

About Ahh Bee

Hi, I'm Abby deVarennes—a wine enthusiast and Air Force pilot, not a sommelier or wine expert. This guide is a collection of information I've compiled, tasted, and learned along the way while living or traveling across wine-rich regions. It's meant to be helpful, approachable, and practical for bringing wine home to enjoy—not intimidating.

I grew up in Davis California, a university town in between Sacramento and San Francisco. UC Davis has a college for wine making and grape growing that train a lot of the winemakers in Napa. If you watch a wine documentary, there is a good chance they mention UC Davis for their wine school--its pretty cool.

I went on a language exchange to France in college and the Professor that took me was a sommelier and a French trained Cordon Bleu chef. She taught me to approach wine and food as a lifestyle. Think about where the grapes are from, what makes that place special, and most importantly--what do you smell?

When I turned 21 my parents took me on a tour of Napa, for my education. They explained the Judgement of Paris (read a small synopsis in Northern California) and we visited the wineries that were apart of the historic tasting. My parents even went on a date at Grgich Hills before they were married and were served by Mike Grgich! My parents said back then it was just a bunch of farmers that like wine and were excited to share for free in the hopes you bought a bottle.

Since then, I've traveled to a lot of different wine growing regions. I try to read up on where I am going in a very approachable wine book called Wine Folly. Then I will deep dive certain grapes or regions in a book called the Wine Bible. I keep a tasting journal because I usually forget what I think--I mean after a couple of glasses who could blame me.

I began to create this guide while dreaming about drinking wine in Crete, while I was stuck in Saudi Arabia. I realized a lot of these cool places the Air Force takes me are prolific wine regions, but most people have no idea what to buy. Hopefully this guide will help you taste something new or bring back great wine to drink later!



Organization of the Guide

Each section is organized into some intro info, a top picks section, BX section, Off-base section, and grape breakdowns. The top picks are the easiest to use and identify what to buy where. The recommendations are a broad generalization of what is grown in the area or what the area is known for. Great for bringing back a bottle to share with your wife or husband!

The next section are charts of what you can find on base and off base. Typically limited selections from Class Six, shoppettes, or BX/PX but still a decent representation--especially overseas. Off-base options include nearby wine shops, grocery stores, and boutique spots worth checking out. If you want to get a case of wine that displays a more nuanced version of the region use the charts. My goal is to help others buy great wine without overspending, whether you're in California, Spain,

Germany, Crete, or wherever the grapes grow. Cheers to finding something good in every glass, “a good glass of wine, is one where you take another sip from.”

A wide-angle photograph of a vineyard at sunset. The sky is a vibrant orange and yellow, with the sun partially visible behind distant hills. In the foreground, there are rows of grapevines. A small tractor or vehicle is visible on the right side of the frame.

BEST
WINE OF

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

If you only have time for the Class 6 BX

Wine	Varietal/Region	Notes	Taste	Est. Price
Austin Hope Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon	Cabernet Sauvignon/ Paso Robles (central coast)	Paso Robles icon: structured icon: structured, balanced, terroir-driven. A boutique label regularly stocked	Bold-Smooth-Vanilla	~\$25-30
Ridge “Three Valleys”	Zinfandel blend/ Sonoma	Premium Zinfandel blend-- elegant and structured	Fruity-Spicy-Balanced	~\$30-35
La Crema	Chardonnay / Sonoma	Crisp, cool-climate, coastal style	Light-Cherry-Silky	~\$25-30
Bonanza	Cabernet Sauvignon	An Ode to California wine. Created by the same family that makes Caymus (a top notch Napa winery)	Juicy-Soft-Chocolatey	~\$25-30
Post & Beam Cabernet Sauvignon	Cabernet Sauvignon/ Napa Valley	Well structured alongside resolved tannins, cassis and blackberry finishing with vanilla, mocha, and cocoa.	Plush-blackberry-Elegant	~\$35-45

Local grocery store called Nugget Market or BevMo				
Wine	Region	Why it's worth it	Taste	Est. Price
Chateau Montelena Chardonnay	Chardonnay / Calistoga, Napa Valley	The exact wines tyle that beat top French whites in the Judgment of Paris 1976; fresh, crisp, and mineral-drivel	Crisp-Apple-Mineral	~\$25-50
Stag's Leap Wine Cellars "Artemis" Cabernet Sauvignon	Cabernet Sauvignon/ Stag's Leap district, Napa Valley	The winery that beat Bordeaux; ripe balckberry, oak, balanced and iconic Napa Cab	Smooth-Dark-Earthy	~\$45
Clos du Val Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	Cabernet Sauvignon/ Stag's Leap district, Napa Valley	French-founded winery; elegant, old-world style Cab	Structured-Cherry-Oak	~\$50
Heitz Cellar Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	Cabernet Sauvignon/St. Helena, Napa Valley	Classic Napa Valley cab, full body with integrated tannins and good acidity.	Elegant-Minty-Long	~\$50-75

The Abby deVarennes speciality choices				
Wine	Region	Why it's notable	Taste	Est. Price
Grgich Hills Estate Chardonnay	Chardonnay /Napa Valley	Crafted by Mike Grgich who was the mind behind the Chardonnay from Montelena's Judgment of Paris winning wine	Rich-Peach-Toasty	~\$45-60
Schramsberg Blanc de Blancs	Sparkling Chardonnay /Napa Valley	First US sparkling wine served at a White House state dinner	Bubbly-Citrus-Crisp	~\$35-45
Patz & Hall Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir	Pinot Noir/ Sonoma Coast	Boutique Pinot Noir from the Sonoma coast where this grape thrives	Silky-Berry-Spice	~\$60-70
Williams Selyem Pinot Noir	Pinot Noir/ Russian River Valley, Sonoma County	The Russian River Valley in Sonoma County is known for its exceptional Pinot Noir	Bright-Cherry-Complex	~\$70+
Clos du Val Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	Cabernet Sauvignon/ Napa Valley	One of Napa's most notable fruit driven Cabs	Lush-Vanilla-Ripe	~\$70-90

Wineries in Napa Valley that offer Free Tastings

Winery	Location	Notes
Hall Wines	St. Helena, Napa Valley	Free Tasting + one guest
Charles Krug	St. Helena, Napa Valley	Includes tour
V. Sattui Winery	St. Helena, Napa Valley	
Domain Carneros	Carneros, Napa Valley	Sparkling wine
Mumm Napa	Rutherford, Napa Valley	30% purchase discount; sparkling wines
Grgich Hills Estate	Rutherford, Napa valley	Classic Napa tasting room
Peju Province Winery	Rutherford, Napa Valley	Scenic grounds
Cakebread Cellars	Rutherford, Napa Valley	appointment recommended

General Info

Wines in California tend to be more expensive due to high land and labor costs, limited water resources, and the premium reputation of regions like Napa and Sonoma. Unlike mass-market wines produced in bulk, small and mid-sized California wineries often focus on quality, sustainable farming, and handcrafted techniques—driving up both cost and value. To get a well-made, character-driven bottle that reflects the region and grape, expect to spend at least \$20. Below that price point, most options are mass-produced blends made for consistency, not expression or uniqueness.

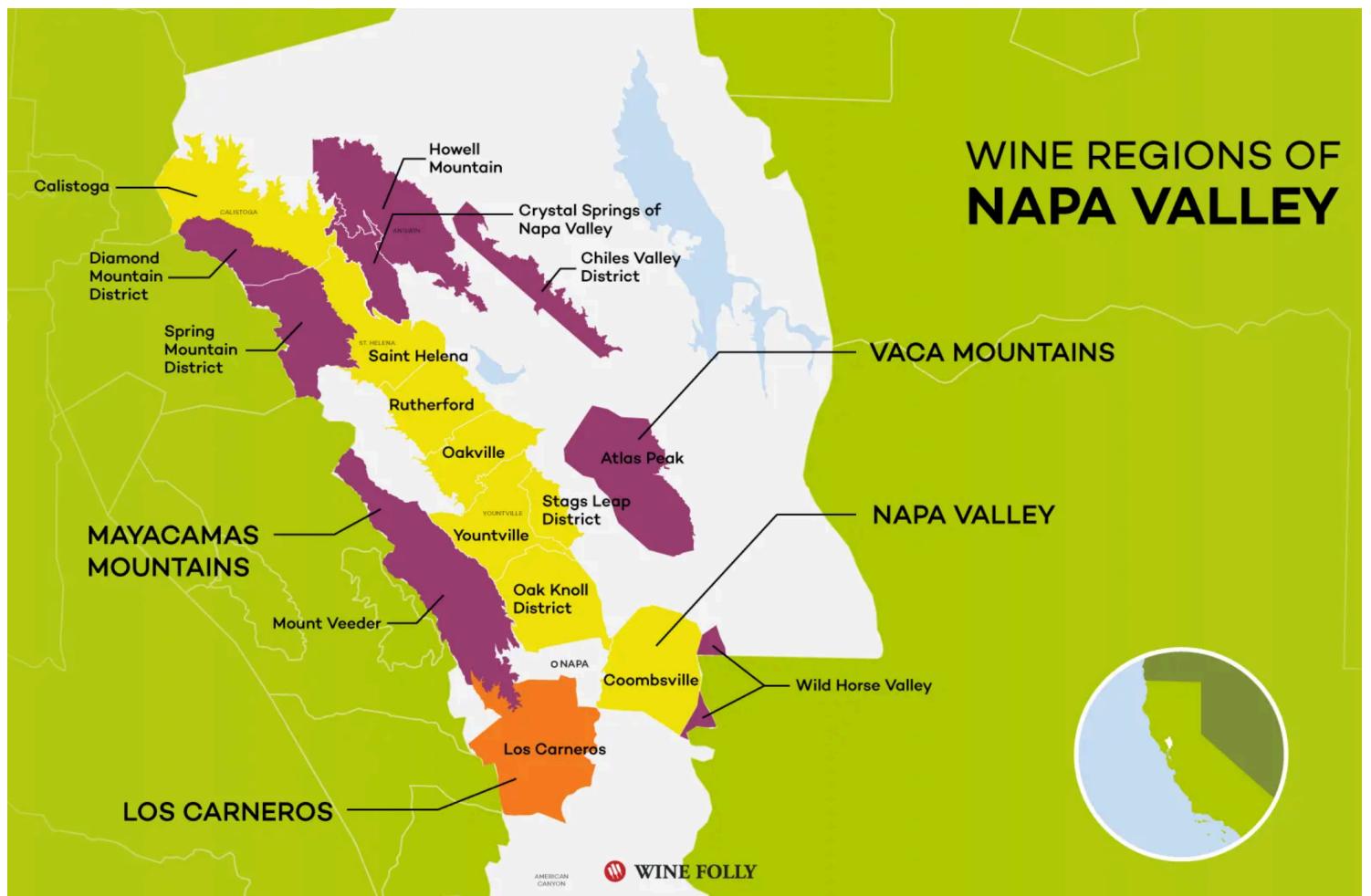
Judgment of Paris

The Judgment of Paris in 1976 was a blind wine tasting held in Paris where esteemed French judges unexpectedly ranked California wines above some of France's most prestigious labels. In a stunning upset, **Chateau Montelena's Chardonnay** and **Stag's Leap Wine Cellars' Cabernet Sauvignon** took top honors, beating out iconic French Burgundy and Bordeaux wines. This event shocked the wine world and catapulted Napa Valley—and California wine as a whole—onto the global stage. Suddenly, American winemaking was taken seriously, opening the door for investment, innovation, and a surge in boutique wineries focused on quality. The Judgment of Paris forever changed California's wine identity, proving it could rival the best in the world.

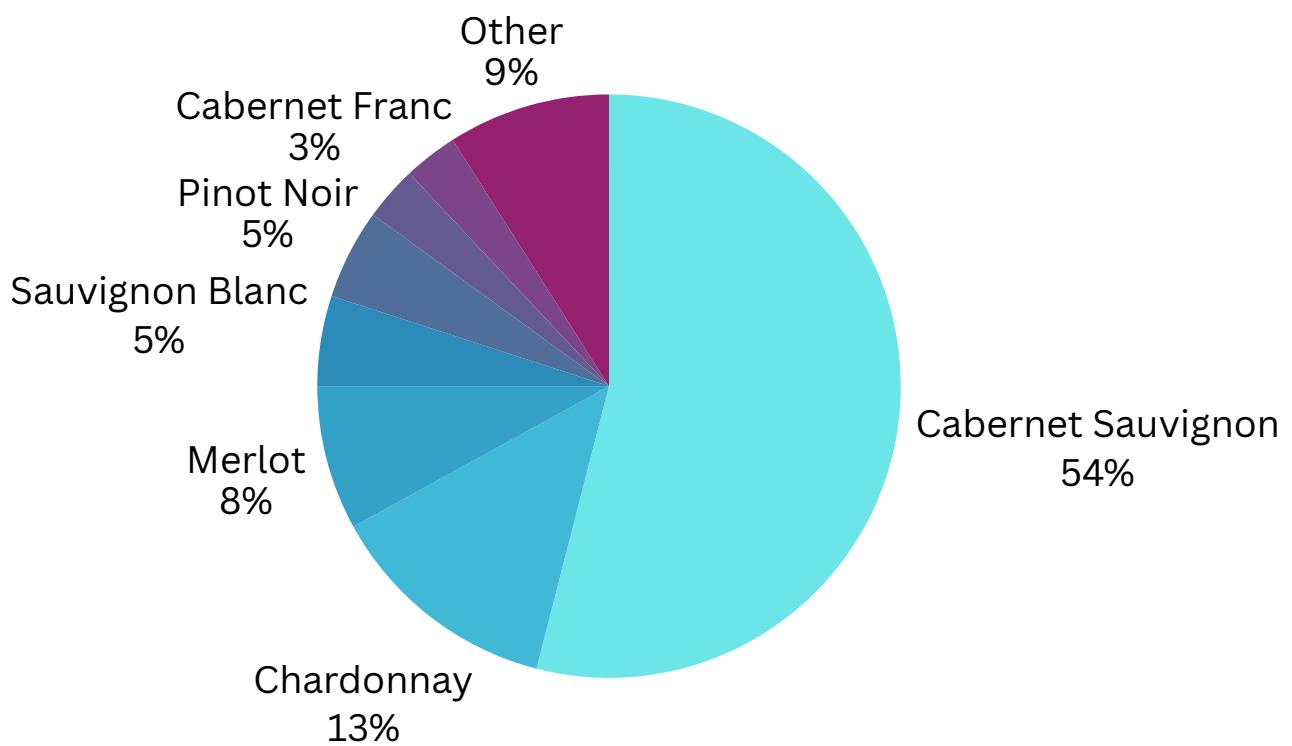
Region and Grape Overview



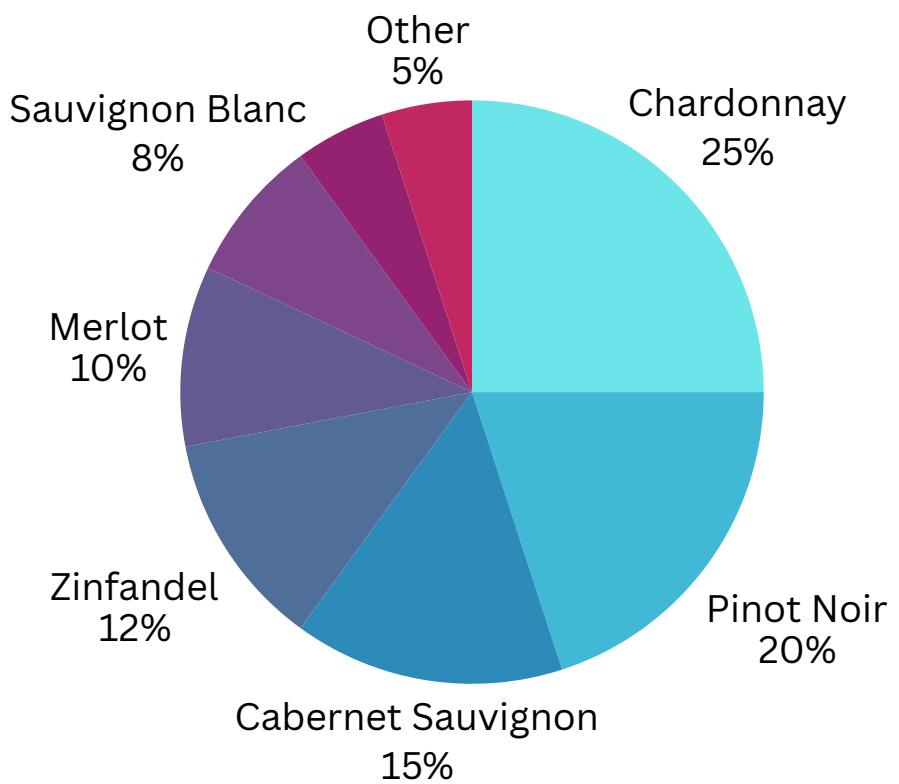
Napa Valley Sub-Regions



Most Common Grapes in Napa:



Most Common Grapes in Sonoma:



Top 3

Red Wine: Cabernet Sauvignon

Red Wine: Pinot Noir

White Wine: Chardonnay

WASHINGTON



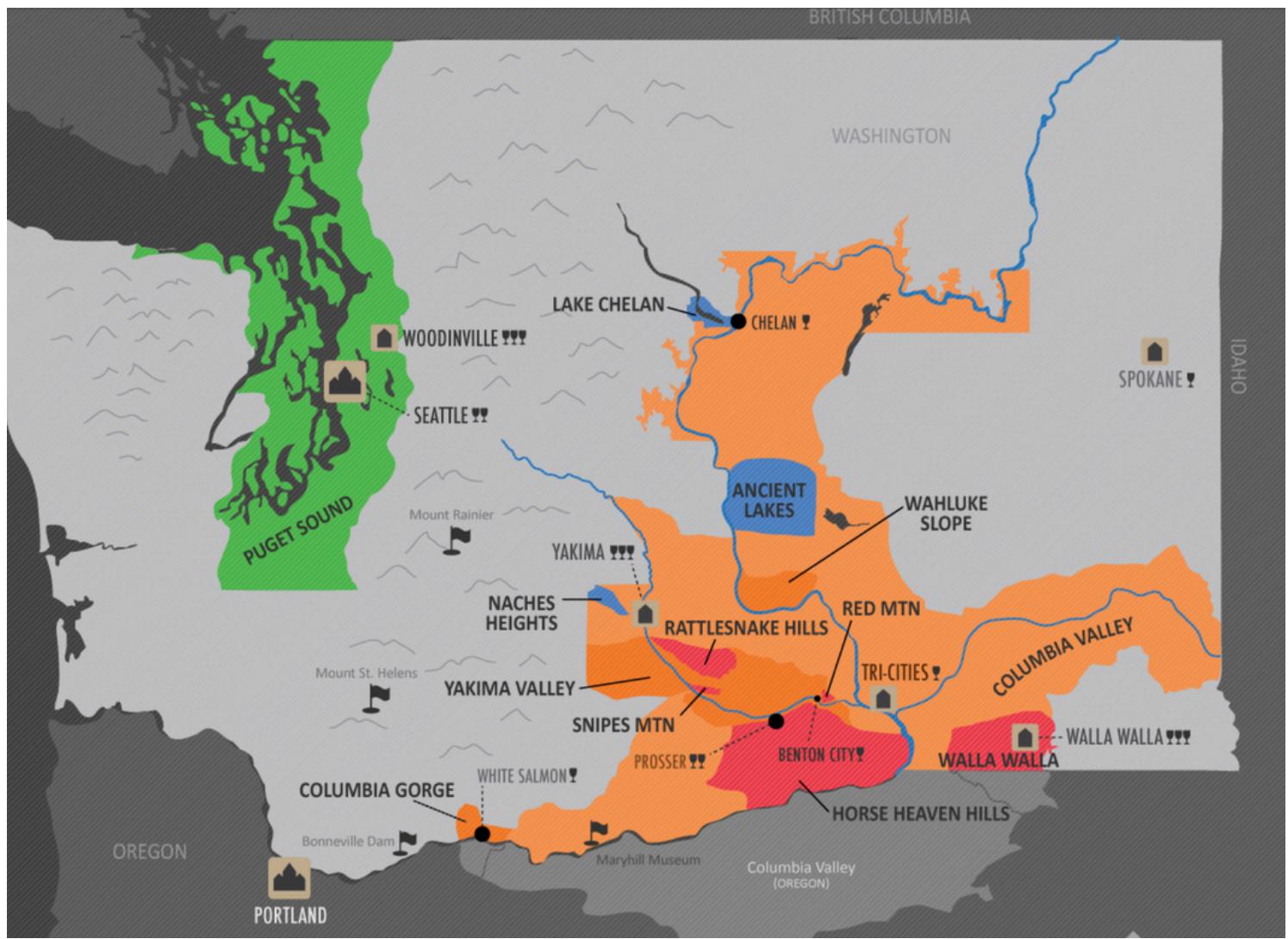
If you only have time for the Class 6/Bx/Px

Wine	Varietal/Region	Notes	Taste	Est. Price
Airfield Estates Dauntless Red Blend	Yakima Valley / Merlot–Cab Franc–Cab Sauv	Affordable Bordeaux-style red; smooth tannins, spice, great QPR	Rich, plush, spicy	~\$22
Airfield Estates Chardonnay	Yakima Valley / Chardonnay	91 pts WS, balanced oak + fruit, versatile with food	Silky, fruity, elegant	~\$17
Chateau Ste. Michelle Cabernet Sauvignon	Columbia Valley / Cabernet Sauvignon	Widely available, reliable, everyday Cab with structure & dark fruit	Bold, smooth, classic	~\$18
Chateau Ste. Michelle Dry Riesling	Columbia Valley / Riesling	Washington Riesling benchmark; crisp & food-friendly	Crisp, citrus, refreshing	~\$11–\$13
Columbia Crest H3 Merlot	Horse Heaven Hills / Merlot	Excellent value, approachable red with soft tannins	Juicy, smooth, velvety	~\$15
Milbrandt Vineyards “The Estates” Syrah	Wahluke Slope / Syrah	Consistently high-value Syrah; dark fruit & pepper spice	Dark, spicy, full	~\$20–\$22
L’Ecole No 41 Semillon	Columbia Valley / Semillon	Rare varietal, barrel-fermented, fresh & complex	Bright, nutty, round	~\$20
Charles Smith Wines “The Velvet Devil” Merlot	Columbia Valley / Merlot	Popular, bold, fruit-driven style at an easy price	Smooth, fruity, bold	~\$12–\$15

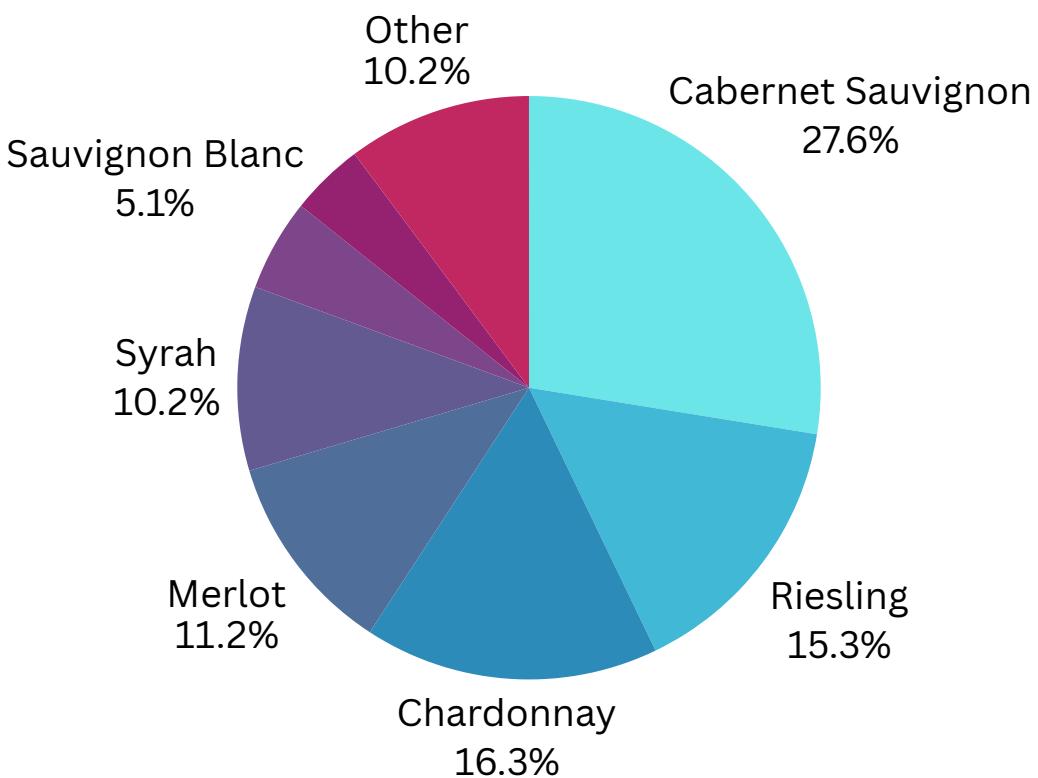
If you can go off-base

Wine	Varietal/Region	Notes	Taste	Est. Price
K Vintners Syrah <i>Motor City Kitty</i> 2021	Yakima Valley, Syrah	93-point “king of QPR,” electric freshness, savory, mineral-rich finish	Bold, mineral, long	~\$40
K Vintners Grenache <i>The Boy</i> 2020	Walla Walla Valley, Grenache	Elegant yet powerful, spicy-floral aroma with finesse	Floral, spicy, elegant	~\$35
L'Ecole No 41 Syrah <i>Seven Hills Vineyard</i> 2021	Walla Walla Valley, Syrah	Intense, with dried chili & black olive, great age potential	Spicy, complex, bold	~\$40
B. Leighton <i>Gratitude</i> 2020	Yakima Valley, Mourvèdre-Grenache-Syrah blend	Silky texture, wild-herb and smoked-meat aromas, seamless tannins	Smoky, silky, herbal	~\$40
Canvasback Cabernet Sauvignon 2020	Red Mountain, Cabernet Sauvignon	Concentrated, black-berry and pencil-lead notes, structured typical of Red Mountain	Rich, structured, bold	~\$32
216 Miles to Go by Mark Ryan Cabernet Sauvignon 2022	Columbia Valley, Cabernet Sauvignon	Cedar-polished, full-bodied, toasted-spice character	Polished, spicy, supple	~\$32
Substance Merlot <i>Stoneridge Vineyard</i> 2019	Columbia Valley, Merlot	Bright, driven, full-bodied with red-fruit and herb character	Bright, full, herbaceous	~\$35
DeLille Cellars <i>Chaleur Blanc</i> 2022	Columbia Valley, Semillon–Sauvignon Blanc blend	Barrel-fermented, spicy oak with vivid citrus and bright acidity	Crisp, spicy, vibrant	~\$40

Region and Grape Overview



Most Common Grapes



Why Washington Wines are Cool

Washington wines are easy to enjoy because they bring together bright fruit flavors and a smooth, balanced taste. The state's vineyards get lots of sunshine during the day and cool nights, which helps the grapes ripen with plenty of flavor while keeping the wines fresh and not too heavy. This means the wines are tasty on their own but also go really well with food. From bold reds like Cabernet Sauvignon to crisp whites like Riesling and Chardonnay, Washington makes a wide variety of wines that are both high quality and affordable—perfect if you're just getting into wine.

Top 3

Red Wine: Cabernet Sauvignon

Red Wine: Red Blend

White Wine: Riesling



SPAIN

I Do Not Know What to Buy

Most Well Known Spanish Wines

If you only have time for the Class 6 BX

Wine	Varietal/Region	Notes	Taste	Est. Price
La Rioja Alta Gran Reserva 890	Rioja / Tempranillo	Benchmark traditional Rioja Gran Reserva	Cherry, leather, bold	\$50–\$100
Marqués de Murrieta Castillo Ygay Gran Reserva Especial	Rioja / Tempranillo	Historic, refined Rioja	Spice, red fruit	\$70–\$120
Marqués de Cáceres Crianza	Rioja / Tempranillo	Classic Rioja, balanced, great quality/value	Cherry, vanilla, smooth	\$10–\$20
Marqués de Murrieta Reserva	Rioja / Tempranillo	Classic Reserva Rioja, smooth oak influence	Cherry, spice, earthy	\$30–\$40
Borsao Selección Garnacha	Campo de Borja / Garnacha	Great value, approachable	Juicy, herbal, smooth	\$15–\$25
Borsao Garnacha	Campo de Borja / Garnacha	Excellent value, expressive	Berry, spice, herbal	\$10–\$25
Tintilla de Rota	Andalusia (Rota) / Tintilla	Rare local Andalusian wine	Sweet, bold, unique	\$15–\$25
Pazo de Señorans Albariño	Rías Baixas / Albariño	Fresh, crisp, great with seafood	Citrus, peach, light	\$12–\$20
Alazules Airén	La Mancha / Airén (white)	crisp and refreshing—often sold in Europe/US	Peach • Apple • Floral	€10–15 (~\$11–15)
Felix Solis "Montefrío" Airén	La Mancha / Airén (white)	Widely distributed Spanish value white, tropical and balanced	Tropical • Balanced • Light	€9–12 (~\$10)
Las Tinadas / El Cérlico Airén	La Mancha / Old-vine Airén	Crafted in amphora from heritage vines—smoky, mineral—highlighted by Jancis Robinson	Mineral • Smoky • Crisp	€15–20
Raventós i Blanc 'de Nit' Rosé (SPARKLING)	Penedès / Macabeo–Xarel-lo–Parellada–Monastrell	Organic, estate-grown cava rosé with elegance and finesse; critically acclaimed	Dry, Strawberry • Mineral •	€18–25 (~\$20–27)
Gramona Imperial Gran Reserva (SPARKLING)	Penedès / Xarel-lo–Macabeo–Chardonnay	Long-aged (30+ months), refined and complex; a premium cava option	Dry, Brioche • Nutty	€25–35 (~\$28–38)
Juvé & Camps Reserva de la Familia (CAVA SPARKLING)	Penedès / Macabeo–Xarel-lo–Parellada	Top-rated brut nature cava; dry, elegant, and long-finishing	Dry, Lemon zest • Almond	€18–30 (~\$20–32)

Interesting and Less Common

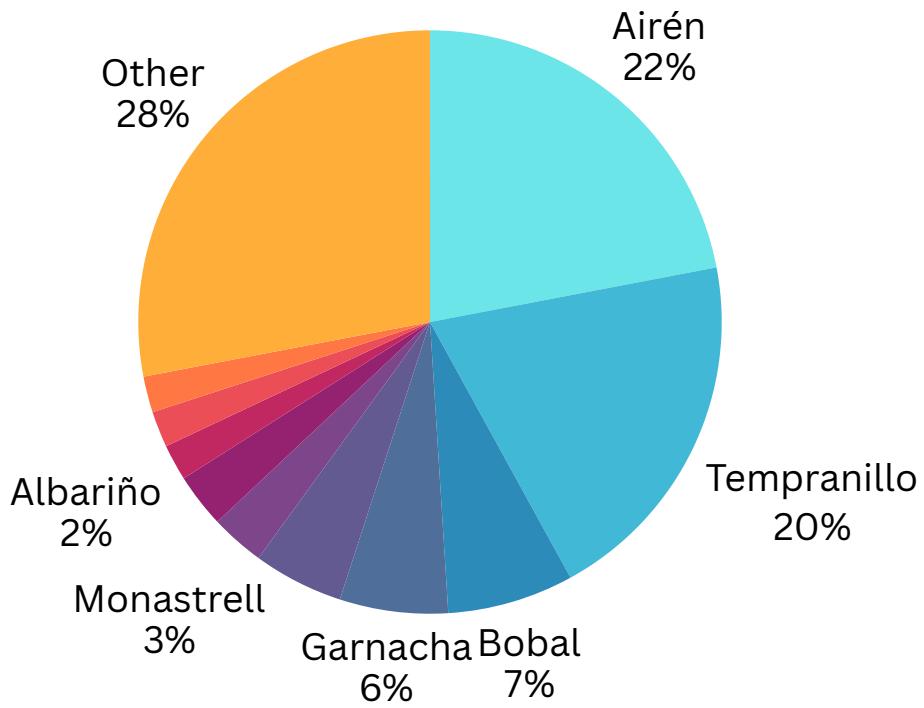
If unavailable at the NEX try Bodegas El Gato

Wine	Varietal/Region	Notes	Taste	Est. Price
Tintilla de Rota	Cádiz (Andalusia) / Tintina	Rare indigenous grape from Rota, a true local specialty	Sweet, dark, smooth	\$15–\$25
Txakolina (Txomin Etxaniz)	Basque Country / Hondarrabi Zuri	Unique Basque wine, refreshing and different from typical whites	Crisp, fizzy, citrus	\$20–\$30
Bierzo Mencía (e.g., Descendientes de J. Palacios)	Bierzo / Mencía	Elegant, medium-bodied alternative to Rioja	Berry, floral, bright	\$20–\$35
Albariño (e.g., Martín Códax)	Rías Baixas / Albariño	Expressive, crisp white from Galicia, perfect with seafood	Citrus, floral, light	\$15–\$25
Priorat Garnacha & Cariñena (e.g., Scala Dei)	Priorat / Garnacha/Cariñena	From the rugged Priorat region, rich and complex	Dark, spicy, bold	\$25–\$40
Manchuela Bobal (e.g., Finca Terrerazo)	Manchuela / Bobal	Lesser-known grape with great structure and value	Earthy, juicy, peppery	\$20–\$30
Montilla-Moriles Pedro Ximénez	Andalusia / Fortified Sweet White	Southern Spain's answer to sherry, great dessert wine	Raisin, fig, sweet	\$15–\$30
Garnacha Blanca (e.g., Viñas del Vero)	Somontano / Garnacha Blanca	A rare white from Garnacha grape, aromatic and elegant	Pear, floral, balanced	\$15–\$25

Region and Grape Overview



Most Common Grapes in Spain:



Explaining Spain's Sparkling Wine

Cava is Spain's version of **sparkling wine**, made in a way that's very similar to **Champagne**. Like Champagne, Cava gets its bubbles from the **traditional method** (or *méthode traditionnelle*), where a second fermentation happens inside the bottle. This process creates finer bubbles and a more complex flavor. Cava is mostly made in **Catalonia**, near Barcelona, using local grapes like **Macabeo**, **Xarel·lo**, and **Parellada** instead of the French grapes used in Champagne. Most Cava is **dry**, which means not sweet—look for “**Brut**” or “**Brut Nature**” on the label if you like crisp, dry wines. If you want something a little sweeter, try “**Sec**” or “**Semi-Sec**.” Cava is an affordable, fun, and food-friendly sparkling wine that's perfect for everything from celebrations to casual evenings.

So What is Rioja?

Tempranillo is a **grape**, while **Rioja** is a **wine region** in Spain where that grape is most famously grown. Think of it this way: Rioja is the place, and Tempranillo is the main grape grown there. Most red wines from Rioja are made primarily from Tempranillo, often blended with small amounts of other grapes to add flavor and structure. So, when you drink a red Rioja, you're almost always tasting Tempranillo.

—but not all Tempranillo comes from Rioja. Tempranillo is also grown in other regions like Ribera del Duero and Toro, where it can taste a bit bolder or more intense.

Top 3

Red Wine: Rioja

Red Wine: Garnacha

White Wine: Albarino

Sparkling Wine: Cava



CRETE

If you only have time for the Class 6 BX

Wine	Varietal/Region	Notes	Taste	Est. Price
Douloufakis Vidiano 2023	Vidiano / Crete	Lean, mineral, food-friendly—popular NEX/Commissary pick	Mineral, honeydew, fresh	€15–18 / ~\$17
Lyrarakis Dafni Psarades 2022	Dafni / Crete	Rare aromatic, spicy herbs, strong Crete identity	Herbal, fresh, bright	€14–17
Lyrarakis Vidiano 2022	Vidiano / Crete	Premium slope-grown fruit, elegant & mineral	Crisp, peachy, smooth	~€18
Douloufakis Liatiko “Dafnios” 2020	Liatiko / Crete	Light red, aged, spicy & savory—aging potential	Tart, herbal, complex	€15–25 / \$15–24
Paterianakis Melissokipos Vidiano 2023	Vidiano / PDO Peza, Crete	Skin-contact white, creamy fruit, balanced acidity	Creamy, fruity, smooth	€15–18 (~\$17)
Diamantopetra Assyrtiko–Vidiano 2023	Assyrtiko–Vidiano / Crete	Crisp citrus & stone fruit with subtle oak	Crisp, oaky, vibrant	~\$19
Oenops Vidiano 2023	Vidiano / Crete	Green-flinty minerality, food-friendly	Mineral, tangy, fresh	~\$22
	Malvasia di Candia / Crete	A nod to the Venetian era, this luscious dessert wine is a taste of Cretan history. Enjoy with cheese or preserved fruits as the sun sets.	Sweet, fruity, exotic	€15–30 (500ml)

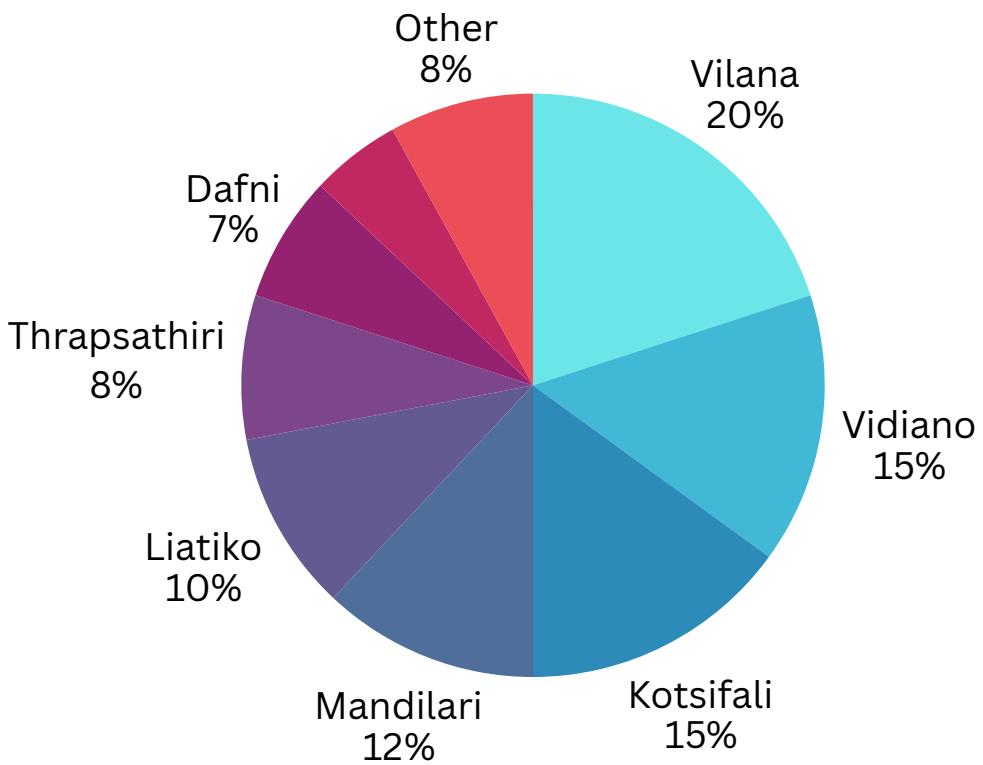
If you go off-base look for

Wine	Varietal/Region	Notes	Taste	Est. Price
Melissokipos Vidiano 2023 (Domaine Paterianakis)	Vidiano / Crete	Organic, skin-contact white; pairs with seafood and grilled meats	Creamy, fruity, smooth	€15–18
Karavatakis Vidiano Klima 2022	Vidiano / Crete	Premium expression from slopes of Heraklion; elegant and versatile	Aromatic, crisp, elegant	~\$20
Lyrarakis Dafni Psarades 2022	Dafni / Crete	Rare, revived varietal with strong Cretan identity and food pairing	Herbal, fresh, bright	€14–17
Douloufakis Amphora Vidiano (2022)	Vidiano (Amphora) / Crete	Made in amphorae; adventurous, textured, and food-friendly	Citrusy, grippy, bold	€18–22
Douloufakis Liatiko "Dafnios" 2020	Liatiko / Crete	Light-bodied red, rich with aging potential and savory spice	Tart, herbal, complex	€15–25 / \$15–24
Diamantopetra Assyrtiko–Vidiano 2023	Assyrtiko–Vidiano / Crete	Blend of two noble grapes; refined and expressive	Crisp, oaky, vibrant	~\$19
Theros Vidiano 2022	Vidiano / PDO Peza, Crete	Single-vineyard expression of Crete's noblest white grape	Bold, fruity, mineral	€20

Region and Grape Overview



Most Common Grapes Grown on Crete



New Generation of Winemakers

In recent decades, a new generation of winemakers on Crete has played a pivotal role in rescuing the island's ancient grape varieties from near extinction. For years, international grapes dominated the market, and many indigenous vines like Vidiano, Dafni, and Liatiko were nearly forgotten. But passionate local vintners, often from multigenerational farming families, began reclaiming these native grapes, nurturing old vineyards, and experimenting with modern winemaking techniques. Their efforts not only preserved Crete's viticultural heritage but also brought these unique varietals to global attention, proving that ancient grapes can thrive in the modern wine world with authenticity, character, and depth.

Great Wine with a Great Price

Wine from Crete offers exceptional quality at a great price because of the island's ideal growing conditions, deep-rooted traditions, and relatively low production costs. The Mediterranean climate, mineral-rich soils, and high-altitude vineyards create vibrant, expressive wines—especially from native grapes like Vidiano, Liatiko, and Dafni. Many producers use sustainable or organic methods, and because Crete is still an under-the-radar region compared to places like Napa or

Bordeaux, you get artisan craftsmanship and unique flavors without the premium price tag. It's one of the best values in European wine today.

Top 3

Red Wine: Kotsifali

White Wine: Dafni

White Wine: Vidiano



GERMANY

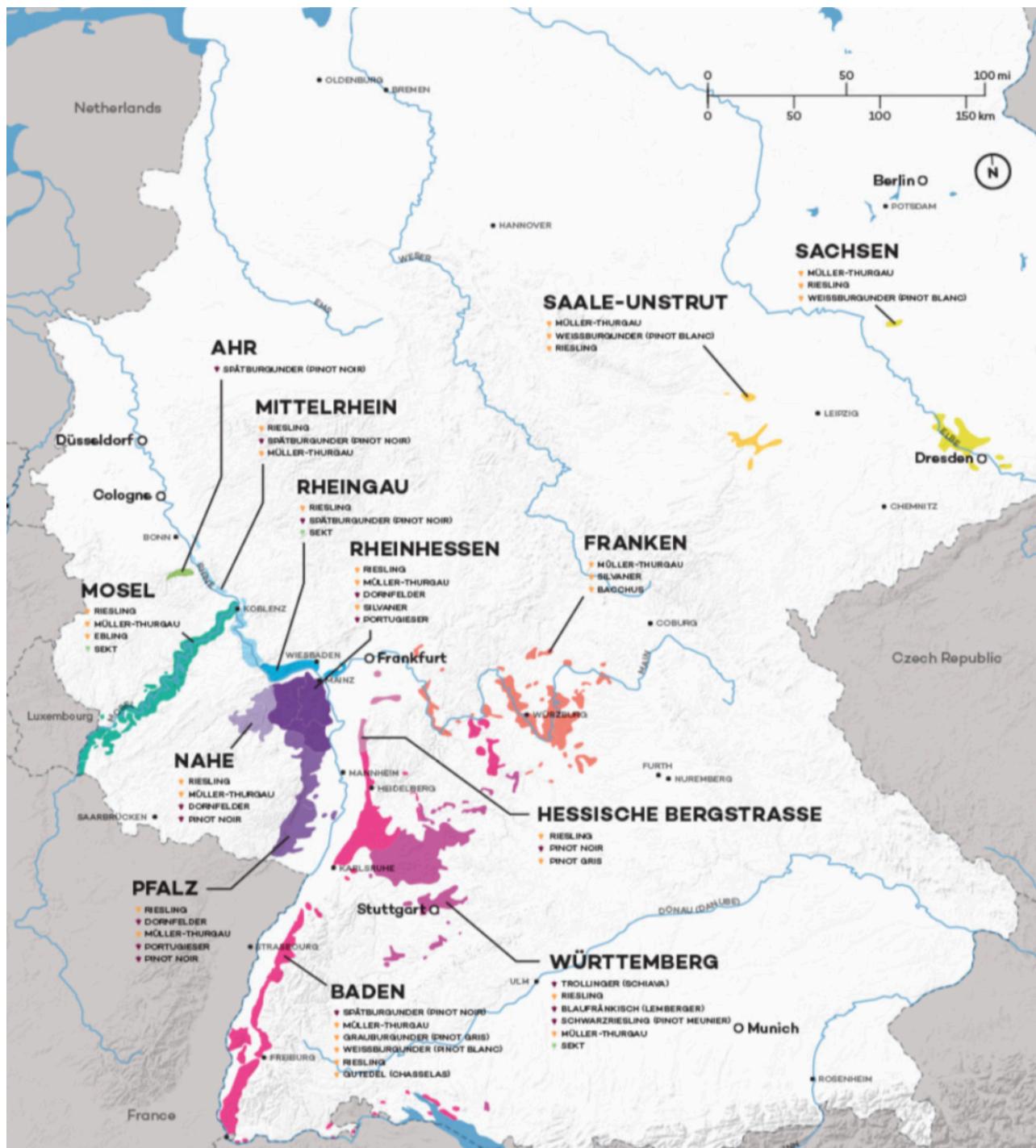
If you only have time for the Class 6 BX

Wine	Varietal/Region	Notes	Taste	Est. Price
Blue Nun Riesling (classic Spätlese)	Riesling / Rheinhessen, semi-sweet	A BX staple—easy-drinking, fruity, gentle sweetness. A nostalgic winemaking classic.	Fruity, sweet, easy	\$12–18
Liebfraumilch (entry-level blend)	Blend / Rheinhessen-Mosel	Familiar and approachable. As noted by a base shopper: "I tried Spaetlase... the blue bottle with the Nun ... very good"	Simple, soft, smooth	\$10–15
Dr. Loosen "Blue Slate" Riesling Kabinett	Riesling / Mosel, off-dry	One of the few slightly upscale bottles you may still spot—elegant, fresh minerality.	Mineral, elegant, fresh	\$18–22
Henkell Trocken Sekt (sparkling)	Sparkling / Rheingau, dry	A crisp, food-friendly celebration wine often stocked in BX celebrations.	Crisp, dry, festive	\$15–20
Rotkäppchen Pinot Grigio Rosé	Pinot Grigio Rosé / Rheinhessen–Rheingau	Light, summery, and approachable—paparazzi pink without the fuss.	Light, fruity, pink	\$12–16
Hans Wirsching Silvaner Trocken	Silvaner / Franken, dry white	A bit rarer, but if stocked, it displays refreshing herbal notes and savory complexity.	Herbal, dry, savory	\$18–24

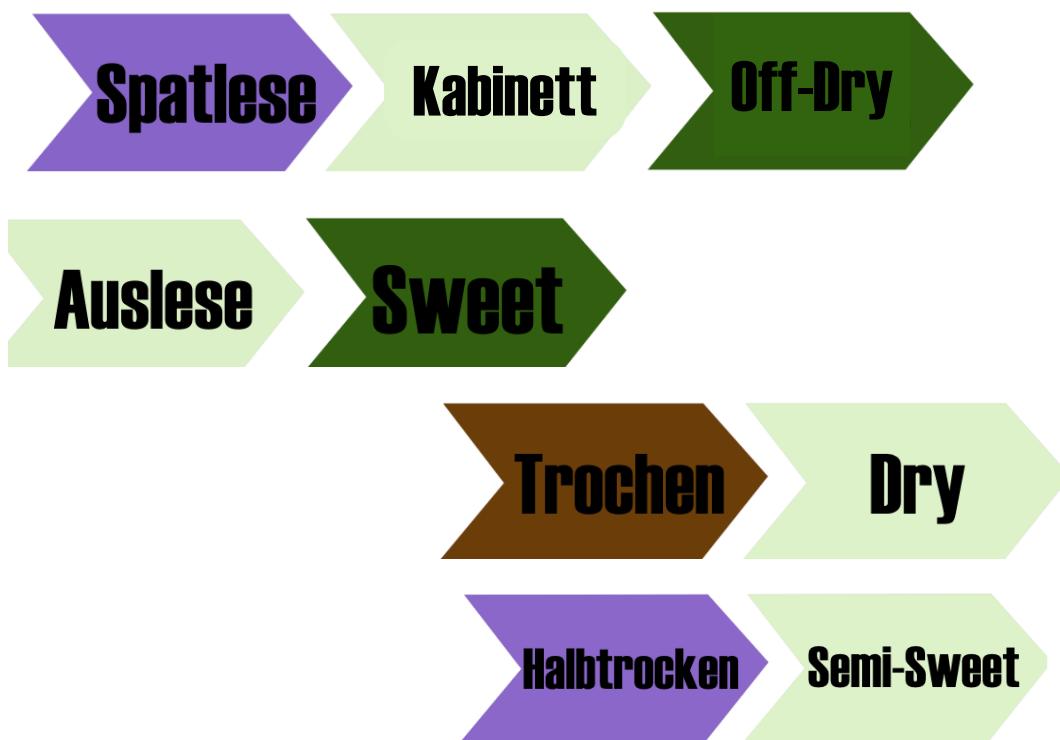
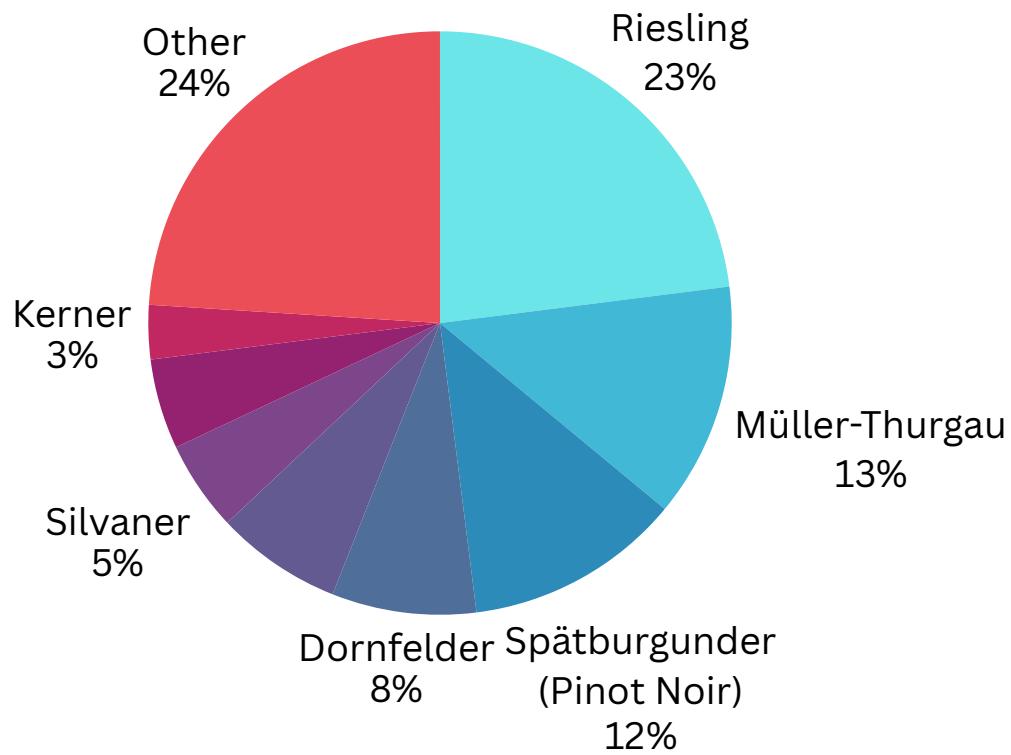
If you can go off-base

Wine	Varietal/Region	Notes	Taste	Est. Price
Joh. Jos. Prüm Wehlener Sonnenuhr Spätlese	Riesling / Mosel, off-dry	Slate-driven minerality, citrus-honey aromatics, age-worthy	Elegant, honeyed, mineral	25–35€
Keller Kirchspiel Riesling GG	Riesling / Rheinhessen, dry	Top-tier Grosses Gewächs with finesse and structure; Vivino's #1 German Riesling	Structured, dry, refined	60–80€
Dönnhoff Kupfergrube GG	Riesling / Nahe, dry	From a VDP icon; taut, mineral-driven, and praised by critics	Taut, crisp, mineral	50–70€
Künstler Riesling Rheingau "Hölle" GG	Riesling / Rheingau, dry	2023's German Wine of the Year by James Suckling; classic Rheingau power	Bold, dry, classic	50–70€
Wittmann Morstein GG	Riesling / Rheinhessen, dry	Brilliant limestone complexity; top-10 in 2023's Top100 Germany	Limestone, bold, fresh	50–70€
Battenfeld-Spanier Riesling GG	Riesling / Rheinhessen, dry	VDP biodynamic estate with elegant terroir expression	Sharp, elegant, earthy	40–60€
Hans Wirsching Iphöfer Silvaner GG	Silvaner / Franken, dry	Franconia's flagship Silvaner: savory, herbal, mineral-rich	Savory, herbal, mineral	25–35€
Joh. Jos. Prüm Riesling Kabinett	Riesling / Mosel, light	Lighter, crisp, food-friendly—perfect intro to Prüm style	Crisp, light, refreshing	20–30€
Bernhard Huber Schlossberg Spätburgunder GG	Pinot Noir / Baden	Elegant Burgundian-style red—Germany's rising red wine star	Silky, red, elegant	30–50€

Region and Grape Overview



Most Common Grapes in Germany



Riesling

German wines are mostly white—about two-thirds of all wine produced in Germany comes from white grapes. The most famous is **Riesling**, which is super versatile and can be dry (trocken), off-dry (halbrochten), or sweet (spatlese, auslese). It often tastes like green apple, peach, or lemon with a crisp, refreshing finish. Another trick is to look at the alcohol percent on the back of the bottle, if the percentage is below 10%, expect the wine to be sweeter.

Abby's Personal Note

I stayed away from German wines for awhile because I thought they were unapproachable with the scary German words. Also, I scoffed at drinking a sweet wine--boy did I have no idea! The range in sweetness of riesling shocked me, I started to get really into off-dry Rieslings. They are nowhere near a sugar bomb, more like adding honey to tea. I tried an aged Riesling and when I smelled it, I swore there was a note of JP8. Turns out aged Rieslings (Rieslings are one of the most cellar worthy wines) sometimes have a slight smell of oil.

Top 3

White Wine: Riesling (Spatlese/Off-dry)

White Wine: Riesling (Trochen/Dry)

Red Wine: Spatburgunder (Pinot Noir)

PORTUGAL



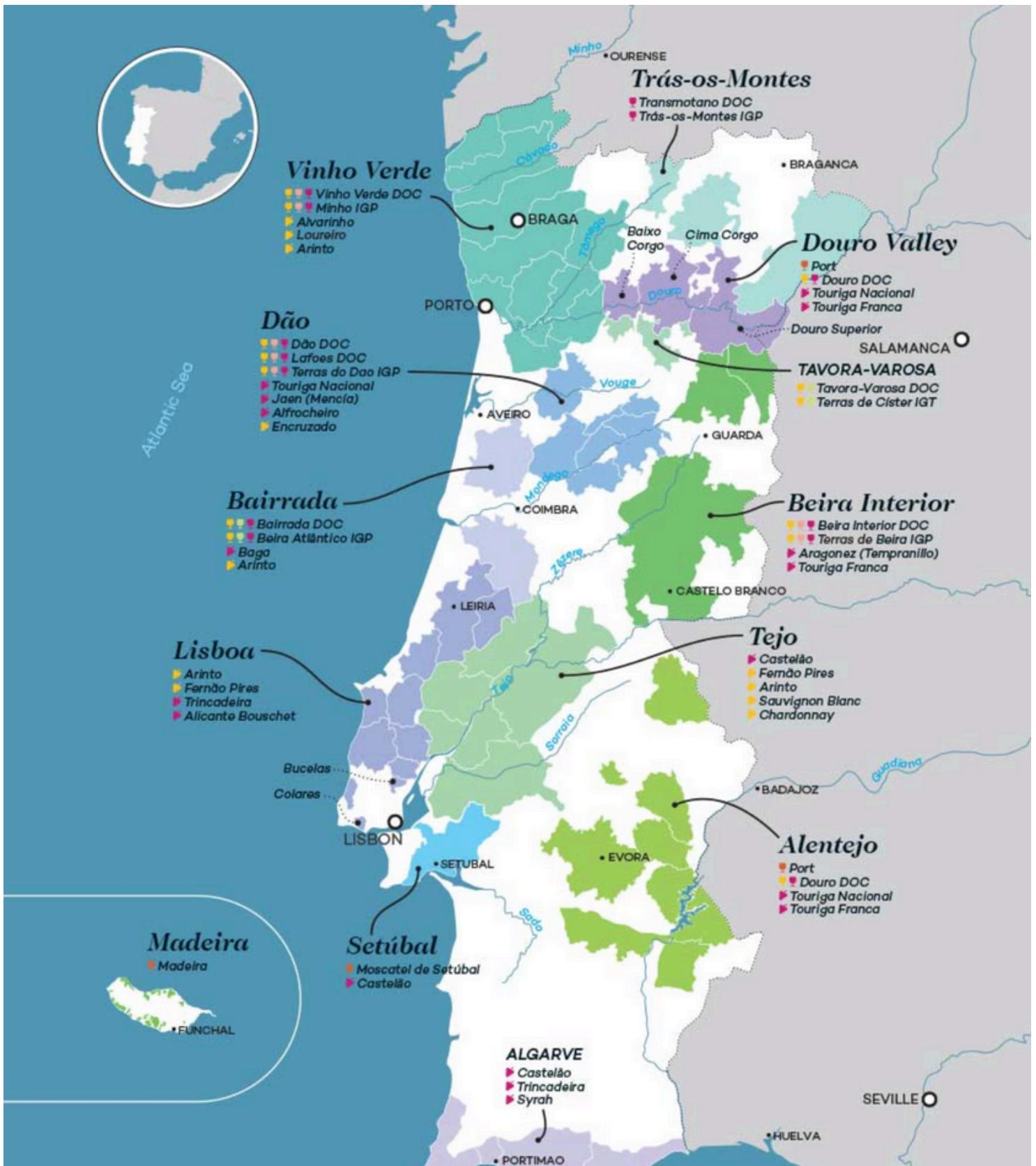
If you only have time for the Class 6 on Lajes

Wine	Varietal/Region	Notes	Taste	Est. Price	
Soalheiro Alvarinho Reserva	Vinho Verde (Monção)/Alvarinho	Only from the northern Minho region; known for intense minerality	Crisp, elegant, fresh	\$40	~\$30–\$40
Quinta do Crasto Douro Red	Douro Valley/ Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca, Tinta Roriz	Family-owned vineyard with terraces on steep Douro slopes; iconic Douro blend	Bold, structured, rich	\$35	~\$25–\$35
Luis Pato Vinha Barrosa Baga	Bairrada/ 100% Baga	One of the few single-varietal Baga wines; high acidity for age-worthiness	Complex, age-worthy	\$40	~\$40
Esporão Reserva Red	Alentejo/Aragonez, Alicante Bouschet	Combines traditional and modern winemaking in Alentejo; elegant oak integration	Smooth, full-bodied	\$55	~\$45–\$55
Quinta do Vallado Reserva	Douro Valley/blend	Estate-grown grapes; oldest Douro vineyards still in production	Elegant, balanced	\$65	~\$60–\$70
Casa de Santar Dão Reserva	Dão	Dão region's granite soils give structure and aging potential	Refined, structured	\$40	~\$30–\$40
Mingorra Colheita Branco	Alentejo/ Verdelho, Alvarinho, Viognier	Small boutique vineyard; expressive blend of indigenous and international whites	Refreshing, aromatic	\$14	~\$12–\$15
Torre de Ferro Reserva	Dão/ Baga, Touriga Nacional	Traditional red from Dão; showcases Baga's firm structure and longevity	Juicy, balanced	\$9	~\$8.99

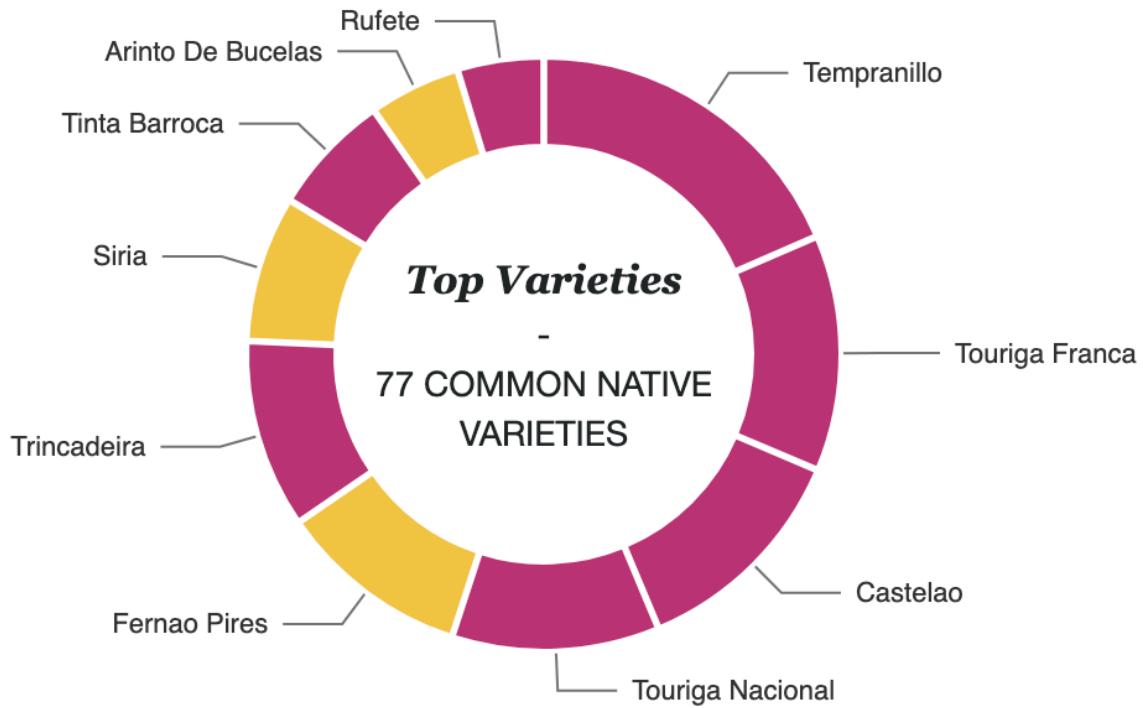
Wines to look for off-base

Wine	Varietal/Region	Notes	Taste	Est. Price	
Gazela Vinho Verde	Loureiro, Arinto / Vinho Verde	Light, slightly spritzy white; perfect intro to Portugal; great summer wine.	Crisp, light, refreshing	~\$9	~\$25–\$35
Aveleda Fonte	Blend / Vinho Verde	Everyday Portuguese white; aromatic and lively with green apple freshness.	Zesty, floral, bright	~\$12	~\$40
JP Azeitão Red	Castelão / Setúbal Peninsula	Juicy, fruit-forward red; soft tannins make it very approachable.	Fruity, smooth, easy	~\$10	~\$45–\$55
Dao Colheita Red	Touriga Nacional, Jaen / Dão	Elegant red from granite soils; balanced and food-friendly at an everyday price.	Balanced, smooth, earthy	~\$15	~\$60–\$70
Soalheiro Alvarinho	Alvarinho / Vinho Verde (Minho)	Benchmark Alvarinho; showcases minerality and citrus from granite terroir.	Crisp, zesty, fresh	~\$30	~\$30–\$40
Quinta do Crasto Douro Red	Touriga Nacional Blend / Douro	Classic Douro valley red; rich, structured, and widely respected.	Bold, structured, rich	~\$35	~\$12–\$15
Luis Pato Baga	Baga / Bairrada	Famous for age-worthy reds; Burgundian finesse and high acidity.	Earthy, tannic, complex	~\$40	~\$8.99
Arinto dos Açores	Arinto / Azores (Pico Island)	Salty, volcanic minerality with high acidity; a true Azores expression.	Salty, fresh, mineral	~\$40	
Verdelho do Pico	Verdelho / Azores	Rare Azorean varietal; tropical, aromatic, and volcanic-driven.	Tropical, mineral, bright	~\$45	
Blandy's 10-Year Malmsey Madeira	Malmsey (Malvasia) / Madeira	Customary Madeira: Richest style (sweet), aged with “estufagem” heat-aging; unique tangy acidity. Served with dessert or cheese; stays fresh months after opening.	Caramel, nutty, vibrant	~\$45	

Region and Grape Overview



SO Many Grape Varietals!



What is Madeira Wine?

Madeira wine is a **fortified wine from the Portuguese island of Madeira**, known for its rich flavors, remarkable longevity, and unique production process. Unlike most wines, it is intentionally exposed to heat and oxygen during aging, which creates its signature notes of caramel, nuts, dried fruit, and spice. This special method also makes Madeira practically indestructible—a bottle can remain fresh for months or even years after being opened. Beyond its flavor, Madeira carries deep historical significance: it was treasured by European explorers, favored by American colonists, and famously used to toast the signing of the U.S. Declaration of Independence. For a new wine drinker, Madeira offers a chance to taste history in a glass, while enjoying a wine that is both approachable and unlike anything else in the world.

Sercial

Very Dry

Drink with: Aperitif,
seafood, nuts

Verdelho

Medium Dry

Drink with: Soups,
poultry, charcuterie

Bual/Boal

Medium Sweet

Drink with: Cheese, rich
desserts

Malmsey/Malsalvia

Very Sweet

Drink with: After-dinner
sipper, chocolate
desserts

Top Picks

White Wine: Alvarinho

White Wine: Verdelho

Red Wine: Touriga Nacional

Other: Madeira (Malmsey)



AUSTRIA

Overview

Like Germany, Austria produces roughly two-thirds white wine. Grüner Veltliner is the country's flagship native grape, known for producing crisp, mineral-driven wines with signature white pepper spice. Austrian Riesling is also exceptional—typically dry, structured, and intensely expressive of site.

Austrian wines are often described as spicy and seductive, especially when compared to other European styles. That signature spice shows up in both whites and reds.

Austrian's Love Their Wine

Blaufränkisch is Austria's premier red grape, producing wines with earthy undertones, bright acidity, dark cherry fruit, and a peppery edge. The structure

can be surprisingly serious, with excellent aging potential.

A wine shop owner once told me that Austrian Blaufrankisch is so good they don't need to export much of them—locals happily keep them to themselves. Most red wines that are exported seem to be Zweigelt, an easy drinking table wine.

And uniquely, the city of Vienna maintains its own commercial vineyards, making it one of the only capital cities in the world with significant urban wine production.

Top 3

White Wine: Gruner Veltliner

White Wine: Riesling (trocken/Dry)

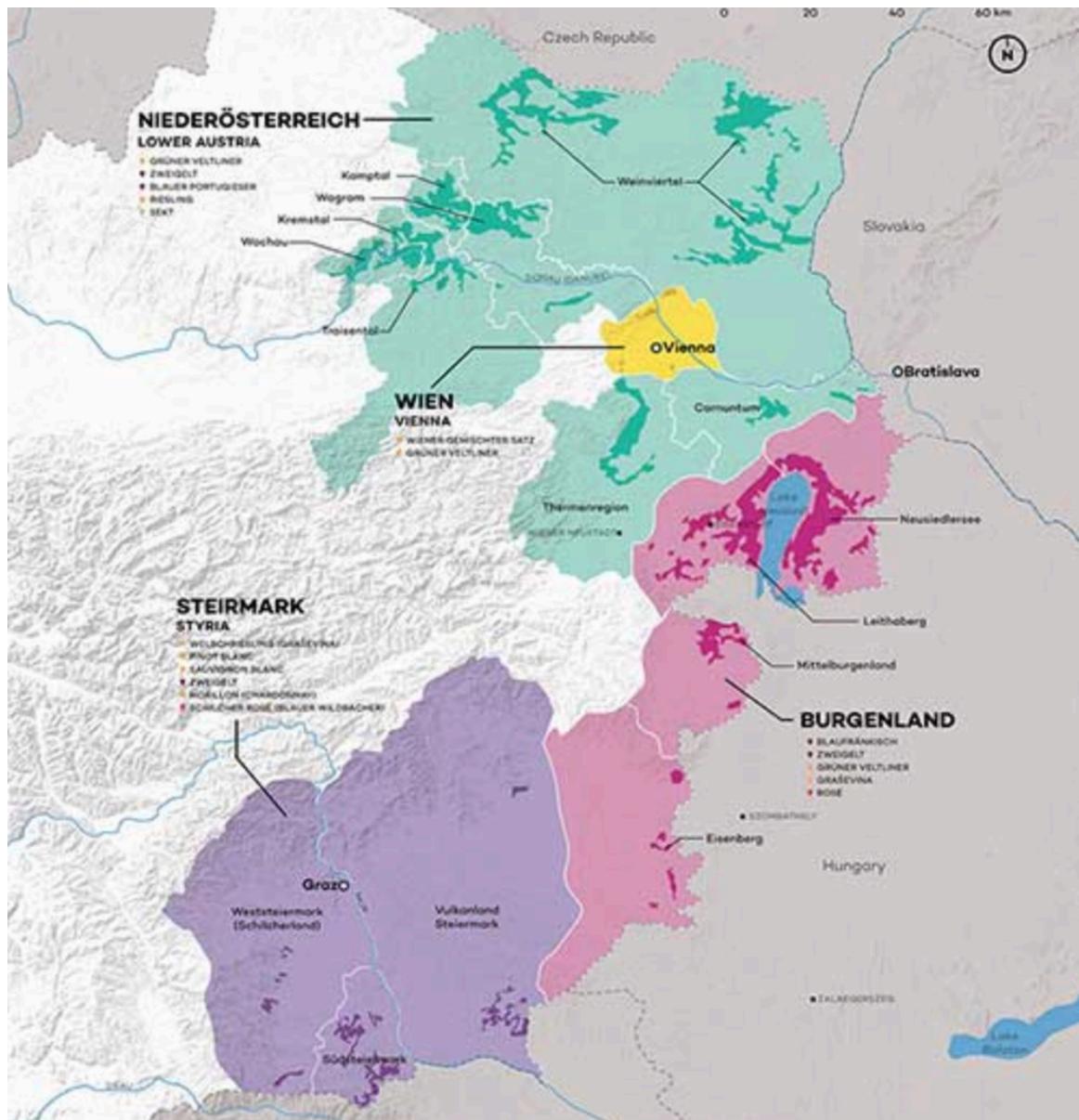
Red Wine: Blaufranisch

Look for at Ramstein:

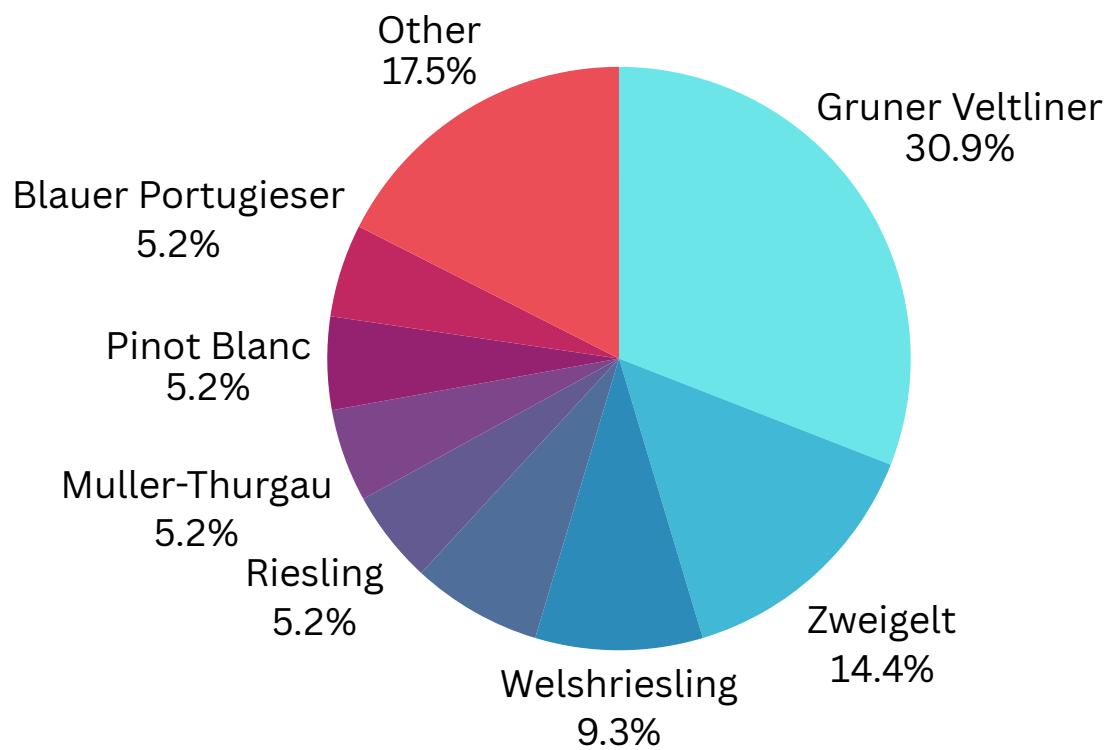
Wine Name	Variety/ Region	Notes	3 Word Taste	Est. Price (USD)
Domäne Wachau Grüner Veltliner “Terrassen”	Grüner Veltliner / Wachau	Benchmark entry Wachau; clean, precise, excellent QPR	Crisp • Peppery • Mineral	\$16–20
Bründlmayer Grüner Veltliner	Grüner Veltliner / Kamptal	Polished, structured, slightly more depth	Citrus • Herbal • Elegant	\$22–28
F.X. Pichler Grüner Veltliner (if stocked)	Grüner Veltliner / Wachau	Premium producer; powerful, age-worthy style	Dense • Spicy • Structured	\$45–65
Weingut Wieninger Wiener Gemischter Satz	Field Blend / Vienna	Traditional Viennese mixed-vineyard white; very food-driven	Fresh • Savory • Bright	\$18–25
Prager Riesling Federspiel	Riesling / Wachau	Dry, mineral-driven, serious structure	Lime • Slate • Focused	\$28–35

Lenz Moser Zweigelt	Zweigelt / Burgenland	Easy, fruit-forward red; great value	Cherry • Soft • Juicy	\$14–18
Heinrich Blaufränkisch	Blaufränkisch / Burgenland	Structured, savory, serious red	Dark • Peppery • Firm	\$20–28
Moric Blaufränkisch	Blaufränkisch / Mittelburgenland	Old-world tension; cellar-worthy	Earthy • Tart • Refined	\$35–50
St. Laurent (Stift Klosterneuburg)	St. Laurent / Thermenregion	Elegant, Pinot-adjacent Austrian red	Red • Silky • Savory	\$18–25
Kracher Spätlese Cuvée	Welschriesling Blend / Neusiedlersee	Iconic sweet wine producer; botrytis richness	Honeyed • Apricot • Lush	\$25–35 (375ml)

Region and Grape Overview



Most Common Grapes in Austria





ITALY

Northern Italy

Piedmont

Veneto

Trentino-Alto Adige & Friuli

Central Italy

Tuscany

Umbria

Marche

Southern Italy

Campania

Puglia

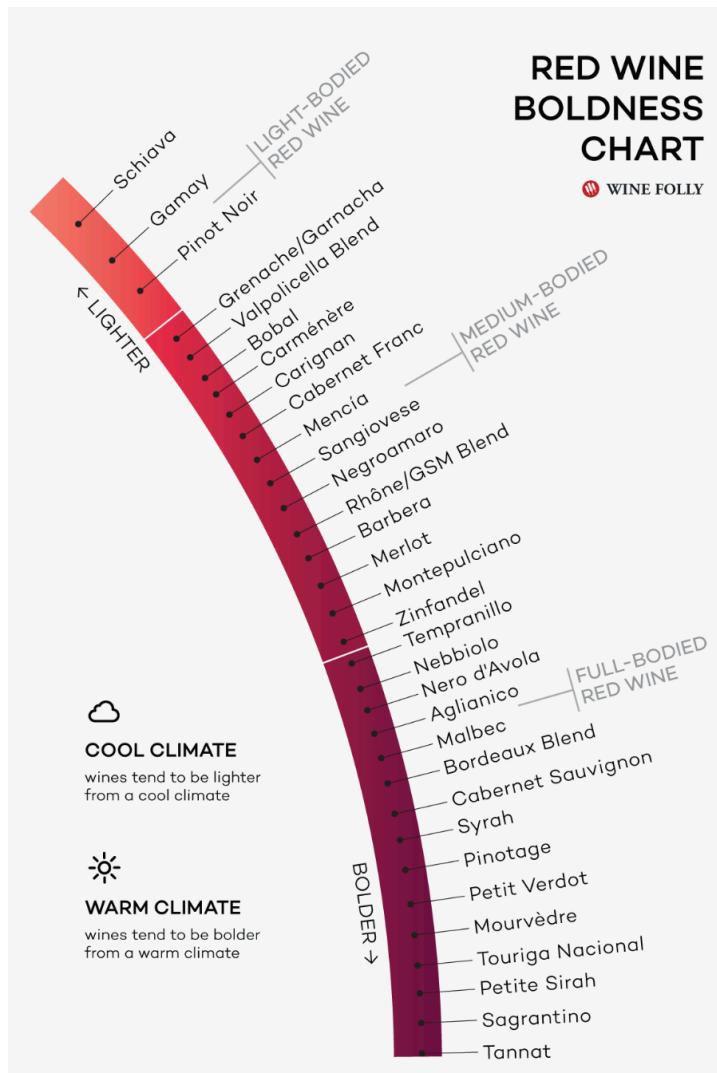
Sicily

Sardinia



Australia

How will I know What I like?







CAMBRIDGE WINE MERCHANT



































