

LE GLOSSAIRE DES RAISINS BLANCS

ALBARINO

Spanish name given to this distinctive and thick skinned white grape now emerging with a vengeance in Spain. Typically lightweight with exotic peachy perfume and apricot notes. Irresistibly refreshing.

CHARDONNAY

Ubiquitous. Grown globally with positive results, the relentlessly popular Chardonnay is now available in nearly every conceivable stylistic shape and size.

CHENIN BLANC

Wonderfully vivid warm climate grape and the backbone of France's Loire valley whites. Whether produced dry or very sweet, Chenin Blanc's bright acidity assures ageworthiness in its better wines.

CLAIRETTE BLANC

Commonly used name for all southern French wine grapes. True Clairette Blanc however, while admittedly old fashioned by today's rigid standards, remains a solid fixture of the Languedoc's white.

GEWURTZTRAMINER

Certainly one of the most pungent and mispronounced varietals. Distinctively spicy with a glorious rose petal, litchi and grapefruit perfume. The wines tend to be rich and soft even when completely dry. Typically best when young.

GRUNER VELTLINER

Austria's favorite and very in fashion with today's chef. This grape produces pale, crisp, light but dry, peppery and lively wines suitable for a myriad of food pairings.

MALVASIA BIANCA

A grape that has existed for nearly 2000 years, believed to have originated near the Aegean Sea and now grown all around the Mediterranean. The grapes produce golden, perfumy and flavorful wines with hints of apricots, musk and almonds.

MARSANNE

Prolifically grown in France's northern Rhone region and usually blended with Roussanne. The principal grape in the white wines of Hermitage and Saint Joseph, traditionally made marsanne tends to be fairly fat, soft and often dull in its youth, but can age quite magnificently. New world Marsanne however, tends to be crafted in a lighter, more perfumed style and should be taken young.

PINOT BLANC

A decidedly more muted profile than that of Chardonnay, well made Pinot Blanc while despite its lack of flashy aromatics can offer up delicious fresh yeasty flavors with hints of green apple and subtle spice.

PINOT GRIS

Though named for the Grey skins, the color of this grape can vary greatly as do the wines for which they produce. Called Pinot Grigio in Italy, the wines there tend to be very light, flinty and dry. At its best, Pinot Gris is capable of fleshy, full bodied wines with a certain spicy style and alluring perfume.

RIESLING

Quite possibly the world's most underrated grape varietal, though certainly one of its noblest. Vinified from dry to very sweet, Riesling is defined by a delicate but complex frame, a heady floral perfume and great length. Unlike Chardonnay, Riesling does not require high alcohol to achieve enormous character and complexity. The best only become better with age.

ROUSSANNE

Grown mainly in the northern portion of France's Rhone region, Roussanne is known to produce delicate, aromatic and refined wines though generally blended with Marsanne. Roussanne is also one of four white grapes allowed in the reds of Chateauneuf du Pape, however since the 1950's has been steadily replaced by the more productive Marsanne.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

Usually bound by lively acidity and a light to medium bodied weight, Sauvignon Blanc is now crafted in far too many distinct styles for easy pigeon holing. From lean and grassy to radiant and tropical, the wines generally offer crisp freshness on top of value.

SEMILLON

More often than not fat and flat on its own (with a handful of very notable examples), Semillon soars when blended with Sauvignon Blanc, helping to offset that varietal's natural acidity and tendency toward grassiness. Semillon also invaluable in the luscious wines of Sauternes.

VIognier

A low yielding and vulnerable grape well in vogue and well worth seeking out. Intense dry white wine with a singular hedonistic perfume of honeysuckle, apricots and pear. Hailing originally from France's Rhone valley, Viognier is to be found judiciously within the great red wines of Cote Rotie as well.

VIURA

Also known as Macabeo, this is a workhorse grape of northern Spain, and the most important white grape in the Rioja region. Viura based wines are generally light, high in acid, slightly floral and fairly fruity. They should be consumed quite young.

LE GLOSSAIRE DES RAISINS ROUGE

BARBERA

Most popular of the many productive grapes in Northern Italy and currently shooting for a statement in the New World. Expect a dark and fruity wine with ripe, nearly sharp currant flavors.

CABERNET FRANC

Less distinguished though similar cousin to Cabernet Sauvignon, Cab Franc is not quite as full bodied, has fewer tannins and less acid than its more popular partner. It is however, more aromatic and herbaceous and may open earlier.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Indisputably, the king of the red grapes and the very foundation of this valley. Enough said.

CARIGNANE

The most commonly grown bulk grape in France and once the most widely grown in California. Known for its high tannins, deep color and alcohol, the grapes are generally blended in with softer grapes

CHARBONO

An uncommon grape varietal found almost exclusively in Northern California though thought to have links to a rare French grape called Corbeau. Very dark in color, tannic and somewhat rustic these wines.

CINSAULT

Highly productive grape in France and crossed with Pinot Noir in South Africa to make Pinotage. Light in body and neutral in flavor, Cinsault is most often found blended with Grenache and/or Carignane.

GAMAY

The wonderful grape of Beaujolais. These light purple, fragrant and fruity wines often suggest peaches, berries and bananas. Perhaps not meaty nor complex enough for some, these wines usually offer up plenty of joyous charm.

GRENACHE

The most widely grown red grape in Spain, where it's called Grenacha and often blended there with Tempranillo. Also prolific in the South of France, where it is usually blended alongside Carignane and Cinsault. It is the primary grape of Chateauneuf du Pape and the foundation for many of the rose wines of the Rhone.

MERLOT

Popular, plummy red wine used both as a blending partner to Cabernet Sauvignon and as a stand alone varietal. Merlot is the primary grape of St. Emilion & Pomerol and one of two primaries in Bordeaux. Merlot tends to be more supple and rounder than Cabernet Sauvignon and can usually be enjoyed much younger.

PINOT MEUNIER

Most widely grown grape in France's Champagne region, though overshadowed by the more famous Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes there. Usually blended into the region's sparkling wines, Pinot Meunier is known for its fruitiness and brisk acidity.

PINOT NOIR

The famous red grape of France's Burgundy region, Pinot Noir at its best can produce ethereal and sublime wines quite unlike any others. Chameleon like in its range and complexity, Pinot Noir can often disappoint madly in its fickle inconsistency.

PRIMITIVO

Thought by many to be the original Zinfandel, grown first in Italy's Puglia region. A hearty, robust wine often with briary, berryish flavors, plenty of tannins, body and alcohol.

SYRAH

Grown in France's Rhone valley at least since the Roman times, this important red grape serves as the backbone for the esteemed wines of the northern Rhone today. When young, the wines are deep colored and tannic, full of tar, spice and pepper. Long lived, the wines show with time deep blackberries, black currants and smoky plums. Darling grape now in the New World where the possible potential for this grape is limitless.

NEBBIOL

Wines made from Nebbiolo grapes are known by a number of names including Borolo and Barbaresco. The fog (nebbia in Italian) that rolls over the hills of northern Piedmont helps ripen the grapes into rich, full-bodied and chewy wines with hefty fruit flavors of chocolate, truffles, licorice and flowers.

TEMPRANILLO

An important red grape to northern Spain and a principal component in the famous Rioja wines. Because of its lower acid and alcohol levels, Tempranillo is usually blended with other varietals.

PETITE SIRAH

Grown mainly in California and not to be confused with Syrah, this grape produces a deep-colored, robust and peppery wine that packs plenty of tannins. Certainly not for the faint at heart, Petite Sirah is often a bully of a wine.

PETIT VERDOT

A high quality grape grown mainly in France's Bordeaux region where it produces full-bodied, extremely deep-colored wines with high tannins and alcohol. It's traditionally been used to add flavor, color and tannins to the Bordeaux blend. Smaller amounts are now planted in Chile & California.