



Welcome to French Wine Essentials!

This certification program is designed to provide a fundamental grasp of French wines. By no means is it exhaustive or comprehensive. The wines have been selected to highlight important appellations that are commonly seen in retail stores and on restaurant menus. There is a lot more to discover and we hope this is just the beginning of your wine journey.

The program covers the key wine regions from Northern, Central, and Southern France. For each region, you will find details on the important appellations, grape varieties, what the wines taste like, and how they are produced. Also included are some notable producers. With so many incredible producers, it was a daunting task to select only a few. We've chosen an array of wineries, from larger, widely distributed ones to niche players, iconic producers, and historically significant estates to emerging entities.

Regional cuisine and points of interest are included to put the region in context and provide a teaser of what to expect when you visit.

French Wine Essentials paves the way for a comprehensive understanding of French wines. Upon completion, you'll be ideally positioned for further studies with the acclaimed French Wine Scholar® (FWS) Program (learn more on the last page.)

Enjoy this captivating journey through France, glass by glass.

Welcome to French Wine Essentials.

Santé!





















Edition 1.0
© 2024, Wine Scholar Guild. All rights reserved.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments & Foreword.....	1–3	Beaujolais.....	48
INTRODUCTION TO FRANCE	6–17	The Road Map.....	49
Map: The Essential Appellations of France.....	8	Red Wines of Beaujolais.....	50–51
Topography, Climate & Soils.....	9	Bordeaux.....	52
Understanding French Wine Law.....	10	The Road Map.....	53
Some Terms to Know.....	11	Cabernet Sauvignon Wines of Bordeaux.....	54–55
Understanding Labels.....	11	Merlot Wines of Bordeaux.....	56–57
Grape Varieties.....	12–15	Dry White Wines of Bordeaux.....	58–59
Wine Styles.....	16	SOUTHERN FRANCE	61
The Cuisine of France.....	17	Map: Southern France.....	62
NORTHERN FRANCE	19	Introduction to Southern France.....	63
Map: Northern France.....	20	Rhône Valley.....	64
Introduction to Northern France.....	21	The Road Map.....	65
Alsace.....	22	Red Wines of the Northern Rhône Valley.....	66–67
The Road Map.....	23	Red Wines of the Southern Rhône Valley.....	68–69
White Wines of Alsace.....	24–25	Provence.....	70
Champagne.....	26	The Road Map.....	71
The Road Map.....	27	Rosé Wines of Provence.....	72–73
Sparkling Wines of Champagne.....	28–29	Languedoc-Roussillon.....	74
Loire.....	30	The Road Map.....	75
The Road Map.....	31	Red Wines of Languedoc-Roussillon.....	76–77
White Wines of Pays Nantais.....	32–33	APPENDICES	79
White Wines of the Middle Loire.....	34–35	Vine Training Systems.....	80–81
White Wines of the Centre-Loire.....	36–37	Winemaking.....	82–86
CENTRAL FRANCE	39	Vins doux Naturels.....	87
Map: Central France.....	40	Champagne, The Fine Print.....	88
Introduction to Central France.....	41	Sweetness Levels in Sparkling Wines.....	89
Bourgogne.....	42	Wine Descriptors.....	90
The Road Map.....	43	Pronunciation Guide.....	91
Red Wines of Bourgogne.....	44–45	Recommended Wine List.....	92
White Wines of Bourgogne.....	46–47	Glossary of Terms.....	93–99
		Next Steps.....	100–101



 Romans establish vineyards in South-West, Bordeaux, Bourgogne, and Loire 1st century BCE	 Champagne vineyards established 4th century	 Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry Plantagenet marry, Bordeaux becomes England's vineyard 1152	 Hundred Years' War, Joan of Arc helps expel the English 1337-1453	 Dutch drain Bordeaux's marshes 1600s	 The first deliberately sparkling champagnes made 1695-1698
					
600 BCE Phocaeans establish Massalia (Marseille) and introduce vines	 2nd century CE Alsace exports wine	 481 Clovis unites all of the Frankish tribes under his rule	 1309 Papal Court moves to Avignon, boosting profile of Rhône wines	 1618-1648 30 Years' War, leaves Europe's population decimated, Alsace becomes French	 1667-1681 Canal du Midi built, connecting the Mediterranean with Toulouse
					 1789 French Revolution

INTRODUCTION TO FRANCE

France is one of the main wine-producing countries in the world, often vying with Italy and Spain for the top spot. France is important, and every wine student or enthusiast will eventually discover it.

France has a long viticultural history that can be traced back to 600 BCE, when the Phocaeans, Greek traders, introduced the vine to the south of France. The Romans formalized and spread viticulture to (almost!) every corner of France. The church also had a huge role in sustaining and building a wine culture in the Middle Ages. Together, they laid the foundation for today's mosaic of regions and appellations.

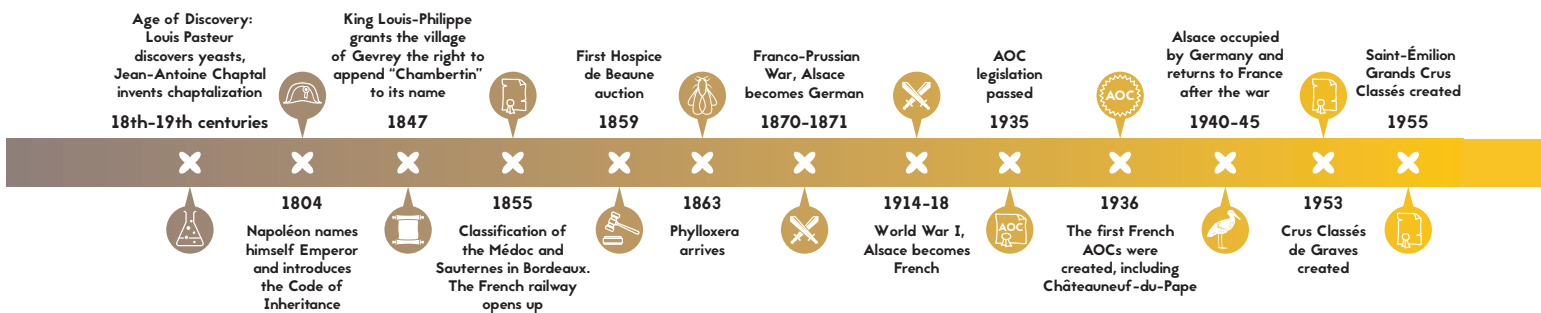
The concept of *terroir* lies at the heart of French wine. It's the awareness that place—the combination of soil, climate, topography, and tradition—gives a wine its unique character. Knowing a wine is from Chablis rather than the Mâconnais reveals much more than knowing it is made from Chardonnay. You must embrace *terroir* to understand the wines of France.

So many of France's wine regions are global benchmarks. Bordeaux and its Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot blends are the model for American Meritage wines. The Rhône Valley's Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre blends spawned Australia's GSMs. "California Burgundies,"

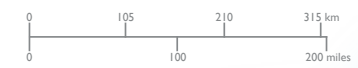
thankfully no longer allowed, were often poor copies of the great wines of Bourgogne.

French wines are historically significant, but producers are not standing still. They continue to adapt to new demands, new technologies, and new climate realities. Sustainability and organic practices have gained traction, reflecting environmental consciousness. New grape varieties and new sites are being assessed. The French wine industry is changing, enhancing quality without compromising tradition.

The French wine legacy continues, captivating enthusiasts with each sip.



The Essential French Wine Regions



- Alsace
- Champagne
- Loire Valley
- Bourgogne
- Beaujolais
- Bordeaux
- Rhône Valley
- Provence
- Languedoc-Roussillon
- South-West
- Jura
- Savoie



Map by
 Quentin Sadler
WSG
 WINE SCHOLAR GUILD

TOPOGRAPHY, CLIMATE & SOILS

France is the largest country in Western Europe, and most of its borders are natural. The English Channel is in the north and separates France from England. The Atlantic Ocean lies on the western coast. The Pyrenees Mountains form the border with Spain. The Mediterranean Sea lies due south. A string of mountains, including the Alps lie along the eastern border.

TOPOGRAPHY

Geologically speaking, France is made up of two massifs, two basins, and a rift valley.

A massif is a distinct mass of rock or connected masses that form the peaks of a mountain range. The Massif Central dominates France's heartland and is characterized by volcanic remnants, plateaus, and deep river gorges. This includes the rugged Cévennes Mountains that are part of Languedoc.

The Armorican Massif, in the northwest, is significantly more weathered and lower than the Massif Central. It is responsible for the soils found in the western reaches of the Loire Valley.

Basins are geologic depressions or bowls. The Paris Basin represents the drainage area of the Seine River, and the Aquitaine Basin provides drainage for the Garonne and Dordogne river systems in the southwest. These Basins bring sedimentary soils.

A system of rift valleys that was formed by tectonic action millions of years ago is found in eastern France. In Alsace, the plain is flanked by the Vosges Mountains to the west and the Black Forest Mountains to the east. In Bourgogne, we find the escarpment of the Côte d'Or to the west and the Jura Mountains to the east.

France's diverse topography contributes to varied terrain and climates, shaping the wine regions and the wine styles.

CLIMATE

France stretches from the Mediterranean coast to inland areas to Atlantic shores. It is no surprise that there are a range of climates, which can be classified as maritime, Mediterranean, and continental.

A maritime climate sees a narrow swing in daily temperatures and in the annual temperature range. Typically, this means a temperate summer and cool winter. Regions such as the western parts of the Loire Valley and Bordeaux are impacted by this maritime effect.

A Mediterranean climate is a special type of maritime climate. The temperature swings are still moderate, but summers are hot and dry, and winters are mild and wet. Southern regions such as the Southern Rhône, Provence, and Languedoc-Roussillon benefit from the abundant sunshine.

In the center of France, a more continental climate dominates. This comes with much bigger swings in daily and annual temperatures, with warm summers and cold winters. Heat spikes and winter freezes are common. Alsace, Bourgogne, and the Centre-Loire all experience continental climates.

The above are general rules of thumb. It is common to see a mix of climatic influences. Champagne is continental, but there are maritime influences. In the Middle Loire, the climate transitions from maritime to continental.

France's various climates significantly affect what grapes thrive and give rise to the traditional styles of each region.

SOILS

France's soils are the result of millions of years of geological activity, erosion, and weathering.

On our journey through France, we will find many different soils. The parent materials (rocks) are generally classified by their origin.

Sedimentary soils, such as limestone, sand, clay, and alluvial deposits are found in the regions located in the Paris and Aquitaine Basins. These soils have their origins in the marine creatures that lived in the seas that periodically covered these areas in ancient times. These soils include the chalk of Champagne, the limestone marls of Bourgogne, the *tuffeau* of the Middle Loire, and the gravels and clays of Bordeaux.

Igneous rock is volcanic in origin and forms when magma exits and cools above the earth's surface. The Massif Central was a hotbed of volcanic activity and has the world's largest concentration of extinct volcanoes (450!). The cooling magma from these volcanoes gave rise to the granite we find in the Northern Rhône, Beaujolais, and Alsace.

Metamorphic soils are formed when extreme heat and pressure are applied to the parent rock below the earth's surface. Examples include shale, slate, schist, and gneiss. In France, we find metamorphic soils in parts of the Loire Valley and the Rhône Valley.

Great wines are made on a range of soil types, as we will see.

UNDERSTANDING FRENCH WINE LAW

The European Union (EU) regulates the wine industry in all its member states. In 2009, new regulations that standardized the nomenclature of quality levels and labeling terms were introduced. The EU divided wine into two major groups and created new categories that roughly corresponded to the quality pyramids already in place in member countries.

Many countries, including France, chose to continue to use their traditional designations for each of these categories. Some producers continue to use the French terms, while others have switched to the EU nomenclature.

AOC/AOP (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée/ Appellation d'Origine Protégée)

- France's PDO level
- Must come from a delimited area of origin
- Must be made from authorized grape varieties
- Must meet published regulations for grape growing, harvesting, and winemaking

IGP (Indication Géographique Protégée)

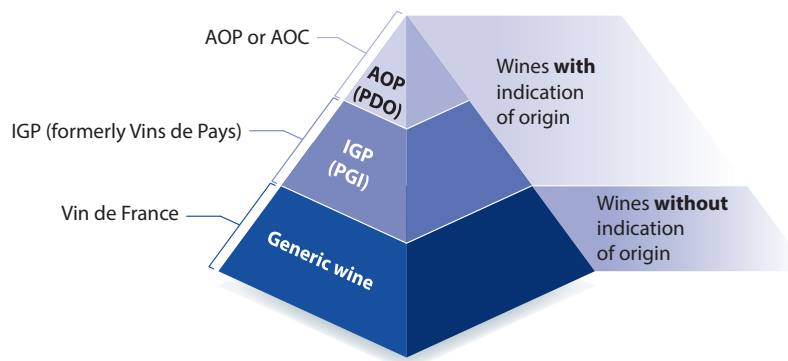
- France's PGI level
- Must come from a delimited zone of production, but this can be quite large
- Offers more flexibility on grape growing, harvesting, and winemaking than the AOC/AOP category

Vin de France – Generic Wine

- Not tied to a specific origin
- Has the least restrictive production standards

EU TERM	FRENCH EQUIVALENT OF EU TERM	TRADITIONAL FRENCH TERM
Wines with Geographical Indication		
Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)	AOP (Appellation d'Origine Protégée)	AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée)
Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)	IGP (Indication Géographique Protégée)	(Formerly Vins de Pays)
Wines without Geographical Indication (Generic Wine)		
Wines without Geographical Indication	Vins sans IG	Vin de France

There is an implied hierarchy and the AOC/AOP designation is regarded as the highest tier. However, there are premium examples in the IGP and Vin de France categories. Typically, this occurs where producers are working just outside AOC borders, experimenting with non-traditional grapes or winemaking practices, or have somehow broken the rules. Price point will usually guide you.



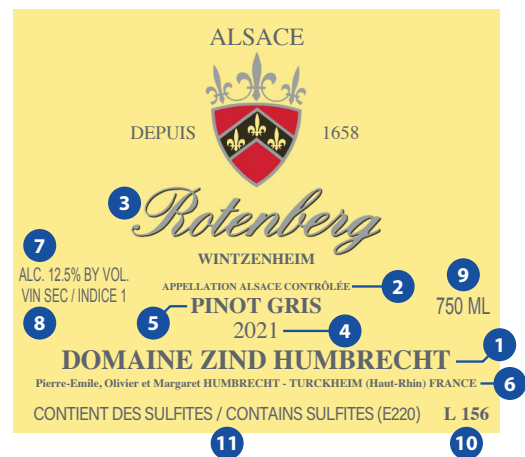
SOME TERMS TO KNOW

Alcoholic Fermentation	the process by which yeasts convert natural grape sugars into alcohol
Appellation	a delineated zone of production (region, sub-region, village or specific terroir) with unique qualities and characteristics stemming from its geography, climate, topography and viticultural and winemaking practices
Botrytis cinerea	a mold that penetrates the grape skin and, when conditions are right, yields unctuous, honeyed dessert wines
Château (Ch.)	used on wine labels to indicate that the wine is produced from grapes grown on a specific estate or vineyard; it is particularly common in Bordeaux
Cru	a vineyard recognized for its quality and unique characteristics, often associated with the classification systems used in wine-producing regions and terms such as Premier Cru and Grand Cru are used to indicate the high-quality potential of a specific vineyard
Dénomination Géographique Complémentaire (DGC)	an additional complementary geographical designation that applies to a smaller, specific area within a larger AOC
Domaine (Dom.)	similar to “Château”, the term is used to indicate that the wine is produced from grapes grown by the producer from the specific estate or vineyard; it is common in Bourgogne
Négociant	companies that purchase grapes or wine from growers and bottle and market their own wine
Terroir	a French concept that embodies the totality of everything that impacts the grape and its final flavors, such as elevation, aspect, climate, soil, grape-growing practices and topographical features

See Appendices for full Glossary.

UNDERSTANDING LABELS

Wine labels provide a wealth of information—if you know what to look for, where.



- 1: Name of producer
- 2: Appellation (name of winegrowing zone)
- 3: Name of vineyard
- 4: Vintage
- 5: Grape variety (common in Alsace, not common in France generally)
- 6: Location of producer
- 7: Alcoholic strength
- 8: Sweetness indicator (required in Alsace, but not for rest of France)
- 9: Volume of wine
- 10: Lot number
- 11: Sulphite declaration

GRAPE VARIETIES

More than any other wine-producing country, the notion of *terroir* in France is foundational and inextricably linked to the soils and the grapes grown. From the Kimmeridgian limestone of Chablis (Chardonnay) to Beaujolais granite (Gamay), and the Middle Loire's *tuffeau* (Chenin Blanc) to Bordeaux gravels (Cabernet Sauvignon), it's hard to separate grapes from the land or the French psyche. *Vignerons* traditionally kept growing the grapes born of their region, or specifically introduced there, continuing with ones that adapted well to their soils and climate, and abandoning those that didn't.

Here are some of the most commercially and culturally significant varieties.

WHITE GRAPES

Chardonnay has been grown in France's Bourgogne region for over a millennium. This adaptable and hearty grape flourishes easily in most climates and conditions and is now one of the most widely planted grape varieties in the world, found in more wine regions than any other. However, it is thought to reach its height in its cool climate homeland, and when rooted in limestone soils. Chardonnay's inherent neutrality makes it an ideal canvas for winemakers, easily shaped by malolactic conversion, *bâtonnage*, and oak use. The naturally higher acidity and alcohol provide it with a long life in the bottle.

Chenin Blanc has been firmly rooted in France's Loire Valley since the 9th century, but its origin isn't clear. This resilient and versatile grape turns out wines from searingly bone dry to lusciously sweet, and into serious sparkling. Unmistakably

constant is the grape's inherent acidity, allowing for wines that can mature for decades.

Grenache Blanc shares the same DNA as Grenache Noir and is found in similarly warm regions. Like the red variation, Grenache Blanc tends to produce full-bodied wines that are high in alcohol and low in acidity.

Marsanne is a vigorous variety that prefers the warmer regions of the south of France. The wines are powerful with moderate acidity and high alcohol. The aromatic profile is restrained with melon and honeysuckle notes.

Melon de Bourgogne is also known as Muscadet, and hails from Bourgogne. It took well to the maritime climate of the Loire Valley. It has naturally high acidity, with a milder concentration of flavors that focus on apple and citrus. An underlying saltiness can often be identified in the wine, reflective of the region's maritime geography.



Muscat has a vast and ancient family tree, including more than 200 different varieties that have been used in wine and table grapes around the globe for many centuries. Muscat grapes and wines almost always have a pronounced sweet floral aroma, and amazingly, smell just like grapes.

Riesling is a highly aromatic grape, which dates back to the 15th century in the Rhine Valley of Germany. It is capable of making a wide range of styles from achingly crisp and bone dry, to unctuously sweet and everlasting, plus bright and lively sparkling. Riesling's most potent draw is its natural and piercingly high acid, providing tremendous aging potential and allowing it to nimbly balance high levels of residual sugar.

Roussanne is fussy and sensitive to mildews, which has made it less popular with growers. It is, however, elegant and gently aromatic. It is

often blended with Marsanne to add freshness and vibrancy to the wines.

Sauvignon Blanc hails from France's Loire Valley, and is also comfortably at home in Bordeaux, blending in harmony with Sémillon. The highly vigorous grape is widely adaptable, spreading as easily worldwide as its tangled and aggressive foliage.

Sémillon is highly susceptible to noble rot, making it one of the most desirable grapes for sweet wines. It is one of the major grapes in the exalted Sauternes of Bordeaux, near where it originated. Young Sémillon shows bright, sometimes racy acidity, and citrus and hay/herb notes. With bottle age, these wines gain a waxy, honeyed heft that brings weight and complexity.

Viognier is the classic white grape of the Northern Rhône that was nearly wiped out in the early 1980s. However, proponents of its exotic jasmine, violet, musk, apricot, and honeysuckle won out. The higher alcohol and sugar levels provide a fuller-bodied, creamier wine, imbued with perfumed, alluring aromatics. It is often blended with Rhône white buddies Roussanne and Marsanne, and also, famously, with Syrah.

ROSE/GRIS GRAPES

Gewurztraminer's name comes from *gewürz*, which translates as spice. In Alsace it loses the umlaut, but it remains a pink-skinned, aromatic grape with high natural sugar and therefore alcohol, plus lower acidity. Though most examples are off-dry, styles range from rich and sweet to bone dry and taut, all with a dusting of exotic perfumed spices.



Pinot Gris is a pink-skinned grape that is a color mutation of Pinot Noir. Its ancestral home is thought to be in Bourgogne, though the mutation was also happening in southwest Germany around the same time in the late 13th century. The grape's skin color varies wildly, sometimes even within the same bunch! *Gris*, French for gray, references the typical peach/purple/gray-hued grape, but it can range from a tanned pink to plummy black and even a very subtle rose color. The wines also vary in hue but are usually high in alcohol with moderate-to-low acidity. In France, it is largely found in Alsace.

RED GRAPES

Cabernet Franc has recently been identified as coming from Spanish Basque Country. In France, we find it in the Loire Valley and Bordeaux. The peppery, perfumed grape predates and even begat the king of reds, Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as Merlot and Carmenère. While the peppery,

perfumed, and finessed Franc can certainly hold its own, as it does in the Loire Valley, it often plays a supporting rather than starring role. It has proven to be an excellent blending partner in Bordeaux blends.

Cabernet Sauvignon is often heralded as the “King of Grapes,” a cloak that this classic variety wears confidently. Thick-skinned, full-bodied, and tannic, this black grape's signature structure reigns, with black fruits, cigar, and graphite ruling in cooler climates. Firmly at home in Bordeaux, especially the gravel-dominant Left Bank, you'll usually see Cabernet Sauvignon blended with Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Despite its iconic status, the grape is a relatively new variety, the offspring of a chance crossing between Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc.

Carignan is a high-yielding, resilient variety that needs warm growing conditions to ripen. Little wonder it is mainly found in the south of France. The wines can be aggressively tannic and carbonic

maceration is often used to tame them. It is native to Spain where it is known as Cariñena or Mazuelo.

Cinsault /Cinsaut is widely planted in Southern France and is well adapted to heat. It is capable of high yields, making it more of a workhorse than a thoroughbred. Cinsault has long been a silent softening partner, and a historically favored grape alongside Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvèdre in the Southern Rhône. It often makes an appearance in rosé wines, bringing perfume and lift, with a hint of pink and white peppercorn spice.

Gamay is a characterful, humble grape and is the darling light red of many thanks to its fresh acidity, fragrant fruitiness, fine tannins, and lithe structure. Its full name, Gamay Noir à Jus Blanc, reflects that its skin is black, its juice is white, but the wine produced is a light-bodied red. Gamay found its zenith in the granites of Beaujolais and is wholly responsible for the region's ten *crus*.



Grenache loves the sun, making it suitable for hot, arid climates, and able to withstand periods of drought. The thin-skinned, sweet grape tends to make wines higher in alcohol and lighter in color, often desirable traits in a blending partner. Pure varietal Grenache isn't all that common; it is mostly blended. Red fruits are hallmarks, along with a characteristic white pepper, spice, and dried herb savoriness, and a move towards leather and tar with age. Grenache's versatility also makes it a feature player in rosés and fortified *vins doux naturels* (VDNs).

Malbec is a black, densely flavored grape native to southwest France and is one of the six original players in the traditional Bordeaux blend. Today, the black plum, savory, and tannic wines of Cahors are the main center for the grape in its native homeland. It requires heat, so it is well suited to warm, sunny climates.

Merlot, originally from Bordeaux, has the genetic makeup of a blue-blooded, trust fund globetrotter.

Merlot is an offspring of Cabernet Franc and is a half-sibling of Carmenère, Malbec, and Cabernet Sauvignon. Merlot has large, thin-skinned berries resulting in lower acid and tannin, and it easily achieves high yields. This medium-bodied red carries deep raspberry, plum, mulberry, fruitcake, and mocha aromas and flavors.

Mourvèdre needs a lot of heat to ripen, and it is found in the sunny vineyards of the Mediterranean. The grape produces densely colored wines with high levels of alcohol and tannins. Wines are typically herbal, plummy, and subtly meaty. With age, aromas of leather and truffle appear. The grape is believed to be native to Spain, where it is known as Monastrell.

Meunier is native to France and is rarely seen outside of Champagne, where it is one of the three principal grapes. It brings approachability and red fruits to the champagne blend.

Pinot Noir has numerous clones, various mutations, and countless synonyms making its family tree difficult to follow. What is certain, however, is this low-yielding grape appreciates calcareous-clay and limestone soils, and cool-to-moderate temperate climates. Few grapes can transmit *terroir* like this one, expressing the slightest change in soil and vintage, especially in Bourgogne where it rules the Côte d'Or alongside Chardonnay. This hauntingly aromatic red grape has moderate tannins, and usually crafts lightly colored wines imbued with red fruits, spice, forest, and mushroom notes.

Syrah/Shiraz is an ancient grape, believed to be from the Northern Rhône. The grape is deep in color, has long aging potential, and makes friends with oak. Most French examples are quite savory, with high acid, high tannin, characteristic black pepper, grilled meat, and dark floral notes.



WINE STYLES

Nature and nurture both contribute to wine style. Nature plays its part via grape variety, soil, weather, and climate; nurture through the human decisions on what to plant, how to train each vine, when to harvest, how to ferment, how long to age the wine, and what to age it in. These factors, and many more, impact what is in the glass.

No matter what wine style you prefer, France has you covered with grape varieties that you've heard of, and many that you have not.

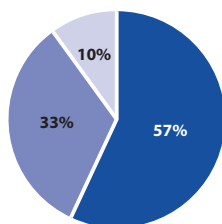
- Aromatic and complex whites from Alsace
- Crisp whites and rosés galore from the Loire
- Elegant Pinot Noirs and nuanced Chardonnays from Bourgogne
- Light and more serious reds from Beaujolais
- Structured reds and elegant whites from Bordeaux
- Blockbuster reds and mouth-filling whites from the Rhône Valley

- Big, full-bodied reds of the South
- Delicate, pale rosés from Provence
- And bubbles. Champagne is a global benchmark for sparkling wines, but don't forget the *crémants*. Many other regions make these sparkling wines using the same method and they can deliver great value
- Sauternes, known for concentration and complexity, stands at the pinnacle of sweet wines. Other regions such as the Loire and Alsace also produce sweet wines that will take your breath away
- The fortified, sweet *vins doux naturels* are traditional in Languedoc-Roussillon and the Southern Rhône Valley. These wines can be white, red, or rosé. They can be fruity and fresh, or aged and nutty

Grab a glass and dive in!

FRENCH WINE PRODUCTION BY CATEGORY (2023 HARVEST)

■ AOP ■ IGP ■ Vin de France

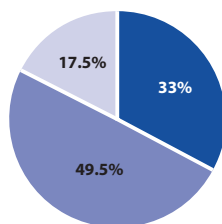


TOTAL = 33,915 mhl

Source: Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Souveraineté alimentaire

FRENCH WINE PRODUCTION BY COLOR (2021 HARVEST)

■ Red ■ White ■ Rosé



TOTAL = 37.1 MHL

Source: OIV, 2021 Harvest, Focus 2023 Evolution Of World Wine Production And Consumption By Colour

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

FWE focuses on the major regions of France, but there are a few other lesser-known regions that shouldn't be overlooked.

Northern France

The **Upper Loire** lies close to the headwaters of the Loire River, in the Auvergne area. Most of the vineyards lie at considerable elevation and are subject to a continental climate. The main grapes are Chardonnay and Gamay.

Central France

Jura, in eastern France, uses the Savagnin grape to make Vin Jaune. The wine is aged under *flor*, a film-forming yeast like that found on fino sherries, giving a unique briny, nutty profile. Local reds like Trousseau and Poulsard yield light, aromatic wines.

Savoie, nestled in the French Alps, produces crisp whites using Jacquère and Altesse. The red wines from Mondeuse have pepper and spice and firm tannins. The wines of Savoie all have a hallmark freshness from their Alpine-influenced climate.

The **South-West** is a melting pot of grape varieties and wine styles. Here, we find Bordeaux-style wines, Malbecs from Cahors, Tannats from Madiran, plus sweet and sparkling wines. The region's full of surprises.

Off the Southern Coast

Corsica (La Corse) lies in the Mediterranean Sea. The Phocaeans, early Greek traders, are attributed with introducing formal viticulture in 570 BCE. Today, Corsica grows Nielluccio (Sangiovese) and Sciacarello (Mammolo) to produce robust reds. Vermentino is the most planted white grape and produces aromatic wines.



THE CUISINE OF FRANCE

Baguette and brie, croissant and beurre, France and cuisine. Some things are meant to be together.

France's varied climates, soils and topographies have given rise to many distinct regional specialties. Brittany boasts artichokes, while Provence offers melons and peaches. Lyon is renowned for Bresse poultry, and coastal areas provide oysters and fresh fish. Diverse breeds of cows yield hundreds of cheeses. All of these provide a cornucopia for France's innovative chefs.

French cuisine took off in the Middle Ages, when the nobility enjoyed opulent, extravagant multi-course meals that came to symbolize status and power. Italian influences were incorporated in the 16th century when Catherine de' Medici arrived with her chefs. Things kept evolving and the 17th and 18th centuries saw the birth of iconic sauces like Béarnaise and Hollandaise.

This laid the foundation for the Golden Age of the 19th century, which introduced formalized techniques, a hierarchy of sauces and dishes, and professional chefs. This was a seismic shift from the norm of cooks being servants and apprentices. Chefs stepped into the limelight and spread French cuisine around the world. In this era, Auguste Escoffier, credited as the father of modern French cuisine, pioneered the kitchen brigade, and created Nouvelle Cuisine that emphasized lighter fare.

France remains renowned for its formal techniques, fresh simplicity, and exquisite presentations, but it continues to evolve. Contemporary chefs are exploring fusion, melding global flavors and classic French methods. Sustainability and farm-to-table practices are also emphasized, just as they are in the world of wine. French culinary tradition continues to adapt, balancing innovation with tradition.