Higher in alcohol (12-14+% for dry wines)

Non-Dessert wines are distinctly dry with focus on minerality, definitely more austere than its German counter parts.

Austria

3 Top Areas: Wachau
Kremstal
Kamptal

Federspiel (lighter style)

Smagard (richer, riper)

BA

TBA

Alsace (Germanic part of eastern France)

Basic Riesling

Single Vineyard Riesling (Cru)

+ Gradations ie. Grand Cru

Vendage Tardive (literally late harvest)

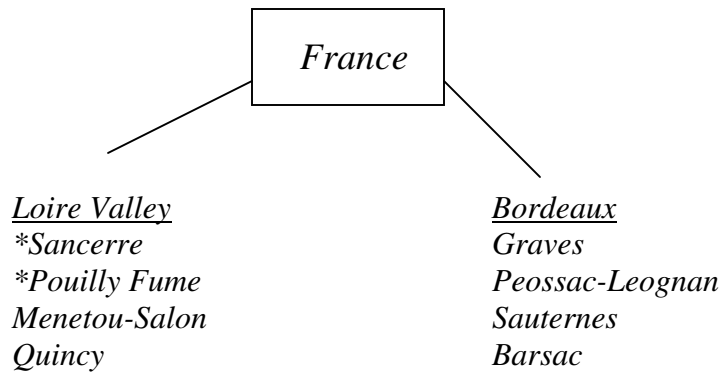
Selecion de Grains Noble

(the most highly priced dessert wine, sweetest, & most concentrated > like TBA)

Bit Players

- New Zealand (on the rise since the grapes introduction in the 1980's)
- Australia (Clare Valley, Margaret River, Eden Valley – cooler areas)
- Washington
- California (some good Late Harvest Wines)
- Oregon
- Italy (Riesling Renano & Italico)

SAUVIGNON BLANC



*New Zealand (Marlborough, Martinborough, Waipara)-racy, more fruit, than your typical Loire wine
California (Santa Barbara, Sonoma, Napa & etc...)*

South Africa

Italy (Friuli, Alto Adige)

Australia (cooler areas)

Slovenia, Chile, Austria

Facts

- 1. Probably originated in Bordeaux (related to Cab. Sauv.)*
- 2. Vine is very vigorous, and yields must be controlled or grapes will struggle to ripen & be too aggressive & green.*
- 3. Often blended with Semillon, which adds flesh & fruit to Sauvignon's acidity & aroma.*
- 4. Make wines that are dry & sweet *(Sauternes & Barsac)*
- 5. *"Loire style"- Fermented and aged in stainless steel, NO OAK, so you get pure Sauvignon & terroir unmasked by wood, also 100% Sauvignon, Usually drink from 1 to 4 years. It is also bottled early (since it is not aging in wood).*
- 6. Bordeaux (Graves) Style – Oak barrels are utilized and Sauvignon is usually blended with Semillon.*

Flavors and Characteristics (of Loire Style)

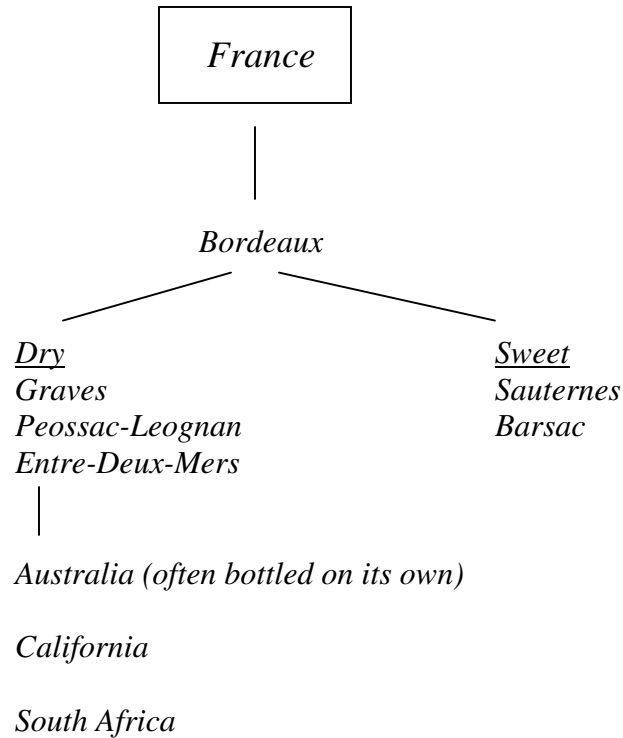
Flavors:

Fruits = Gooseberry, Grapefruit, Lemon, Guava, Passionfruit, Citrus Zest, Melon

Non-Fruit = Grass, Tarragon, Catpiss, Flint, Mineral, Pepper, Mint, Smoke

Texture = From light to medium, bright and racy, good acidity

SEMILLON



Fact

1. *Semillon is usually thought of in a symbiotic relationship with Sauvignon.*
2. *White Bordeaux (sweet & dry) are usually a blend of both Semillon and Sauvignon. Percentages do vary. Semillon is grown more than Sauvignon.*
3. *Semillon is fatter & more round than the angular, racy Sauvignon (which is also more aromatic & acidic)*
4. *It is more golden colored grape, with a slightly honeyed character.*
5. *Best white Bordeaux can age very well (due to low yields, old vineyards, oak, & the harmonious blends of Semillon & Sauvignon). But too often in California, this style leads to Chardonnay wannabes.*
6. *It is prone to Noble Rot (Botrytis Cinevea) which concentrates the sugar & acids, shrinks the yields, stimulates production of Glycerol which gives a sense of viscosity, and add complexity to the aromas and flavors.*
7. *Sauternes & Barsac are extremely ageworthy and justly famous dessert wine. They are in a Meso Climate between two rivers (the Garonne and its Ciron tributary. The meeting of the two rivers creates a mist in the valley that encourages the Botrytis fungus to spread.*
8. *Sauternes & Barsac are usually about 14% in alcohol, with the degree of Botryt's determined by the vintage. The wine is usually aged in oak barrels for 18 to 36 months (the barrel regimen can range from 100% to new to a small percentage of new, depending on the producer).*

CABERNET SAUVIGNON MERLOT CABERNET FRANC

Bordeaux, France
(ancestral home of this triumvirate)

The Medoc (Left Bank)
*About 1/3 planted to Merlot,
the rest to the Cabernets*

St. Emillion & Pommereol (Right Bank)
30-70% Merlot 35 to 98% Merlot

The Bordelais Model
*Usually involves the blending of these varietals
***Note: Petite Verdot & Malbec can be used in small amounts*

<u>California</u> <i>North Coast (Napa, Sonoma)</i>	<u>Washington State</u> <i>Columbia Valley (Walla Walla)</i>	<u>Italy</u> <i>Tuscany Friuli & others</i>	<u>Australia</u> <i>Barossa Coonawarra Margret River</i>	<u>Others</u> <i>South Africa Chile Argentina</i>
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General Characteristics

Cabernet Sauvignon

- a. High in Tannin
- b. Deep in color
- c. Medium to full body
- d. Ages well (rewards both with longevity & complexity) tends to be firm, rich & muscular
- e. Later ripening
- f. Flavors & aromas: black currant also known as cassis, blackberry, vegetal tones (bell pepper), mineral notes, chocolate, cedar

Merlot

- a. Less tannic than Cabernet Sauvignon (relatively speaking) “softer”
- b. Good, dark color
- c. Medium to full in body (and when ripe has lower acid than Cab)
- d. Tends toward opulence, fat & lushness (higher alcohol)
- e. Earlier ripening
- f. Flavors & aromas: plum, black cherry, coffee, chocolate

Cabernet Franc

- a. Moderate tannin
- b. Lighter in color
- c. More medium in body & lighter than the others, less fleshy
- d. Add nuances, finesse, complexity, more aromatics
- e. Ripens a little earlier than Cabernet Sauvignon
- f. Flavors & aromas: red fruits, olive-like notes, violets, floral nuances, spice

PINOT NOIR

Burgundy (Labeled by Commune)

California

Napa/Sonoma

**Russian River*

**Sonoma Coast*

**Monterey*

**Santa Barbara*

(Santa Maria & Santa Ynez)

Oregon

Willamette Valley

New Zealand

Central Otago

Flavors

Red to Dark Berry

Red to Black Cherry

Spices (Cinnamon)

Floral Perfume

Earth & Underbrush

Orange Zest

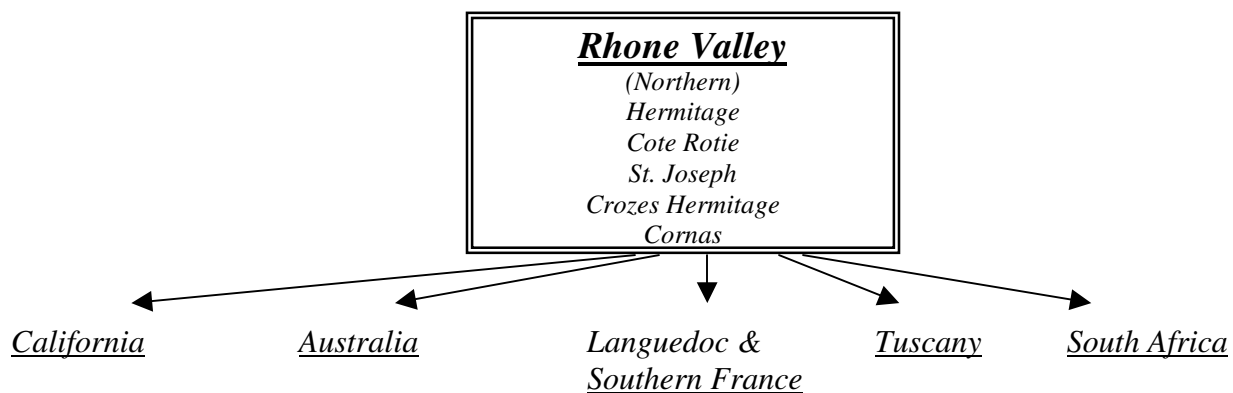
Characteristics

Thin-skinned make it prone to disease & weather damage, also lighter in color & tannin.

Facts

- *Not blended (except in Champagne)*
- *Prized for fragrance, finesse, silkiness.*
- *Feminine.*
- *Some capable of extended aging but most meant to be consumed young.*
- *Rather food flexible.*
- *Cabernet is sort of the bankers' wine: solid, safe, sturdy, age worthy, not finicky to grow or make.*
- *Pinot is the artist/poets' wine: troublesome to grow & make, variable & sensitive, often disappointing but capable of amazing elegance & complexity.*

SYRAH



Monterey
Santa Barbara
Napa
Sonoma
**Carneros*
**Sonoma Coast*

Flavors

Dark Berry & Plum
Cassis
Hickory
Bacon
Tar
Black Pepper
Smoke
Roasted Meats

Characteristics

Good Color Potential
Med to Full Body
Good Ageability
(Vest range of Style)

Usually bottled on its own, but also blends

- *In Cote Rotie with small % of Viognier*
- *In Australia with Cabernet Sauvignon*
- *In Southern Rhone with Grenache, Mouvedre, Cinsault*
 - *Cote du Rhone*
 - *Chateauneuf du Pape*
 - *Gigondas*

TEMPRANILLO (SPAIN'S GREATEST GRAPE)

Rioja: 2 General Types

a. Traditional

Typically, not particularly deep in color because of techniques (moderate ruby with garnet, orange tint. Nose is usually, quite expressive: tobacco, cedar, sweet, ripe red fruit, spices, leather, dried flowers, roasted meat. Those flavors echo on the palate. Due to long barrel-aging (often in older, neutral barrels), the flavors are usually rather advanced & mellow, the textures rather polished & elegant. This is one of the few wines, that comes to market after a rather prolonged aging period.

b. Modern

This style has emerged more recently and emphasizes darker colors, more primary fruit flavor, new French oak flavors (vanilla, chocolate, etc...) Tempranillo is often blended with Grenache (from small amounts up to 50%) (Garnacha) for complexity & body. And sometimes with Mazvela & Graciano for structure (small amounts i.e. 5%) In general, Rioja has distinct femininity & grace.

Crianza – 12 months in oak + 12 months in bottle

Reserva – 12 months in oak + 24 months in bottle

Gran Reserva – 24 months in oak + 36 months in bottle

Ribera del Duero –

If Rioja can be characterized as more feminine & elegant, the wines of Ribera del Duero (the banks or coast of the Duero River) tend to be darker, with more primary fruit & plenty of richness. Where as Rioja is characterized by secondary & tertiary flavors, those are characterized by the primacy of meaty, ripe berry fruit, dark color & often new French oak.

Crianza – 12 months in oak + 12 months in bottle, then released

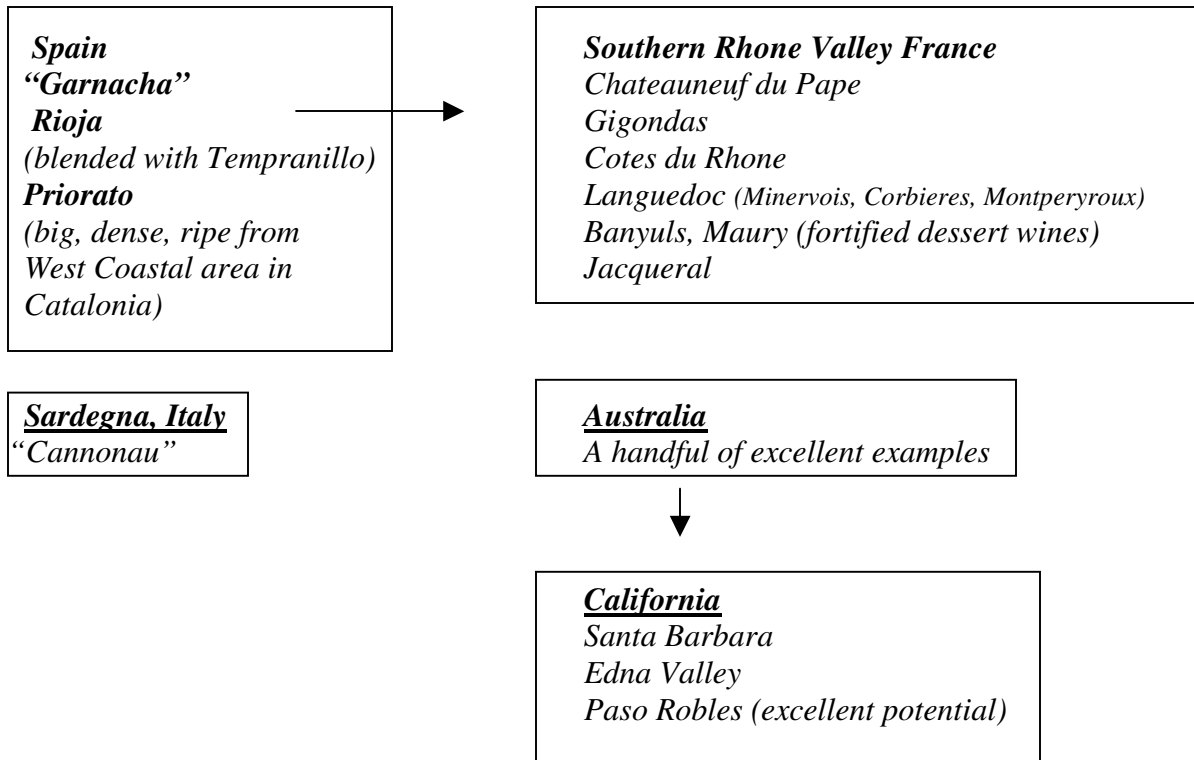
Reserva – 12 months in oak + 24 months in bottle

Gran Reserva – 24 months in oak + 36 months in bottle

Toro –

Near Ribera del Duero, it has become a new frontier for high quality Spanish wine. Made from Tinta de Toro clone of Tempranillo that is smaller, thus making wines that are darker & more tannic. Since the revival of the region was in the 1990's most producers make wine in the modern style (going for dark color, primary fruit, full-body).

GRENACHE



Characteristics

A rather difficult & fickle grape to grow in order to make great wine. Yields must be kept low & near perfect ripeness is essential. It thrives in hot, sunny climates & benefits from the wind (le Mistral). Typically rich in alcohol, Grenache can be difficult to extract deep color from (like Pinot Noir). If not done right, Grenache can be pale & alcoholic and not much else. Done right, it can be fleshy, full-bodied, gloriously fruity & lush. It blends beautifully with Syrah & Mouvedre.

Flavors

Kirsch (cherry liqueur), black & red cherries, raspberry, pepper, licorice, roasted peanuts.

Chateauneuf du Pape is where Grenache reaches its apogee

14 varietals permitted in the blend;

*but usually it revolves around a blend of: **Grenache** + **Syrah** + **Mouvedre***

Grenache = flesh, perfume, brightness & richness

Syrah = color, flesh, dark fruit, ageability, meaty, bacon notes

Mouvedre = color, structure, earthiness, depth, gamy, mushrooms, true bark flavors, classic anti-oxidant

Medium to full in body depending on the style.

These can age but also can be complex when young.

Flavors: black & red cherry, pepper, meat, blueberry, garrigue (sort “herbs de Provence” blend.)

Gigondas

Is near Chateauneuf and is very similar to it. It does tend to be more sauvage: earth, game, sweet cherries, pepper, garrigue. Sort of CNDP’s rough country cousin.

Cote du Rhone (similar to Chateauneuf & Gigondas but lighter & less expensive)

Vacqueras (Similar to Gigondas but lighter)

Also makes good roses’ (Tavel, Lirac)

ZINFANDEL (CALIFORNIA'S "INDIGENOUS" VARIETAL)

Two competing theories as to its origin:

- a) is Primitivo from Puglia in Southern Italy (Genetically Identical)*
- b) it came from the Dalmatian region of Croatia
(only Adriatic Sea lies between the two)*

Its European is indisputable but what is also indisputable is that Zinfandel reaches its greatest heights here in California. Rich in color and high in alcohol. Usually medium in tannin & not particularly high in acid.

The charm of zinfandel is its ripe fruit & fleshy texture. Flavors range from red to black berry fruit, with spicy notes as well as an often "jammy" character (from high degree of ripeness).

Zinfandel does not benefit from extended aging but some balanced Zinfandels can be cellared (usually best to drink within 6 or 7 years of vintage date).

Zinfandel blends brilliantly with Petite Sirah (which is very dark & tannic, but rather monolithic on its own) and Carignan.

ITALY *by Region*



1. **TOSCANA** (Tuscany) —————> *Where Sangiovese is king!*

Intro – Italy’s most important wine region (along with Piemonte), in terms of quality & most of all in commercial importance. In terms of recognition & market, importance, Tuscany in Italy’s Bordeaux.

Sangiovese

Considered to be a wild native vine. Name is thought to be derived from Sanguis di Giove (“blood of Jove”). It is also grown in Emilia Romagna but it hits its apogee in Tuscany. The most widely planted grape in Italy!

There are two basic types of Sangiovese:

*Large Berry & Small berry
(Sangiovese Grosso) (Sangiovese)*

*The larger Sangiovese Grosso has thicker skin, which seems to aid it in aging. But of greater importance than clonal variation, it is the soil & climate that explain the differences in the 3 major Sangiovese areas: **Chianti, Montalcino, and Montepulciano***

Basic Flavor & Characteristics – Black and red cherry, leather, tobacco, underbrush and forest floor, earth, spice, dried cherries and flowers. Can be light and simple, medium-bodied, or full-bodied. Has high natural acidity.

Chianti Classico

In the 1300's, the Florentine Republic named the woodsy, forested, hilly area between Firenze and Siena as Chianti. In the 1870's, Bettino Ricasoli, set the "formula" for Chianti (Sangiovese and Canaioli and white grapes).

Chianti has seven sub-zones (Classico, Rufina, Colli Senesi, Colline Fiorentini, Colli Aretini, Montalbano, Montespertoli)

The most imported of which qualitatively in Chianti Classico (with Chianti Rufina coming in second)

Important towns in Classico:

- Greve
- Panzano
- Gaiole
- Castellina
- Radda
- Castelnuovo Berardenga

Tradition and Transformation-

Despite its long roots and traditions, Chianti and much of Italian winemaking have gone through dramatic changes.

Chianti used to be associated with "il Fiasco", the cheap ubiquitous, straw covered bottles that hung from the rafters in pizza parlors. They tended (with some notable exceptions) to be thin, tart, browning wines that didn't impress much. The image and the real quality of Chianti (as well as the price) have changed since then.

One consistent theme in modern Italian enology was the change from old school agricultural production based more on quantity than quality. A "contadino" (peasant, usually a sharecropper) wasn't looking to make great wine, he was looking to make a lot of wine for himself and to sell or trade off. Italy transformed from an agricultural economy to a modern one lead to wholesale change of life in the countryside.

IN THE VINEYARD

Typical production numbers for 1960's and 1970's

2000 vines per hectare = 4 to 5 kilos of fruit per plant

Vs. Today

5000+ vines per hectare = 1 to 2 kilos of fruit per plant

Increased Vineyard Density

- A. *Makes plant struggle and compete for resources and nutrients, thus naturally reducing yields to a degree and assisting the lower quantity of fruit to mature more thoroughly.*
- B. *Reducing yields in the vineyard by pruning off extra bunches also helps substantially. (Actively choosing quality over quantity)*

WINEMAKING TECHNIQUES

- A. *Temperature controlled fermentation was a major advancement that enabled greater presentation of fruit color and freshness.*
- B. *Use of small barrels (now often French) instead of Botti (very large Chestnut) that were often very funky, crusty, and old.*
 - *Replacing at Botti or at least upgrading them also help preserve color and fruit, sweetens the fruit and adds tannin. They also add color and body.*
- C. *Use of Cabernet and Merlot to blend (to “sweeten up” and soften Sangiovese’s natural austerity).*
- D. *Red blending grapes: **Canaiolo, Mammolo, Colorino, Malvasia Nera***

Chianti Classico

- *Aged one year*
- *More primary and straight-forward*

Chianti Classico Riserva

- *Aged 2 years with minimum of 3 months in the bottle*
- *Usually a higher selection of grapes and/or a single vineyard*
- *Should ideally be from best lots to withstand extra barrel aging*
- *Should show more depth, richness and be more age worthy*

From the “Formula” in the 1870’s to Today

- *In 1989, law was changed to allow 10% “foreign grapes (Cabernet and Merlot) and reduces the minimum of white grapes to 2%*
- *In 1996, DOCG (Denominazione di Origine Controllatae) reduced allowable yields, up to 15% level “foreign grapes” allowed, abolished minimum of white grapes*

“Super Tuscans”

In 1971 Antinori released “Tignanello” in an attempt to work around Chianti’s restrictive laws. His motive was to make a world class wine that would compete for prestige and dollars against the world’s finest (i.e. Bordeaux, etc....) He blended 80% Sangiovese from his bet vineyards with 20% Cabernet Sauvignon and started a bit of a revolution. Officially given the once, designation Vino da Tavola (VdT), he sort of did an “end around” the whole restrictive regime in pursuit of quality

What was once revolutionary, has now become mainstream. Super Tuscans can be all Cabernet, all Merlot, Sangiovese, a blend, Syrah, etc...

B. Brunello di Montalcino

25 miles south of Siena, just outside of the southern limits of Chianti Classico. But, whereas Chianti is cooler, damper, and more forest-like with oaks and pines, Montalcino is more “macchia”, scrub-like brush and Mediterranean climate. Even in Montalcino itself, the north is cooler than the south.

- i. Sangiovese Grosso (100%, no blending allowed)
Thicker skins mean more tannin and darker color. More Muscular. Chestnut and mineral notes are common
- ii. Warmer, Mediterranean like climate make Brunello bigger and more powerful (high alcohol) The soil is sandier and therefore warms up, speeding up ripening (cooler clay and marl soils slow it down) As such, Montalcino harvests before Chianti on a regular basis.

Rosso di Montalcino

Young, lighter wines meant to be drunk in their youth. More accessible, often “declassified” Brunello. Fresher, brighter, less aging and oak. Sometimes it is made of lesser lots, sometimes it is just exposed to a simpler process.

Growth in Production

1975 - 25 producers = 800,000 bottles
1995 – 120 producers = 3,500,000 bottles

C. Vino Nobile di Montepulciano (East of Montalcino)

“Prugnolo Gentile” (clone of Sangiovese)

Tends to have typical Sangiovese flavors, but softer tanning than Brunello.

Lower acidity and more broadness on the palate than Chianti (DOCG regulations allow up to 20% of canaioli and/or other grapes.

Sandier, more alluvial soils assist ripening. Slightly lower elevation and warm climate also assist in ripening.

D.) Carmignano (typically 80% Sangiovese + 20% Cabernet)

Just west outside of Firenze, northwest of Chianti Classico

E.) Morellino di Scansano

The local name for Sangiovese in Scansano. Located in the Southern, coastal part of Tuscany. Tending towards berry fruit, with less acidity than Chianti due to warmer climate.

F.) La Maremma (Malarial marshlands drained by Mussolini in the 1920’s and 1930’s turned into Tuscany’s new El Dorado!)

Cabernet: Introduced to Italy from France in the early 1800’s. It has provided many splendid wines in Tuscany, as it is the base for many “Super Tuscans”.

Merlot: Used both for blending & flesh out (to soften Sangiovese) and bottled on its own or blended with Cabernet. There have been several very notable successes with this Bordeaux native.

Syrah: Some experiments being carried out.

WINE REGION OF PIEMONTE, ITALY

NEBBIOLO GRAPE

A. Facts:

1. Name comes from Nebbia (fog)
2. Only accounts for 3% of Piemonte's total production
3. Amounts 1/15th of Barbera's production
4. Where it can be planted is restricted
5. It has a thin skin that nonetheless produces intense tannin (its thin skin makes it prone to breakage and make color extraction a task)
6. It ripens late, usually well into mid October & is given the best exposures (It is said that old peasant-farmer-winemakers choose the site to plant Nebbiolo by demarcating where the snow melted first on the hillsides after Winter (those being the places that received the most sunlight)
7. Its production can be traced back to the 1200's in Piemonte (when it probably originated)
8. Historically, Nebbiolo (Barolo in particular) was a sweet wine until the mid 1800's, when it became decidedly dry (elevated natural sugar + cold weather in November & December + lack of prepackaged yeasts + lack of temperature controlling technology = residual sugar)
9. To maximize its bouquet, use Burgundy glass & always decant

B. Flavors:

Red Raspberry, Cherry, Black Cherry, Leather, Spices, Camphor (bay leaf), Dried Herbs, Dried Flowers (roses), Tar, Earth, Cedar, Tobacco...

C. Characteristics:

One of the most esoteric, intellectual, aristocratic and sophisticated varietals, Nebbiolo is not warm, cuddly, & jammy nor obvious or particularly friendly to the neophyte. It does not usually produce great color (in that it is Pinot Noir like). It is not overly fruity and fat on the palate. Instead, it is rather stern, austere and tannic. One must always understand that Nebbiolo is intensely tannic and understand it as such, to judge it as it is not in comparison to Cabernet, for example. Its aromatics can develop great complexity (dried flowers, camphor, leather, tobacco, red fruits, truffles, tar). It is rather full in body, with serious tannin, often needing 8 to 10 years of aging minimum. It is generally rich in alcohol & acidity. Older Nebbiolo is usually garnet or brickish in color.

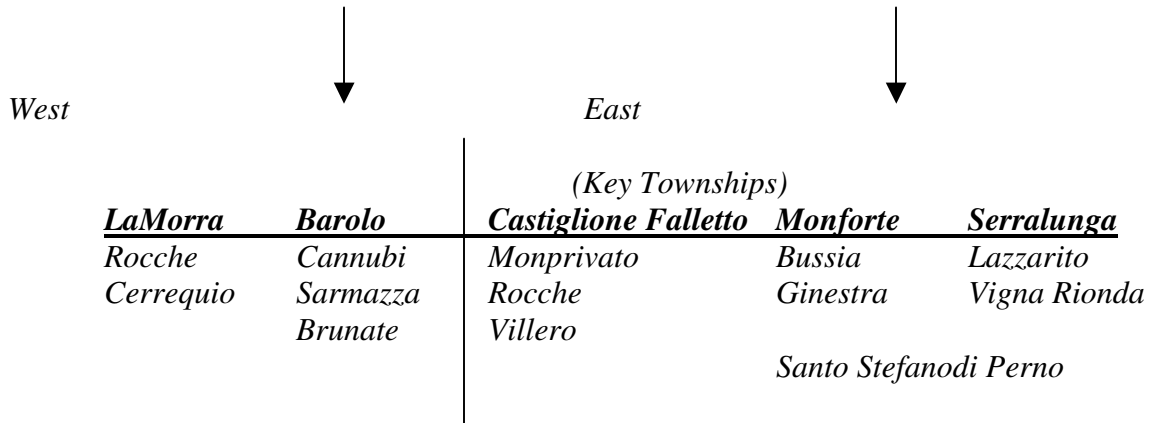
D. Barolo:

- a. The most powerful expression of Nebbiolo
- b. 3 years before release (2 in wood, 1 in bottle), 4-5 years for Riserva
- c. Cru or single vineyard bottlings have proliferated (most producers have a basic Barolo, then bottle single vineyards separately)

Two Basic (Macro) Soil Types

a. Calcareous Marl (more fertile soil)
softer, fruitier, more aromatic

b. Compressed Sandstone
yields intense, structured wines



E. Barbaresco:

- a. Slightly cooler climate than Barolo, yet ripens a little earlier
- b. Calcareous marl
- c. Tends to be less powerful than Barolo (with a focus on aromatic intensity & elegance)
- d. Tends to be age less than Barolo
- e. Important townships:

	<u>Barbaresco</u>	<u>Neive</u>	<u>Treiso</u>
Crus	Asili	Gallina	Pajore
	Montestefano	Albesani	
	Rabaja	Santo Stefano	
	San Lorenzo		
	Tilden		

- f. Barbaresco production = 40% of Barolo production
- g. 2 years before it can be released (at least one in wood: oak or cask)

F. Satellite Nebbiolo (less important areas)

- a. Gattinara
- b. Spanna
- c. Ghemme
- d. Carema

G. Two Schools of Nebbiolo

Traditionalists:

Hell-bent on tradition, the best make austere but brilliant wines then enjoyed by a small percentage of the public. They employ long macerations and tend to use large casks or relatively neutral wood. They are remarkably aromatic, complex, & ageworthy. On the downside, they can be rather forbidding in their youth. When given the proper bottle age (and extended decanting).

Modernists:

Have sought through winemaking practices & technology to make darker wines with more forward fruit and softer tannins for earlier consumption. They tend to employ shorter macerations and are more amenable to using newer oak and small barrels. They are fleshy & more approachable in their youth. Will they have complexity & age worthiness of the best traditionalist wines? Only time will tell.

BARBERA GRAPE

A. Facts:

1. *The #2 most widely grown varieties in Italy*
2. *Make up 50% of the region's DOC red wine production*
3. *Ripens 2 weeks after Dolcetto*
4. *Ripens 2 weeks before Nebbiolo*
5. *Best sites are: Alba, Asti & (less so) Monferrato*
6. *It has good color & body, good acidity, naturally low in tannin*
7. *Is produced in a vast array of styles that depend on site & the ambitions of the producer*
8. *Historically, it is planted where Nebbiolo would not tend to ripen fully (often replacing Nebbiolo that would struggle)*

B. Flavors:

Black Cherry, red cherry, chocolate, spices

C. Characteristics:

By its nature, Barbera is very vigorous, meaning it wants to produce a lot of fruit. This must be seriously restrained to make good wine. Old school Barbera was usually light, with dried cherry flavors and high acid. Barbera doesn't produce much tannin, but does tend to have high acid. Low yields and aging in new French oak can enrich the texture and color of the wine and add tannin. The finest Barbera's are flashy, fruit driven and fleshy. Their generous oak treatment is usually well absorbed if the right things were done in the vineyard and winery. We consider this style of Barbera to be a fine alternative to Merlot. It is usually best to drink in its youth. It ranges in color from moderate to fairly dark. Single vineyard bottling are usually the highest tier, with regular Barbera's being lighter & juicier. With a few exceptions, Barbera is not meant for extended cellaring. Along with Dolcetto, this is what people drink at the table in Piemonte as they wait for the Barolos to age.

DOLCETTO GRAPE

A. Facts:

1. *Best in Dogliani (Dough-lee-On-knee), Alba, Asti (Ah-stee)*
2. *Early ripening (4 weeks before Nebbiolo, 2 weeks before Barbera)*
3. *Has thick skins, rich in color & tannin*
4. *The name (which literally means little, sweet one) refers to its early ripening nature & not sweetness (since it is quite dry).*
5. *Tends to be planted on sites where Nebbiolo and Barbera will not properly ripen (i.e. Nebbiolo gets the South-facing, superior exposures to maximize sunlight since it takes more to ripen it)*
6. *Origins traced back to Dogliani in the 1400's*
7. *Along with Barbera, this is what Piemontesi drink on daily basis (usually when young).*

B. Flavor:

Blackberry, chocolate, almond (espresso from lavish oak), licorice. In your face and satisfying, but not very intellectual or elegant

C. Characteristics:

Dolcetto has good purple color, ample tannin, low acid. It doesn't age despite its tannin. It is best enjoyed for its forward grapy fruit. The texture can range from easy and smooth (Beaujolais-like) to chunky and chewy, depending on its ambition. It is made in stainless steel, new and used oak, and/or a combination of the two.

DESSERT WINE PRIMER:

Wine novices often express shock and horror at wines that are overly sweet. They seem to think that sweet is unsophisticated. This is a serious misconception sweet/dessert wines can be absolutely brilliant, complex, supremely age worthy, as well as utterly hedonistic. They are a fine way to end a meal (accompanying dessert or cheese or even on their own). (Some sweet wines can even be paired with savory foods but this is a tricky area – Foie Gras & Sauternes)

1. FORTIFIED –

Definition = Grape “must” is fermented, but fermentation is halted by the addition of alcohol. Thus, residual sugar remains, giving the wine sweetness. The addition pushes the overall alcohol level from 12-15% to 18-20%. These wines are usually quite age worthy.

A. PORT (from Portugal)

The most well known fortified wine comes from the Douro in Portugal. It is made from a blend of indigenous Portuguese grapes.

- i. **Vintage** – *The top of qualitative ladder in port: they are the richest & most complex (with aging). They benefit from at least 10 years of aging but can be drunk younger.*
 - *only declared in the very best years (1970, 77, 83, 85, 91, 92, 94, 97, 00)*
These ports have a dark purple color & intense blackfruit flavors. They are massive & rich & age very well.
- ii. **Single Quintas** – *Single vineyard selections of the best grapes from usually non-vintage declared years. Their flavour & textures mirror vintage ports.*
- iii. **Late Bottle Vintage** – *Held back for an extra year in cask, thus shedding in barrel much of its sediment. These are less expensive than the above and are usually ready to drink*
- iv. **Tawny** – *(unlike the purple hue of vintage port) – These have been aged in wood cask for very long periods. The process involves a controlled oxidation, The color is amber & flavors tend toward hazelnut, dried apricot*
The advantage of these at the restaurant level is that they seldom & very slowly deteriorate once open. The mouth feel like the flavors are mellower and more mature. They are usually a blend of vintages. Usually offered in 10, 20, 30, 40 year designations.
- v.
- vi.

FLAVORS

*Plum
Blackberry & Cherry
Licorice
Mineral
Chocolate
Cassis
Earth
Maple Syrup
Espresso
Cocoa*

BIGGEST NAMES

*Fonseca
Taylor
Quinto do Noval
Dow
Warre
Churchill*

2. BOTRYTIS –

Botrytis Cinerea (aka: Noble Rot) is a fungus that affects the flavor and aromas are hard to describe yet unmistakable once one is familiar with them (fig, honey, etc...)

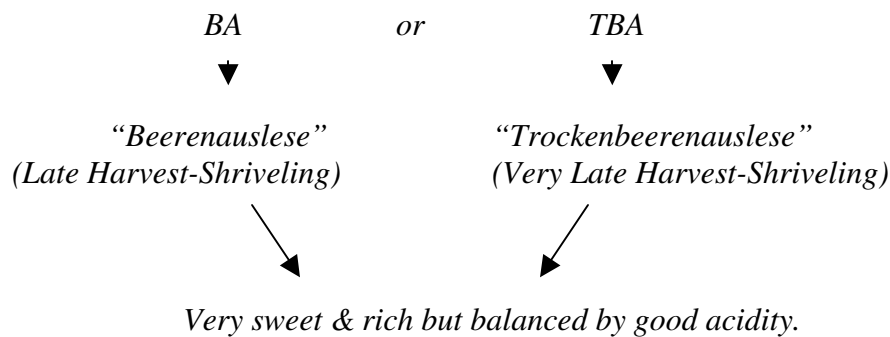
Botrytis concentrates & sweetness the grape as it shrivels it. Botrytis seems to thrive in certain geographic & climatic conditions (it does well with fog & dampness). Botrytis usually becomes more prevalent later in the harvest. It varies from vintage to vintage.

NOTE: dry white wines can be positively affected by limited botrytis but usually undesired

- A. **Sauternes/Barsac** (Bordeaux, France) – Among the greatest sweet wines in the world & the most famous of Botrytis wines.

Blend of Sauvignon Blanc & Semillon (in varying percentages). They are amber to gold in color and flavors range from honeyed fruits (apricot, apple, peach, pineapple, orange), crème brulee, barley sugar, vanilla, coconut (with age). New oak is commonly used. The body is full & the wine can be remarkably ageworthy. Other areas in the world that make Botrytised Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon with success (California & Australia)

- B. **German Riesling** – (New oak seldom used)



- C. **Alsace – Vendage Tardive** (Late Harvest) – New oak seldom used, can range from dry to off-dry to sweet.

Selection de Grains Nobles – (literally a selection of noble berries – the ripest, most Botrytis infected, sweetest grapes)

Varieties – Pinot Gris, Riesling, Gewurztraminer

- D. **Chenin Blanc** (Quarts de Chaume, Coteau du Layton, Vouvray Moelleux) – New oak seldom used