

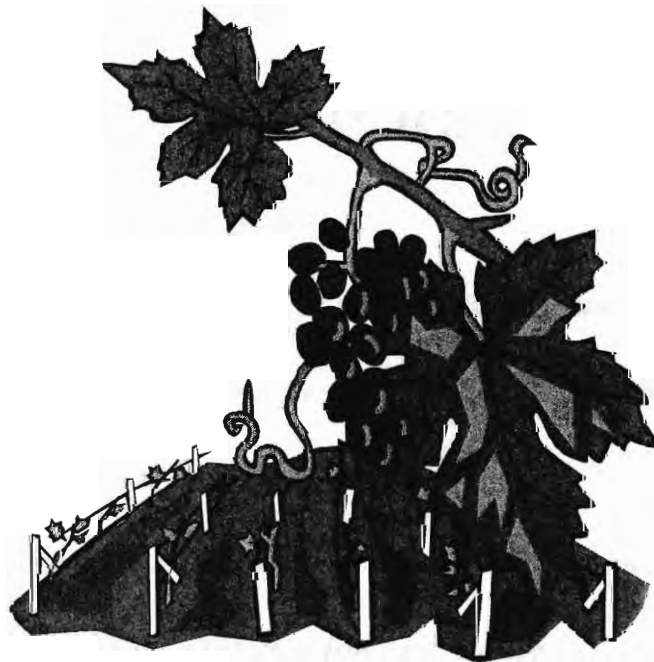
WHAT ARE GRAPES?

Grapes are nature's perfect package for fermentation. One grape contains all the ingredients necessary for making wine.

- Approximately 10% to 25% of the grape is sugar
- Approximately 70% to 80% of the grape's pulp is water
- The remainder is made up of acids, minerals and flavors

Grape skins contain all the pigments or color compounds for making red wines. They're also covered with natural yeasts to ferment the sugars (although the winemaker will intervene and control the yeast that is used in the fermentation process).

Finally, tannins, the astringent components of wine that dry out your mouth, and help the wines to age, are found in the seeds, skins and stems of grapes.



WHAT IS WINE?

Wine is fermented grape juice. Add yeast to grape juice and the yeast ferments the natural sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide.

Grape Juice (Sugar) + Yeast = Wine (Alcohol) + Carbon Dioxide

The yeast eats the sugar, the carbon dioxide bubbles away, and the alcohol in the wine, packed with all those grape flavors, remains. If the winemaker wants to make a sweet wine, he or she can remove the yeast before it eats all the sugar, leaving a bit of residual sugar in the wine.

Sometimes winemakers keep the carbon dioxide in the wine and make sparkling wines. The most famous is Champagne, which comes from the Champagne region of France. Sparkling wines produced in other areas cannot legally be called Champagne. Only the sparkling wine from Champagne can be named Champagne.

Since wine comes from grapes, it's an agricultural product. And, as with all agricultural products, differences in wine flavor can sometimes be explained by weather variations during the grape growing season. That's why there's a vintage date, or year, on every wine bottle that signifies when the grapes were picked and made into wine.

HOW WHITE WINES ARE MADE

- 1. White grapes picked***
- 2. Grapes crushed and removed from stems***
- 3. Grapes pressed to separate juice from skins***
- 4. Grape juice to fermentation***
- 5. New wine to barrels or tank for aging and clarification***
- 6. Filtration, stabilization and bottling.***

What's a *Varietal* Wine?

Just like there are Golden Delicious, Rome, Granny Smith, Gala and many other apple varieties, there are numerous grape varieties. When the wine label says the name of the grape variety on the label, like “Chardonnay” or Zinfandel”, it’s called a varietal wine.

Wine Types: *White Wines*

Grapes come in different colors, and so do wines. White wines are almost always made from white grapes. But because all grape juice is clear, even in red grapes, white wine could be made from dark grapes. The grapes are crushed to separate the juice from the skins, yeast is added to the sweet juice and the juice ferments into wine.

The most popular white wines in the U.S. are:

Chardonnay (*shar doe nay*)

Generally a rich, complex, white wine that takes nicely to aging in oak barrels, which adds toasty, sometimes vanilla flavors. Aromas may be of vanilla, hazelnuts, lemon or apple.

Sauvignon Blanc / Fumé Blanc (*so veen yon blahnk / foo may blahnk*)

Aromatic wine with distinctive fine herb, citrus or bell pepper aromas and flavors. Can have smoky or grassy undertones. (In the U.S., the term Sauvignon Blanc is used interchangeably with *Fumé Blanc*.)

Riesling (*rees ling*)

Also called *White Riesling* or *Johannisberg Riesling*, it’s capable of producing wines of extraordinary balance. It has fruity aromas of fresh flowers, peaches and apricots. It’s naturally high acid level provides a crisp refreshing finish. Very versatile wine...can range from bone dry to dessert sweet.

Gewürztraminer (*guh verts tra mee ner*)

This grape makes an aromatic, spicy wine with strong hints of flowers and rose petals. “*Gewürz*” means “*spice*” in German.

Pinot Grigio (*Pee noe Gree Jee oh*)

The Italian name for the Pinot Gris grape grown in France. Does well in many parts of the world and is now being grown increasingly in California. Generally produces a low-acid, full-bodied wine with a smooth, clean finish. Aromatic with hints of citrus, as well as apple flavors. Can be light or medium bodied.

Wine Types: What Makes Wine Red?

Red grapes have white juice inside. Red color in wine comes from pigments in the skins. The grapes are crushed and the juice and skins are pumped to a tank where yeast is added to ferment the juice into wine. After a week or so of fermentation, the grape juice is converted to alcohol and by the yeast, and the skins have imparted their red pigments to the new wine. Skins also impart other important components to red wines, especially tannins and flavors.

Tannins produce the chalky, dry feeling in your mouth and act as a preservative to help the wine age. Black tea and unripe persimmons have a lot of tannins, too.

Tannins and other components sometimes combine in older red wines to form sediment. As that sediment precipitates out, the wine can actually become softer and easier to drink. This is called maturing - it's the real reason for aging wines.

HOW RED WINES ARE MADE

- 1. Red grapes picked***
- 2. Grapes crushed and removed from stems***
- 3. Grape juice and skins to fermentation***
- 4. New wine pressed to remove skins***
- 5. Wine to barrels or tank for aging and clarification***
- 6. Filtration, stabilization and bottling***

The top selling reds in the U.S. are:

Cabernet Sauvignon (*cah bear nay so veen yon*)

Elegant red wines with flavors of blackberry, cassis, olives, mint and cherry. Can be tannic or astringent when young. It matures slowly and ages well.

Merlot (*mehr lo*)

Similar in flavor to Cabernet Sauvignon, but softer and fruitier. Tends to be less tannic and usually matures faster than Cabernet Sauvignon. It's often blended with Cabernet to add softness.

Pinot Noir (*pee no nwahr*)

Wines with aromas of cherry, raspberry and tea; smooth textures like satin or velvet. Sometimes described as having earthy or mushroom aromas.

Syrah or Shiraz (*seer ahh or sheer ahz*)

Considered the best red grape of France's Rhone valley, has been produced successfully in California where it makes rich, full-flavored wines of medium to full body with distinctive dark red fruit flavors. In Australia and increasingly in the U.S. it is referred to as Shiraz.

Zinfandel (*zin fan dell*)

It makes blush wines like White Zinfandel when the grape skins are removed early, as well as blockbuster reds from vines up to 100 years old. Raspberry and strawberry fruit flavors usually shine through in any style. Origin has been traced to southern Italy and Croatia, but it's considered California's own.

Grenache (*gren-nash*)

Used in blends to make the famous red wine of Chateau –Neuf-Du-Pape and on its own to make fine roses. Transplanted to California, Grenache produces some of the best American rose and some wine makers make it as a sweeter style red wine.

Wine Types: Do White and Red Make Pink?

Pink or blush wines like White Zinfandel have become extremely popular in the U.S. over the past twenty years. They're made by crushing red grapes and leaving the red skins in contact with the white juice for a short period of time - less than a day, sometime only for a matter of hours. That's just enough time to extract a pink blush from the pigments in the skins instead of a deep red color.

Pink wines can also be made by blending red wine with white wine, though the technique is not generally practiced in the U.S.

Blush wines often have a little bit of residual sugar, that is, they're slightly sweet.

Some blush wines, are called Rosé wines. Rosés are often drier (less sweet) than a White Zinfandel or other Blush wines. Dry Rosé wines are experiencing an increasing popularity because of their versatility with food.

White Zinfandel, with its strawberry and cherry fruit aromas and flavors, is the most popular Blush wine in the U.S., though Blush wines may be made from any red grape, since most red grape juice is colorless (White Cabernet Sauvignon, White Merlot).

HOW BLUSH WINES ARE MADE

- 1. Red grapes picked***
- 2. Grapes crushed and removed from stems***
- 3. After short contact, the grapes are pressed to remove skins***
- 4. Pink grape juice to fermentation***
- 5. Wine to tank for settling and clarification***
- 6. Filtration, stabilization and bottling***

Winemaking Treatments

All wines go through fermentation and some aging, but whites and reds sometimes ferment and age in different kinds of containers for different periods of time.

Many white and red wines ferment in stainless steel tanks. Stainless steel does not impart any flavor to the wine, and temperature can be easily controlled. Many Chardonnays benefit from fermenting in small oak barrels. The wood imparts flavors like vanilla and toast that complements the natural grape flavors of a Chardonnay.

Those vanilla flavors come from the wood itself. The toasty flavors come from a charred layer of wood on the inside of the barrel that occurs when the barrel is manufactured. Chardonnay is one of the few white wines that benefits from being fermented in barrels. If a Chardonnay says “barrel fermented” on the label, you know it was fermented in an oak barrel.

Oak barrels are also used for aging many types of wines. Since aging also imparts flavors, more delicate white wines can't spend as much time in barrels as heavy red wine; the wood flavors might overpower the wine's grape flavors. Heavy red wines can often age more than twice as long in barrels than white wines. 18 – 24 months is not uncommon. Because of the full flavor and astringent tannin they can absorb more flavor and aroma from the barrel without losing character. Barrels are porous which allows a small exchange of air with the wine. Partly because of this, the wines become softer and silkier before going into the bottle.



READING A LABEL

American wine labels are required to contain certain information that tells you more than just who made the wine.

Alcohol Content: Alcohol content is noted in percentage by volume. All table wines are between 7% and 14% alcohol by volume, but can legally vary by plus or minus 1.5% from what the label says.

Vintage Year: The year the grapes were harvested to make the wine. At least 95% of the grapes used had to come from that year stated on the label. (A wine that doesn't have a vintage date is simply a blend of two or more vintages and is called a non-vintage wine.)

Brand Name: The name of the producer must appear as well as the address.

Appellation: The area in which the grapes were grown. It can be large or small. For example, "California" means that all of the grapes came from California. "Carneros" (a small area in Northern California known for high quality wines) means at least 85% of the grapes came from that area. Sometimes wineries even list individual vineyards on the label.

"Produced and Bottled by . . ." The winery named must have performed the usual winemaking operations and bottled the wine. **"Cellared and bottled by"** or **"vinted and bottled by"** mean that the winery may have contracted out some of the winemaking steps. **Estate Bottled** means that the producing winery owns or controls all of the grapes used to make the wine; that they were all grown on its property and that the wine was bottled by the producer on its property.

Grape Variety: If it's named on the label, at least 75% of the wine must be made from that single grape variety. Wines that contain less than 75% of any one grape sometimes take proprietary names since by law they cannot name the wine varietally.

In many European countries, wines are traditionally named for the region in which the grape is grown, such as Burgundy or Chianti.

U.S. Wines may also have made-up, or proprietary, names. Wines like B.V. Tapestry or Opus One are blends of various kinds of grapes, with no one grape comprising 75% of the blend. The names “Tapestry” and “Opus One” can only be used by those wineries and are, therefore, considered proprietary names.

Government Warnings: “Contains Sulfites”: Wine labels in the U.S. must mention that the wine “contains sulfites” (if the concentration is over 10 parts per million, which is the case for the majority of wines). Sulfites are a naturally-occurring anti-bacterial and preservative produced during fermentation. Winemakers may also add some sulfur dioxide at various times during the wine making process to keep the grapes or the grape juice fresh and prevent the wine from going bad before being bottled.

If sulfur dioxide is not used, wines will turn brown and could eventually become vinegar in the bottle. But because a small percentage of the population can have an allergic reaction to sulfites, the U.S. Government requires the warning label. The label must also include a warning regarding avoiding wine if pregnant or driving or operating machinery.

TASTING WINE

Wine appreciation is a matter of individual taste, including sight and smell. Using your senses in the best way to get acquainted with wine.



SIGHT: Check the wine's color. Wine is supposed to please the eye as well as the palate. Is it dark or light? Look for its clarity, brilliance and intensity.



NOSE: Swirl the wine first to release aromas, then inhale; short sniffs are most effective. First impressions are always the most accurate. The smells in a wine are referred to as its "nose". Aroma refers to a single smell that you may detect and bouquet refers to multiple aromas.



SIP: Taste it. "Chew" it in your mouth a bit. Purse your lips and suck in a little air. Notice the subtle flavors. Most people will detect sweetness of the wine, if any, on the tip of the tongue; acidity such as that found in lemon or grapefruit is sensed along the sides of the tongue; and bitterness from tannin at the back of the tongue. The body of a wine is described as either light, medium or full... how does it feel in the mouth? How is the finish - that lingering aftertaste that you can savor in your mouth even after you've spit or swallowed the wine? Was it short, medium or long?

SAVOR: Think about what you have tasted. You can make certain conclusions about the wine. Its age – does it taste youthful or mature; its quality – is it well made; its value – is it worth the price? Most of all, did you like it?