The
First Wine Book
For The Yachting
Industry

The Yacht Cru

WiNe GUIDE

by Master of Wine
Louise SYDBECK

Riviera Wine

Service Expertise Passion

Summary

Hello dear reader,

The aim of this book is to make you more confident dealing with wine in your daily job on board. It's not a wine book for wine connoisseurs nor is it a book filled with statistics or technical information. I have tried to write it in a clear informative manner mainly focusing on themes and wines most relevant to the yachting industry whilst still allowing for a broader more general overview of the world of wine. Some of the topics will not be of relevance to senior crew members but can be helpful when you start out in the industry so apologies for sometimes stating the obvious.

After having supplied fine wine to yachts for over 15 years and having taught WSET wine courses to over 400 crew members, it never ceases to surprise me how much knowledge and experience is required to run the interior of a yacht. On top of all the yachting related skills, senior interior crew is also expected to have a good grasp of wine. Quite challenging really! So with this in mind, and of course the fact that I LOVE wine, I though a wine book for the yachting industry seemed like a grand idea.

I hope you will find it helpful!

In conjunction with this book there is also an educational website where you can find more information, articles and video teaching sessions: www.theyachtcruwineguide.com

Louise Sydbeck, MW

How to Taste Wine

Learning how to properly taste wine, as opposed to simply enjoying it, is the only way to learn about wine and is therefore also the most logical start to this book. To the average wine consumer, the quirks associated with professional wine tasting may seem unnecessary, if not downright silly. Assessing legs, shade and rim, aroma, structure, length, sniffing and spitting can all, understandably, seem frivolous. However, wine tasting is a fascinating art. It helps wine lovers and professionals alike to correctly judge the maturity, style, quality, and even origin of a given wine. It also forces the taster to put words to sensations, which is hugely helpful in remembering wines, and when describing wine to a client or a friend. It will also improve your food and wine pairing skills, as you will get a better understanding of the structural elements of the wine.

Wine tasting is no longer the reserve of sommeliers or wine buffs - It's a useful skill for anybody involved in the wine industry. As a Steward or Stewardess, you are likely to be working with some of the most exclusive wines in the world, which is quite a privilege. You will taste wines that most wine lovers can only dream of, so learning to taste like a professional is a great opportunity to accurately assess and appreciate these special bottles.

When drinking wine from now on, make a habit of properly tasting by following these four steps. While writing tasting notes for every wine you drink may feel excessive, becoming familiar with these steps and considering this approach will be of tremendous benefit and vastly improve your wine knowledge!

1. Appearance

In assessing a wine's appearance, there are three aspects to consider: clarity, colour intensity, and shade.

Regarding clarity, most wines should be clear, that is, without any haze or sediment. Some wines appear slightly cloudy because the winemaker has decided not to fine or filter them, as these processes can remove some of the wine's complexity and flavour.

The intensity of the colour can hint towards the grape variety. Darker wines tend to be made from thick-skinned varieties and tend to be fuller in body, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec. A paler wine will usually be lighter in body, with Pinot Noir being the classic example.

The shade of the wine will give an indication as to its maturity. All red wine start its life with an almost purple shade and will eventually evolve to a tawny colour. Depending on the type of wine, the journey from purple to tawny can take just a few years, such as with a simple Beaujolais Nouveau, or several decades for top wines such as Grand Cru Classé Bordeaux. Purple hues in a wine are a sign of youth, while tawny shades suggest maturity. For rosé wines, the shade will shift from a cooler pink to a more orange hue with age. White wines will go from pale lemon colour to more golden and, eventually, amber if completely oxidised. A white wine showing hints of brown is very likely to be oxidised. There are of course some deliberately oxidised wines, where this colour and associated aromas are simply part of the wine's character.

One final consideration with appearance is the wine's legs or tears. These are the droplets that run down slowly on the inside of the glass after swirling. Wines with more legs tend to have high viscosity, a result of either high alcohol, sweetness, or both.

2. Nose

A very pleasurable part of wine tasting is simply to smell the wine. To get the most out of the wine, it's important to swirl it around so that oxygen can assist in releasing the aroma. Complex wine can reveal a world of different aromas that continue to develop in the glass. This complexity is also a critical factor when judging wine quality. Simpler wines tend to be rather one-dimensional, with a limited aroma profile. A more complex wine, on the other hand, may offer

aromas like tar, roses, leather, truffles and smoke, all at the same time.

Smelling wine can cause difficulty for many new tasters, as searching for aromas can feel unfamiliar. "It just smells like wine!" is a common remark. With practice, it becomes evident that there is much more to find. When starting out, I recommend splitting aromas into one of two categories: The first covers fruity, floral and fresh aromas, while the second shows more earthy notes, like mushrooms, leather and smoke. Once you have decided on a category – remembering that some wines will have both – then you can begin to drill down and assess whether what you are detecting is citrus fruit, stone fruit, red fruit or whatever else. White wines tend to be described in terms of white fruits, and red wines with red fruits. The second category of more earthy aromas is mostly relevant for more mature wines.

Use this simplified system to get used to identifying some aromas. When you are comfortable, you can then take things a little further. Wine tasters tend to divide aromas into three categories:

- Primary aromas, which come from the grapes and include fruity, herbal and floral notes;
- Secondary aromas, which come from winemaking methods including oak and malolactic fermentation, and include things like toast, toffee, almonds, vanilla, cloves, butter, brioche and more;
- Tertiary aromas, which come from the ageing in bottle, oak, or both. These aromas include dried fruits like prunes, leather, earth and mushroom.

3. Palate

We may think that we can detect flavours with our tongue, but it's not that simple. The tongue can only detect a relatively small range of tastes, namely: salt, acidity, sweetness, bitterness and umami - a savoury substance related to monosodium glutamate (MSG). The actual flavours we feel on the palate are in fact thanks to our nose.

To get a full impression of a wine, take a sip and roll it around all parts of your mouth. Next, comes the tricky part: Draw some air through the wine to aerate it while still in your mouth. This will release more flavours, and, despite its inelegance, is the only way to taste a wine properly.

More important on the palate than the actual flavour perceptions are the wine's structure and balance. The main structural elements to consider are tannin, acidity, alcohol and sweetness – or lack thereof.

Tannin is only found in red wine and results in a drying, almost bitter sensation on the palate. If you are struggling to detect tannin, taste some black tea that has been steeped for too long and you'll know all about it. All these elements

should be balanced for a wine to be of good quality. Thankfully, it's quite rare today to find wine that is out of balance, as modern winemaking techniques allow for adjustments.

On the palate, one also talks about the body: Is the wine full-bodied, medium-bodied or light-bodied? The higher the alcohol, the fuller-bodied the wine is likely to be. However, it is not alcohol alone that defines the body, but rather an overall impression of all structural elements.

Having assessed how the wine tastes, it's now time to spit – at least if you are tasting at a wine course or professional wine tasting event. Spitting is necessary, despite how unflattering it may sound. Believe me, after your tenth sip of wine you will have lost much of your tasting ability, so you are much better off to get accustomed to spitting.

4. Conclusion and Assessing Quality

The main aspects to assess in your conclusion are quality level and readiness for drinking or maturity. Wine quality can be difficult to evaluate when you first start tasting. Although wine professionals sometimes disagree on quality, the same criteria are always assessed. These are balance, intensity, length and complexity, or BILC for short.

Balance

Though the clear majority of wine today is balanced, it is still something to look for when assessing quality. Balance refers to the structural elements of wine such as acidity, alcohol, sweetness and tannin. Are they all in balance, or does one of the elements stand out in a harsh or excessive manner? Note, however, that a wine can be very sweet and be fully balanced if it has enough acidity to back it up. Or, a wine can be high in alcohol yet still balanced, provided there is enough richness and concentration of fruit in the wine.

Intensity

Intensity on its own isn't enough to indicate a high-quality wine, but together with the other criteria it certainly is. There are plenty of rather simple wines that can have an intense aroma and flavour, yet be very short and one-dimensional.

Length

Once you have swallowed or spat the wine, it's time to assess its length or finish, which is a surefire indicator of quality. The finish can be tough to judge when starting out, but it is defined by how long the pleasant flavours of a wine stay on your palate after tasting. The operative word is "pleasant": If the wine is very bitter and leaves you with a long, harsh and bitter feeling, this is not considered as a long finish.

Complexity

This is a highly desirable quality in a wine and refers to a large array of different aromas and flavours. This is often, though not always, a combination of primary, secondary and tertiary aromas. A simple wine, on the other hand, is more one-dimensional and with a more limited range of aromas, for example offering aromas only of citrus fruits.

Personal Preference

Whether or not you like a wine can be a good starting point in evaluating the wine, but just because you love it doesn't necessarily indicate objective quality. Many consumers love crisp, fresh and fruit-driven wines like Provence rosé, Italian Pinot Grigio and Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. Though there are great examples of these styles, there are also plenty of rather one-dimensional examples lacking in depth and quality. Try to be objective in your assessments, and focus on the key quality aspects we've outlined here. This approach will take you a long way in assessing quality.

Tasting Notes

Another great habit is to start taking notes. Collect your notes in a tasting book, on your phone, in a wine app or anywhere else that it's easy to access. Forcing you to put words to your sensations will help you to remember the wine, and help to describe a wine with ease when you need to. It may feel a little repetitive at first, though it's a great way to get fully immersed in the world of wine!

Food and Wine Pairing

This is probably one of the most pleasurable aspects of learning about wine, yet it often becomes more complicated than it should be. The key factor when pairing wine and food is personal preference. Most people prefer a robust red wine with steak and white wine with smoked salmon, but if you prefer a Chardonnay with your steak, that's fine too. Aside from personal preference, there are several helpful guidelines to follow in order to find the best pairings and to avoid some bad matches.

Traditionally, professional food and wine recommendations were based on classic combinations that considered aspects such as the weight of the food and wine, acidity, sweetness, flavour intensity and fat. More recently, a more modern view has emerged focusing on four key components in the wine and food: sweetness, umami (a savoury taste which is distinct from the other primary tastes), acid and salt. This is a huge topic, so this section will provide a short overview to get you started. The classic guidelines will be explained first, followed by the more modern viewpoint.

Stay Local

Many wines, especially in the Old World, have been made to suit local cuisine. If in doubt about what to serve, a local wine can be a good place to start for local cuisine. For example, much Italian food is based on tomato and garlic, both of which are very high in acid. Most Italian wines are also high in acid, and therefore make a good match for this kind of food. Another example is goat's cheese and Sauvignon Blanc. Sancerre and Pouilly Fumé, both made from Sauvignon Blanc in France's Loire Valley, are perfect matches for goat's cheese which is produced in this region. Other examples are boeuf bourguignon with red Burgundy, oysters with Muscadet and truffles with Barolo.

> "A local wine can be a good place to start for local cuisine

Weight

Another key consideration is weight; a light-bodied wine is suitable for a lightweight food. For example, if one were to serve a full-bodied, creamy Chardonnay to accompany a light salad, the wine would be overpowering and the salad tasteless. The goal of food and wine pairing is to have the wine and food co-exist and allow each to express its character without being dominated by the other. A better suggestion for a light salad would be a fresher and crisper wine such as a Pinot Grigio or a Sauvignon Blanc. On the other hand, a heavyweight food, such as a mushroom risotto would overpower a light-bodied wine, and so the oaky, creamy Chardonnay would be a good choice.

Flavour Intensity

Flavour is another important aspect. A full-flavoured wine will overpower a very mildly flavoured dish and vice versa. A full-flavoured and full-bodied Barossa Shiraz is an excellent match for BBQ meat because both food and wine are spicy and full of flavour. A lighter red such as a Beaujolais, however, would not be able to compete with the intensity of the food. Related here is the classic rule of pairing white wine - or a light red - with white meat, and red wine with red meat.

Acidity

When pairing acidic food with wine, it is important that the wine has equal or higher acidity than the food, to create balance. Gambas with a lime dressing, for example, would be well matched with a crisp white wine with naturally high

acidity, such as Chablis, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc or Riesling. A wine with low acidity would taste very neutral and flat due to the high acidity of the lime dressing.

Sweetness

Sweet foods need sweet wine. Otherwise, the wine will taste sour, and the dessert will not show its full potential. Pairing a lemon meringue pie with a full-bodied dry red does a disservice to both the food and the wine. The wine should be as sweet, if not sweeter than, the dessert. Pair chocolate desserts with red Port, or with French dessert wines such as those from Banyuls and Maury. Fruit desserts benefit from a fruitier white wine such a Muscat. Muscat de Beaume de Venise is a prime example.

Fat

We mentioned that weighty food should be paired with full-bodied wine, though fatty foods can be a little different. Sometimes the best match here is a wine with high acidity to counterbalance the fat. Smoked salmon is heavy and relatively high in fat, and is a great match with Champagne or Chablis. The naturally high acid in these wines will cut through the fat and make the meal seem lighter and more refreshing.

Red Wine with Fish

Generally speaking, pairing red wine with fish is not recommended. If you don´t know what you're doing or haven´t tried the combination before, you should choose a white wine. Red wines contain tannins, and in combination with certain umami-rich fish, they create a metallic and bitter taste which can be quite unpleasant. As is always the case with wine, there are exceptions: reds that do work well with meatier fish are low in tannins and light in body, such as Beaujolais or red Sancerre.

Hot Spice

Chilli is one of the trickiest foods to match with wine, though sensitivity to chilli heat varies greatly from one person to another. Thus, this guideline will largely come down to personal preference. Some of the best matches are with off-dry to medium sweet white wines from Alsace, such as Pinot Gris and Gewürztraminer. The wine makes a lovely match with the exotic spiciness and can even soften a hot dish. High acidity and tannin should be

avoided since this can make the heat even more intense and hard.

Classic Combinations (and Some Personal Favourites!)

One might think that the above would be sufficient to cover food and wine pairing. While it goes a long way, this section would be incomplete without covering the more modern viewpoints mentioned in the introduction.

Sauternes	Blue Cheese
Port	Stilton
Sauvignon Blanc	Goat's Cheese
Asti	Strawberries
Sauternes (or Vendange Tardive from Alsace)	Foie Gras
Vouvray	Scallops
Red Burgundy	Sushi
Amarone	Parmesan Cheese with Honey
Banyuls or Maury	Chocolate Dessert

The driving force behind this later development is Tim Hanni MW, chef and Master of Wine. He has conducted extensive research on the topic for the past 20 years and has concluded that most traditional guidelines, such as red meat with red wine or seafood with white wine, are just myths. According to Tim, any wine with any food is fine as long as the seasoning is adapted accordingly, a concept called "flavour balancing". Many chefs around the world are now adopting this way of thinking, and wine education programs have changed their syllabus to incorporate the new findings.

> "According to recent research, red meat with red wine or seafood with white wine, are just myths

Simply put, there are two components in food that makes the wine taste more bitter and less fruity - sweetness and umami *(see page 15)*. Two other components in the food, salt and acid, will render the wine fruitier, less acidic and smoother. To experience the first effect, pair a sweet dessert with a dry wine. Witness how the wine changes, losing its fruit and roundness and becoming hard and bitter. For a similar effect, pair a food high in umami, such as smoked salmon or asparagus, with a dry and tannic red wine. In other words, umami and sugar in food diminish the enjoyment of the wine. To witness the enhancing effect of flavour balancing on a wine, add lemon or salt to any food and see how the wine becomes fruitier and rounder. Surprisingly, the addition of salt or lemon can even improve a terrible combination such as dry red wine with smoked salmon or asparagus!

Though the concept of flavour balancing does work, it is likely that past traditions and deeply rooted guidelines have already formed our taste preferences. Experimental tasting environments may reveal that even an unconventional pairing can taste fine once the acid and salt levels are correct and the flavours are balanced; a Margaux wine with perch in white wine sauce, for example.

UMAMI

Although quite a new concept to most, umami is one of our five basic tastes and is described as having a meaty or broth-like taste. It is quite difficult to isolate but to give you an idea, it is the main component of Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) which is widely used in all processed food as a flavour enhancer. Foods that naturally contain high levels of umami include asparagus, eggs, smoked salmon, cured meat and many hard cheeses. Umami makes the wine taste bitter and less fruity but if the effect is offset by salt and acid the impact is less noticed.

Nonetheless, I am unlikely to choose such a combination in a restaurant. I believe that most people prefer a crisp white wine when they eat fish and a fuller red wine with a steak, even if this is just a concept programmed by tradition. My guess is that the classic guidelines will stay for many years to come, and that flavour balancing will serve as an interesting complement and as a topic to play with in tasting classes and experimental restaurants with experienced chefs and sommeliers.

Pairing Wine with People

As mentioned above, this is perhaps the most important aspect of food and wine pairing. Wine is made for our enjoyment and whoever is drinking the wine is, of course, the ultimate judge of whether a combination is successful.

When I started my wine drinking career in my late teens, I thought sweet Asti Spumante was a great match with pasta and ketchup, which I must say I don't agree with any longer! A client of mine once served her charter guests the unusual combination of Pétrus, a legendary and super-expensive Bordeaux wine, with hamburgers. It's certainly not conventional, but I must admit it's a pairing I wouldn't turn down!

How to Open and Serve a Bottle of Wine

I'm aware that many of you won't need to read this section, though after having taught wine courses to over 400 crew members, I think it is worthwhile to include.

For more junior crew members, opening a bottle of wine is not always as straightforward as it may seem – I often hear comments about crumbling corks breaking apart, questions about which corkscrew to use and more. This section will cover everything you need to know to open a bottle of wine with confidence. Serving wine on a yacht can be very different to doing so in a restaurant, particularly when yacht owners or charter guests may have specific requests or habits. Nonetheless, I'll explain how things should be done in a top-class restaurant setting as this is industry best practice.

Let's imagine that your guest has chosen a wine to have with dinner, and now you must present the bottle.

First, it's vital to always handle the bottle with care. With older red wines, the wine may contain a lot of sediment that can be stirred up if the bottle is moved around too much.

When you arrive at the table to present the bottle to the host, it's helpful to gently state the vintage and name of the wine. Wine labels are often full of information, and it may be difficult for the guest to identify that the bottle is the one that they have requested.

Now, it's time to open the bottle. This should always be done in view of the guests, on a side table near theirs. On yachts, this may not always be practical, and opening the bottle in the galley may appear the easier option. In top restaurant service, a sommelier would never open a bottle out of the guests' view, however, as this could lead to doubts about the authenticity of the wine, with the risk that the wine may have been exchanged for something less expensive.

Opening a bottle of wine properly requires a good corkscrew. Though some yachts use other devices like a screw-pull, this is not considered so elegant and would be seriously frowned upon in fine dining. Good corkscrews need not be expensive – the main aspects to look out for are that it has a Teflon screw and that it is double-hinged, as in the photo below. This way, you are considerably less likely to break the cork when opening the bottle..

After opening a bottle, some people choose to smell the cork. This is an old tradition, the idea being to detect any wine faults. Simply sniffing the cork is not an adequate means of checking for wine faults, so the act itself is more for show than anything else. A cork may look and smell fine, yet the wine is corked or have some other defect. Conversely, a cork can look mouldy or wet, yet the wine inside is perfectly fine.

As a result, the only way to truly know if a wine is defective or not is to taste it. Someone should always taste to check that the wine is in good condition before it is poured to the guests. Depending on the quality of the cork itself, as many as 5% of wines sealed under cork may suffer from cork taint *(see page 47)* – hence the importance of tasting the wine before serving to guests.

In wine service, the wine may be checked either by the host at the table or by the sommelier or both. If you don't feel comfortable tasting the wine in front of guests, or you don't know how to spot a faulty wine, then it's always preferable to pour a tasting measure for the host to try (the latter should be done even if you do decide to taste the wine yourself).

Keep in mind that each successive bottle that is opened must be tasted, not just the first one. Let's say that the guests are drinking a Château Lafite 2000, and the host decides to order a second bottle of the same wine. For this purpose, it's convenient to have some small glasses to hand, so that you can swiftly pour a small sample of the second (and any subsequent) bottle for the host to check before you continue to top up the guests' glasses.

If the guests go through several bottles of

the same wine, the host may find it an inconvenience to check each and every bottle. In this case, I recommend that you pour a small sample from a bottle that he or she has already approved, and put it aside in a small glass. Later, you can use this sample as a reference point when you open new bottles – you can check that the wine is in good condition by comparing the newly-opened bottle with the approved sample.

Though this may sound like a complicated procedure, or even unnecessary, take caution: In theory, all bottles should be checked before serving. Let's imagine that your guests are enjoying that Château Lafite 2000, and the host requests another bottle. You decide not to check it and top up the guests' glasses, only to then discover that the new bottle is corked. Now, you must change all the glasses and open even more of this very expensive wine. You can avoid this entirely by simply checking the wine first.

Opening a Bottle of Sparkling Wine

Opening Champagne is a far more dangerous procedure than you might think. The pressure inside a bottle of Champagne is around four bars – the same as you'd find inside the tire of a large truck. People have been blinded by having a Champagne cork shoot out during an inattentive or careless opening. The only equipment you'll need to open Champagne is a clean linen napkin. First, remove the foil then gently loosen the wire cage. As soon as this is done, it's vital that you keep a finger firmly on the cork, as it is now liable to shoot out with great force at any time. You should remove the wire cage elegantly, though if you find this too tricky, then you can simply loosen it and leave it in place before removing the cork.

Removing the cork is best done by positioning the bottle at a 45° angle and twisting the bottom of the bottle, as opposed to the cork. Twist the bottle carefully while you hold the cork firmly in place, and you'll have a very slow, controlled and safe opening.

Remember that the sound coming from opening a bottle should be no more than a light "sigh", and never a loud or violent pop.

"Opening Champagne is a far more dangerous procedure than you might think

Decanting Wine

There are two primary reasons for decanting a wine: the first is to separate the wine from any solid matter in the bottle, and the second is to aerate the wine to make it more expressive and accessible in the glass. Decanting to remove sediment is less important with wines made today, as modern winemaking techniques virtually ensure a clear wine even years after bottling. There are exceptions, however. The main reason for decanting today is to allow the wine to come into contact with oxygen. This process of aeration allows the wine to "open up" and release its hidden aromas.

It is mostly red wines that are decanted, though white wines can also benefit from aeration. A third reason for decanting may be merely aesthetic, as discerning diners enjoy the ceremonial aspect of fine wine service at the table.

In the past, winemaking was not as refined as it is today, and it was important to decant all wines, even those that had only been recently bottled. Most wine made today is fined and filtered, limiting the need for decanting to remove sediment. Mature wines often still need to be decanted to ensure they are clear. This should be done with the utmost care however, as decanting very old wine runs the risk of ruining its flavour. As old wine is so fragile, its exposure to large amounts of oxygen can turn it flat and dull in a matter of moments.

Unfortunately, there are no set rules for when a given wine is too old to decant. It will depend on the region, producer and vintage. If in doubt, it is best to ask the owner or charter guest for their preference or to call your supplier for advice.

Young wines also benefit from decanting, though the aim is not the same. The goal here is not to remove sediment – young wines rarely have any – but rather to aerate the wine. The action of decanting itself will bring the wine into contact with air, softening it, making the tannins less grippy and making for greater harmony overall. If the first taste reveals a tannic, grippy or youthful structure, then even inexpensive wines can benefit from decanting. Aerating a young wine several hours before serving it can be highly beneficial. A common misconception, however, is that a wine can be sufficiently aerated just by opening the bottle. This is not the case, as the surface area of the wine exposed to oxygen is too small; only the first few centimetres in the bottle neck will be aerated and not the rest of the bottle.

Decanting for the first time can seem intimidating or complicated, especially in front of guests. It is, however, very simple. To start with, take the wine carefully from where it has been stored, ideally lying on its side in a suitably cool, dark environment. Avoid any rapid movements of the bottle to ensure the sediment stays where it is.

If the bottle is old and you anticipate a lot of sediment, let it stand upright for a couple of hours if possible. When the time comes to decant the wine make sure you have everything you need. This includes a good corkscrew, white linen napkin, decanter, a candle and of course the wine. Slowly pour the wine into the decanter with the candle just below the bottleneck so you can see when the sediment starts to come. Then stop pouring and put down the bottle.

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The wine in the decanter will now be clear and without any solid matter. In older wines it is quite acceptable to have a little sediment in the wine after decanting. This is almost impossible to get rid of unless using a coffee filter, which is simply not permitted in fine wine service! When decanting a young wine for the purpose of aeration, less care needs to be taken when pouring, as there will be no sediment.

Temperature

Managing temperature for wine service can be difficult enough in a restaurant, let alone on a yacht. Things become extra tricky on board because storage space is limited, and what space is available is often not suitable for wine storage from a temperature control point of view. The issue of temperature is crucial to maximise wine's potential. Temperature is a key factor in how a wine tastes alongside the type of glass used. Warm temperatures will increase the release of aroma molecules and make the wine taste more alcoholic, seeming heavier and less fresh. Cold temperatures, on the other hand, will reduce the release of aromas and mask some off-flavours, making the wine seem crisper and fresher. The ideal service temperature will depend on the style of the wine, including its complexity, body, colour and sweetness.

Style of Wine	Examples	Service Temperature
Light to medium-bodied white wines	Pinot Grigio, Provence rosé, most Sauvignon Blanc	Chilled 7-10°C (45-50°F)
Medium to full-bodied white wines, often oak-aged	White Burgundy, white Rhône blends	Lightly chilled 10-13°C (50-55°F)
Light-bodied red wines	Valpolicella, Beaujolais, some young and light Pinot Noir	Lightly chilled 13-14°C (55-57°F)
Medium to full-bodied red wines	Most other red wines	"Room temperature" 15-18°C (59-64°F)
Sweet wines	All sweet white wine	Well chilled 6-8°C (43-45°F)
Sparkling wines	Champagne, Cava, Prosecco	Well chilled/chilled 6-10°C (43-50°F)

White and Rosé Wine

Most white and rosé wine should be served cool to maximise the delicate flavours of the wine and enhance its freshness. However, wines with medium or full body – often oak-aged – are potentially more complex, and will benefit from being served only lightly chilled, between 10-13°C. This will include most white Burgundy, many premium Chardonnays from the New World, and white Rhône blends. A crisp, light to medium-bodied white wine, such as a Sancerre, most rosé or Pinot Grigio, benefit from a cooler temperature of around 7-10°C. Most fridges today are around 4-6°C, so if taken directly from a refrigerator it will most likely be too cold initially. If this is the case, rinse the wine bottle in warm water for a minute or so, or take it out from the fridge 15 minutes before service . The best option, however, is to store the wine at the correct temperature in the first place.

Red Wine

The term "room temperature" is common when it comes to wine service. It dates to a time before central heating, when 15-18°C was the average household temperature. This expression is no longer correct, however, as most households, restaurants and, indeed, yachts, have a temperature of between 20-24°C, depending on the season. This temperature range is too warm for wine and would have an adverse impact upon how it tastes. Nonetheless, most wine books today continue to refer to the

> "Medium or full-bodied white wines often oak-aged are potentially more complex, and will benefit from being served only lightly chilled, between 10-13°C

ideal red wine serving temperature as "room temperature".

Just like white wines, different styles of reds require different temperatures. A light-bodied red, like a traditional Valpolicella or a Beaujolais, will benefit from being served lightly chilled at around 13-14°C. A medium or full-bodied red, like Bordeaux, Rhône or Australian Shiraz, should be served between 15-18°C. If your yacht is lacking proper wine fridges, just put the red bottle in the fridge a while before serving to bring its temperature down to the correct level.

Sweet Wine

Sweet wines benefit from the coolest temperatures, around 6-8°C. The reason for this is their high sugar content. A lightly-chilled sweet wine will often seem heavy and cloying, and lacking in freshness. As the cold temperature also gives the impression of an overall fresher and crisper wine with higher acidity, it's imperative to serve sweet wines well-chilled. At the wrong temperature, a sweet wine can easily seem out of balance.

Sparkling Wine

The range of temperatures for serving sparkling wine is wide, between 6-10°C. A light-bodied, simple wine like most Prosecco, Asti and Cava, will benefit from being served at around 6-8°C, enhancing its freshness and light fruit characteristics. A more sophisticated vintage Champagne, however, would need higher temperatures to fully open up and release all its complexity. Around 10°C would be more suitable in this case.

Fortified Wine

There are many different styles of fortified wine, and ideal service temperatures will vary according to style. The most common styles in yachting are Port and Sherry. White Port should be served well chilled, tawny Port lightly chilled, and vintage Port at room temperature. Classic Fino Sherry is best served chilled at around 7-10°C, while Oloroso and Amontillado should be served lightly chilled *(see page 112)*.

Practical Considerations

It's virtually impossible to achieve the perfect serving temperature for each and every wine. To start with, there are very few yachts equipped with adequate wine fridges to accommodate the guidelines discussed above. Additionally, if served on a hot summer day on the aft-deck, the temperature will change rapidly as soon as the wine is poured into the glass. Especially if the service is taking place in a hot temperature, it is better to have the white or rosé wine on ice, even if it may be too cold at first. This way, the wine will be pleasant to drink for longer than it would if you were to start serving at the correct temperature. With indoor service, in a cool environment, it is easier to serve at the correct temperature from the outset.

> "It's virtually impossible to achieve the perfect serving temperature for each and every wine

How to Build and Manage a Wine List

Given the luxury and prestige of yachting, you would think that having an impressive, carefully selected wine list on board would be standard. That's rarely the case, however. Over the last 15 years of supplying and consulting in the industry it is clear that finding a great wine selection on yachts is indeed rare. This is very understandable though.

First, yachts do not have sommeliers on board. There is rarely someone on the crew with the time or expertise to craft a well-planned list, as there would be in any top restaurant. This is not to downplay the great wine knowledge of many crew members, but rather to highlight that the role of sommelier simply does not exist here. Instead, this work tends to fall to the Chief Steward or Chief Stewardess, who will have many other responsibilities and skills and from whom it would be unfair to expect the sort of in-depth wine knowledge you'd expect of a sommelier or other wine professional.

There is also the issue of crew turnover. Yachts frequently change crew, and so wine selections tend to be incomplete or scattered. New crew members may want to add their preferences to the list, which may not necessarily be in tune with the existing list.

Another consideration is the preference of the yacht's owner. Some owners have very strict guidelines on which wines to keep on board, leaving the person in charge with no choice but to follow instructions. Owners' requests are often heavily label-focused, with choices made on perceptions of prestige as opposed to any particular wine knowledge or insight.

That's not all. Yachts that are for charter may have separate selections for the owner and charter guests. Space and storage are also a major concern. With respect to these and many other issues, it

would be impossible to suggest a one-size-fits-all wine list solution. Each yacht has its own combination of variables in play and will need its own approach to wine selection. Instead, I will give guidelines on how to create a good, balanced and broad wine selection that will have something for all palates, and, most importantly, allow for good food and wine pairing.

Before we continue, it's important to bear in mind that, as with everything in wine, personal preference counts for a lot. What is a great wine list to some might not be considered as such by others.

> "What is a great wine list to some might not be considered as such by others

One definition of a great wine list that I find very true comes from American sommelier Joe Campanale:

"A great wine list must first and foremost complement the chef's food and be a good representation of the style of cuisine offered. It should have options for many different types of wine drinkers, both regarding price point and style. It must be presented clearly so that it's easy to navigate for the guest. It must feature wines that are craft products and are not made industrially. When all of that is accomplished, it can reach its highest point: a work of passion for a dedicated wine director or sommelier who knows the wines well and loves sharing them with their guests."

Though this definition may appear difficult to attain for all yachts, it is an excellent standard towards which to aspire. Keep it in mind when you start putting your wine selection together. First, though, let's look at the basics: the structure of the list, wine styles and presentation, followed by some tips on how to manage your wine selection.

Structure

A wine list should be structured in a logical order, echoing the format of the meal. It should start with sparkling wines, followed by whites, rosés, reds and dessert wines. Under each category, the wines should be listed according to their origin. The way to structure the list depends on the size of the selection of course. If a yacht has less than ten references each for red and white wines, it's sufficient to simply list them under the categories "white wine" and "red wine". For a medium-sized selection, it is suitable to list the wines under their different countries. For more extensive ranges, the wines should be organised by country and region.

To illustrate, an example: Under the heading of "White Wine", a logical place to start would be "France". Under the sub-heading of "France", you would then list the different regions whose wines are represented. Typically, you might find "Loire", "Burgundy", "Alsace", "Rhône" and "Bordeaux". Then, list your Italian whites. If you have a broad selection, you should also list these under regional subheadings, though for shorter lists the simple heading "Italy" will suffice. Follow this model too for your red wines. For rosé and dessert wine, it is enough to simply list the wines under the category headings "Rosé Wine" and "Dessert Wine". When listing the names of individual wines, use a consistent format. Start (or

finish) with the vintage, followed by the name of the producer and the region of origin. For example, simply listing a wine as "Puligny-Montrachet" is not sufficient. This is just the region, and without stating the producer and vintage it doesn't offer the client enough information to make an informed choice. This may seem obvious to many, but I have seen lots of wine lists where basic information is missing.

Below you can find an example wine list in a logical structure for a small to medium-sized selection, grouped by country and with the wine names written out in a logical manner.

Wine Selection

A good wine list should have something that pleases all palates and enables good food and wine pairing. This requires some thought regarding the styles of wine chosen. I have sometimes come across lists with only oaked Chardonnay, for example, and though this is a lovely and classic style, it is not to everybody's taste and will not be suitable for all types of food. It needs to be accompanied by other styles if the list is to be balanced.

Let's start with the sparkling wines as this is where a meal tends to start. I recommend stocking at least one Brut Champagne, one rosé Champagne and one or two prestige Champagnes, such as Cristal or Krug. Prosecco is very popular and thus may make a welcome addition. Another option is Franciacorta; another Italian sparkling wine made using the traditional method. A quality Spanish Cava will also make a good addition.

> "A good wine list should have something that pleases all palates and enables good food and wine pairing

In white wine, it's important to have at least three or four different styles represented. First, you'll want crisp, light and unoaked whites, like most Sauvignon Blanc, Chablis and Pinot Grigio. The second style should be medium to full-bodied oaked whites like Puligny-Montrachet, Meursault, and New World Chardonnay. A third style would be aromatic whites with some residual sugar, like an off-dry Gewürztraminer or Pinot Gris, to go with more exotic spicy dishes.

For rosé, most people like crisp, fresh and fruit-driven styles, so this is a must. Lately, there has been strong growth of more serious wines in this category so I would recommend adding an oak-aged version too.

Your red wine selection would cover light and full-bodied styles. Lighter styles relevant to yachting will typically be quality red Burgundy, from the Pinot Noir grape. Fuller-bodied wines can include Bordeaux, Tuscany and lots of New World reds – though, of course, this is a broad generalisation. If possible, also try to have a variation in maturity levels, so that all wines are not from the same vintage and your guests can enjoy both young and old wines.

Dessert wine is a category that is very limited in yachting – and, sadly, in the rest of the world! Nonetheless, you should have a couple of dessert wines on every list. You should stock a Sauternes and something from another country or region, such as Alsace, Vin Santo from Italy, or Tokaji from Hungary.

Regarding producers, I recommend that

Wine List

Sparkling Wine

Champagne

NV Louis Roederer, Brut Premier	€€
2006 Dom Pérignon	€€
2008 Billecart Salmon Rosé	€€
2011 Amour de Deutz Rosé	€€

White Wine

France

2009 Domaine Leflaive, Puligny Montrachet 1er Cru Folaitiéres - Burgundy	€€
2009 Trimbach, Clos St Hune – Alsace	€€
2010 William Fevre, Chablis Grand Cru Les Clos - Burgundy	€€
2012 Baron de L, Ladoucette - Pouilly Fumé - Loire	€€
2013 Domaine Vacheron, Le Paradis – Sancerre - Loire	€€

Italy

2012 Angelo Gaja, Gaja & Rey - Langhe	€€
2014 Cantina Terlano, Nova Domus - Alto Adige	€€
2015 Silvio Jermann, Pinot Grigio - Venezia Giulia	€€
2015 La Scholca - Gavi di Gavi	€€

Other Countries

2010 Kistler Chardonnay Les Noisetiers, Sonoma, California - USA	€€
2015 Paso Senorans, Rias Baixas - Spain	€€
2015 Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc – Marlborough - New Zealand	€€

Rosé Wine

2015 Domaines Ott, Clos Mireille, Côte de Provence - France	€€
2015 Château d´Esclans, Les Clans, Côte de Provence - France	€€
2015 Château Pibarnon, Bandol - France	€€

Red Wine

France

1996 Château Lynch-Bages, Pauillac - Bordeaux	€€
2008 Château Montrose, Saint Estephe - Bordeaux	€€
2008 Clos des Papes, Châteauneuf du Pape - Rhône	€€
2009 Domaine de Montille, Volnay 1er Cru Les Taillepieds - Burgundy	€€
2010 Domaine Meo Camuzet, Gevrey Chambertin- Burgundy	€€

Italy

2004 Cretto Bricco Rocche, Barolo - Piedmont	€€
2007 Biondi Santi, Brunello di Montalcino - Tuscany	€€
2010 Antinori, Tignanello - Tuscany	€€

Other Countries

2004 Único, Vega Sicilia - Ribera del Duero - Spain	€€
2010 Cheval des Andes, Mendoza - Argentina	€€
2011 Au Bon Climat, Pinot Noir, Santa Barbara, California - USA	€€

Dessert Wines

1999 Royal Tokaji Aszu 6 Puttonyos,Tokaji - Hungary	€€
2010 Château Rieussec, Sauternes - France	€€

Please note that the aim of this list is simply to show how to structure a list generally and not to specifically recommend these particular wines.

you look further than famous brands and well-known names, though it will be necessary to stock some top labels too. Ask your suppliers for smaller producers that can often offer more interesting and better value wines. With regards to origin, try to stock wines from different countries. Though France and Italy are the most important wine countries in the yachting industry, I recommend that you also add a few other countries to the list. Given what we discussed in the introduction, however, it is difficult to give precise recommendations – there are so many variables in yachting that you simply don't find elsewhere. Thus, these are guidelines to point you in the right direction as opposed to being definitive or exhaustive instructions.

Presentation

With your structure in place and wines selected, you must decide how to present your wine list. It should always be housed in an exclusive binder, printed on top quality paper, and be frequently updated so that the wines and vintages on the list are accurate. Beyond this minimum standard, you could also choose to add descriptive tasting notes. This is entirely optional, and there's no right or wrong approach. Most top restaurants will not list tasting notes, though some will and many consumers find it incredibly helpful. If done well, it can show some extra commitment on your part and add value for the owner and charter guests. If you choose to include notes, make sure only to include relevant information relating to the wine style and quality, and avoid technical details. You will find tasting notes online through websites like www.vinous.com and www.robertparker.com. Many tasting notes will include numerical scores; I do not recommend adding these to your wine list as consumers then tend to look only at the score and not the description.

Managing a Wine Selection

Managing a wine selection on a yacht is different and far trickier than in a restaurant due to several factors: as a yacht moves around, it may prove difficult to source the wines you need in some locations. There are often several people involved in purchasing, which can complicate things.

For example, let's say the owner has gone ashore and has a fabulous wine in a restaurant. He decides that he wants to stock it on board and orders 24 bottles, which are promptly forgotten about. A charter broker may have placed an order for a guest trip and find a large amount of leftover wine. For the past three seasons, new crew members may have been ordering what they felt suitable. Put all of this together, and you end up with quite an incoherent selection of wines that can be difficult to manage. This is part and parcel of yachting, however, and is probably not going to change any time soon.

To make things as manageable as possible, I recommend that you regularly take stock of your inventory to verify state and maturity of the wines. This will not be new information for many of you, so apologies for sometimes stating the obvious, but this is important and well worth doing. Look for wines that are too old for consumption that can be gotten

rid of to free up space. For example, Provence rosé, Pinot Grigio and most New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc should all be consumed within a couple of years to show their best. On the other end of the spectrum, you may have some old and expensive Bordeaux wines that are heading towards the end of their drinking window and should be consumed within a year or two.

Taking stock and making evaluations like this regularly allows you to keep track of what you have. You can suggest wines to the guests accordingly. If, for example, you have a single bottle of an expensive, mature Burgundy from a top producer, perhaps suggest that the owner and his wife have it over dinner so that it's not forgotten about. For young and fresh wines, parties and events where wine is not in focus is a good opportunity to serve those that are approaching the end of their drinking window.

Another way to streamline your selection is to serve wines whose stock is running low, where you only have one or two bottles left and don't intend to restock the same ones again. One way to do this is to organise a pre-dinner wine tasting for your guests. We often offer this to our clients, and they are always an appreciated activity.

Another way to do it that doesn't require having a wine expert on board is to serve several wines within one meal. For example, you might serve a white wine with the starter and then set the table with two white wine glasses for each guest. You may serve two different Chardonnay wines, such as one from Puligny-Montrachet and another from Napa Valley. Read up a little bit on the two wines and then present them as part of a "wine tasting dinner" for your guests. Do the same for red wines, and you'll create a talking point for your guests – while also cleaning up your wine cellar!

In conclusion, creating a good wine selection and managing it properly requires some thought and knowledge. If you feel that you don't have the experience or time to research, then ask your wine supplier for advice and recommendation. We are always very happy to help, too, so get in touch if we can be of assistance!

Wine Storage on Yachts

Storage might not be the most fun aspect of wine, but is nonetheless a critical one. This is especially the case in yachting, given the high calibre of wines and often inadequate storage facilities on board. Stories of fine wines stored near engine rooms or under beds are not uncommon. Lately, however, there has been a positive development in terms of interior design planning and newly built yachts tend to have better storage facilities than in the past.

The ideal long term storage temperature of a wine is between 10-13°C, at a constant temperature and in a dark place. A wine should also be stored away from vibrations, though this is virtually impossible on a yacht. Bottles should always be stored on their sides, so the cork remains in contact with the wine.

Let's look in more detail at the different aspects of storage, and why they matter.

Temperature

The ideal long term storage temperature for wine is between 10-13°C at a constant temperature. However, on board yachts this will rarely be possible as, even for boats with proper wine fridges, these will be set according to service temperature, not long term storage. In reality, a yacht will be looking at having the wine stored between 8-18°C depending on wine style (white and sparkling, cooler and red wine, warmer). Although not perfect storage temperature for the long term, this range is perfectly fine and as long as the other aspects are respected (see below) the wine will not be affected in any negative way for several years. Still, we always recommend to not stock more the you need for a season or two and keep topping up the wine cellar more regularly instead.

> "The ideal storage temperature for wine is between 10-13°C and at a constant temperature

Minor changes of temperature due to changing seasons are less important than rapid and sudden changes. If the temperature fluctuates massively, the wine will mature faster and lose some of its fresh fruit flavours and complexity. Modern yachts usually have a comfortable temperature of around 20-22°C or so. This temperature is not suitable for wine in the long term, so when possible do try to invest in a wine fridge. Another point of concern is during crossings when the air conditioning is turned off in certain areas, and temperatures can easily reach 35-40°C. This can have a severe impact on the wine, even after a short period. At high temperatures, the wine will start to develop "cooked" fruit flavours and lose its freshness. The wine also expands when it is hot, so if you see a cork slightly pushed out of the bottle this is a sign of having been exposed to heat, and you should move it to somewhere cooler. This does not guarantee that the wine has been affected, though it may well be the case.

It is quite safe for the temperature to drop lower than the ideal range of 10-13°C, provided the wine doesn't freeze. Luckily, wine won't freeze until its temperature drops considerably below 0°C, as the alcohol acts as antifreeze. In very cold temperatures, small crystals may form at the bottom of the bottle. These are known as tartaric crystals, and they form when tartaric acid in the wine solidifies. Tartaric crystals have no effect on the taste of the wine and will not harm you, and they can be removed by simply decanting the wine. In fact, many producers will intentionally freeze their wines and eliminate these crystals before selling the wine, in a process known as cold stabilisation. Therefore, if you do see these crystals it is a sign of less intervention during the winemaking

process. The top producers around the world tend to prefer a "hands off" philosophy to allow for the best expression of the wine. It is also worth remembering that one of the main reasons for storing and cellaring wine is to enable it to gracefully develop and change. At a very low temperature, all chemical processes will take much longer. Patience, here, is a virtue.

It is also worth noting that heavier red wines are less sensitive to heat and light than lighter whites and rosé wines. The wines most susceptible to high temperatures are delicately flavoured ones like Provence rosé, Pinot Grigio and light-bodied aromatic white wines. A sturdy young red wine with plenty of tannins and fruit concentration, such as a high-quality Bordeaux, will suffer less.

Humidity

The main reason to pay attention to the humidity level is to ensure the cork doesn´t dry out. This is also why it is important to keep bottles on their sides, so the wine stays in contact with the cork and keeps it moist. If the cork dries out, it can harden and fail, leading to oxidation. For screw cap wines this is not an issue, but for practical storage reasons, all wine bottles tend to be stored lying down. Modern cellars or wine fridges will be equipped with a measurement of humidity and can be correctly adjusted, with 70% humidity considered to be ideal. Be aware that overly high humidity levels can sometimes damage wine labels, as mould might form.

Light

A cellar should be dark since light can speed up chemical reactions and make the wine lose elegance and freshness. Therefore, fine wine bottles are usually made of dark glass, and Cristal Champagne, bottled in clear glass, is wrapped in protective dark yellow plastic. Some yachts have special display facilities with bright lighting, designed to impress guests with fine and rare wines. This arrangement is not recommended, and if you work on such a yacht, it is best that you at least turn off the light when there are no guests on board.

Vibration

Not a problem with home storage, vibration is a significant issue in storing wine on yachts. Wine stored over the long term should be kept completely still. Mature wines often have some sediment, and if the wine is constantly vibrating, the sediment will be thrown around the entire bottle instead of staying static at the bottom. This will make the wine difficult to decant, and there is likely to be sediment in every glass when serving. Of course, this is part of being on a yacht, the sea moves, but think carefully about where you are storing your wine – for example, as far away from the engine room as possible!

For yachts, the best solution to ensure quality is to either invest in a wine fridge or to buy ready-to-drink vintages that don't need to be laid down for long. In either case, it is best to try to plan in advance, anticipating what will be required for the season as much as possible and store ashore.

The Importance of Glassware

If you've ever drunk wine from a mug, you'll know that a proper wine glass can completely alter your enjoyment of it. However, not every wine glass is appropriate. In the yachting industry, we see plenty of elegant wine glasses made from cut crystal, from the likes of Baccarat and Christofle. Though these glasses may be works of art, they are not ideal for wine consumption.

To enjoy a wine to the fullest and to assess it accurately, your wine glass should be thin, of clear glass and have a proper stem. Its bowl should be large enough to enable swirling without spilling and be narrower at the top to concentrate the wine's aromas. The size of the glass will also depend on the wine being served, be it sparkling, white, red, sweet or fortified.

Over the past decade, there has been an increase in the number of different wine glasses on the market, intended for different grape types or wines from certain regions. This movement has been headed by glassmaker Riedel. Though it has merit, limited storage space on board yachts may make stocking grape-specific glasses a bit of a stretch.

Champagne and Sparkling Wine Glasses

Champagne and other sparkling wines benefit from being served in a Champagne flute. This glass is narrow and tall, enabling the bubbles of the wine to travel through the glass and theoretically enhance its aroma. Over the past two or three years, many reputable Champagne houses have designed their own Champagne glass, similar in style to a traditional white wine glass. They claim that their Champagne is too complex to fully express itself in the flute-style glass and that a broader white wine glass allows for better development of aromas. Last year, there was even an article in wine magazine Decanter entitled "The Death of the Champagne Glass". For now, though, the vast majority of consumers prefer their sparkling wine in a classic Champagne glass, and thus it is too early to write off the flute just yet.

White Wine and Rosé Wine Glasses

As white and rosé wine is served chilled, these glasses should be smaller than those for red wine. This is because if one were to serve white wine in a large red wine glass, there would not be time enough to finish the wine before it became too warm. The bowl should also be wider than the narrower top, to concentrate the aromas.

Red Wine Glasses

Red wines often need more oxygen than white wine, as there tends to be a greater number of potential aromas to develop. Swirling the wine in the glass helps to bring out these aromatics, and thus a rather large glass with a wide bowl and narrow top is the best option.

Sweet Wine Glasses

Storage space is often an issue on yachts, so a special glass for sweet wines is something that you can probably forego. Sauternes and Muscat-based sweet wines can easily be served in white wine glasses, though remember to pour sparingly. It is common to drink sweet wine in far smaller quantities than dry wine, so a standard-sized pour would be excessive. Alternatively, you can serve sweet wine in fortified wine glasses, once the glass has a proper bowl and swirling is possible.

Fortified Wine Glasses

Fortified wines, like Port and Sherry, have a high alcohol content that can hit or exceed 20% alcohol-by-volume. Thus, it's important to serve these wines in smaller glasses. Too large a glass with too broad a bowl will make the alcohol fumes build up, creating an uncomfortable burning sensation in the nose. The complexity and fruitiness of the wine can easily be missed in such a situation. The ideal fortified wine glass should be small, though still have a proper bowl to enable swirling.

Wine Preservation

"How long does an open bottle of wine keep?" is a common question among our clients and wine course candidates. As with everything regarding wine, the answer is, "It depends!"

Light, inexpensive, aromatic white, rosé and sparkling wines have the shortest lifespan once opened. Just one day after opening, most wines like this will have lost much of their freshness and aromatic profile. Robust young red wines, however, can handle a few days in an opened bottle and will sometimes even improve. Below are some suggestions on how to slow down the damaging oxidation process, which starts as soon as the cork is removed. We also introduce the revolutionary solution whereby one can serve a glass of wine without removing the cork at all - the fantastic invention that is the Coravin!

Refrigeration

All chemical reactions, including oxidation, are slower at low temperatures, so keeping the bottle cool is a good first step. Low temperatures also make life difficult for various bacteria, such as the acetic acid bacteria that eventually turn wine into vinegar. There are, however, more efficient solutions than simply keeping your wine in the fridge.

Decanting

Instead of just putting the cork back into the original bottle when half full it is advisable first to decant it to a smaller container, minimising the ratio of oxygen to wine. Some argue that by decanting the wine into a second bottle, the wine is exposed to oxygen and that there is no advantage of doing it. This depends on the wine being decanted.

Vacuum Pumps

Another way of preserving wine is by using a vacuum pump. This is a simple device that creates a vacuum in the bottle. Unfortunately, it can also suck some aromatics out of the wine. Some wine experts claim the use of a vacuum pump leaves the wine somewhat flat, while others find it to be a good solution for a few days. In my experience, it does increase the holding capacity of the wine, but I recommend to keep it for no longer than three to four days. These pumps are widely available in supermarkets and wine shops.

Coravin

The Coravin is a truly revolutionary tool, and it is highly recommended that all yachts have one on board. The Coravin technology has changed the way wine lovers around the world can enjoy their rare bottles. It is now fully possible to serve Pétrus by the glass to demanding charter guests and then serve from the same bottles to another charter a few months later!

The concept was invented by Greg Lambrecht, who wanted to be able to open several bottles in the same evening without having to drink everything or throw it down the sink. “My dream was to magically pour wine from bottles without ever pulling the cork. The remaining wine could then go back in my cellar so that I could enjoy it again, whenever I desired.” The ability to serve a glass of wine without opening the bottle sounds too good to be true, but this little gadget makes it possible.

Instead of opening the bottle traditionally, you insert a needle into the cork, through which you inject an inert gas called argon that protects the wine from oxidation. Through the small needle, you then pour the wine. If it sounds tricky, there is a thorough presentation on their website, www.coravin.com.

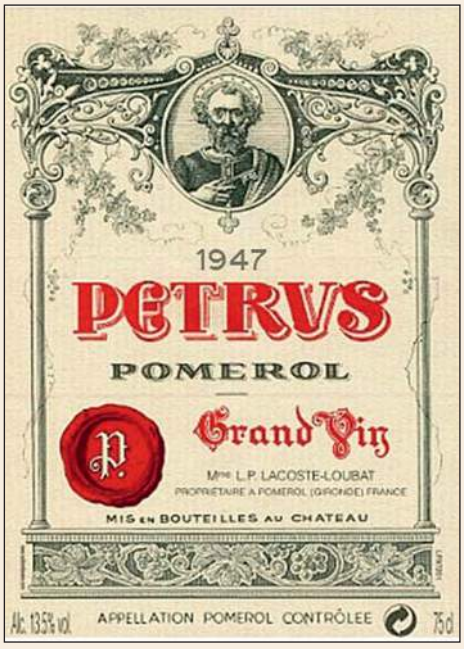
Coravin has recently become available in Europe for around €220 including two of the Argon capsules. The only slight downsides are that the capsules don’t last very long, and that it takes some extra time to pour the wine.

Reading a Wine Label

In yachting as anywhere else, you will most certainly sometimes encounter wines with which you are not specifically familiar. And as we all know, labels can be incredible confusing at times so being able to properly read the provided information can be very useful and many times give you an indication of wine style and/or quality. There are some different things to look out for to help you understand the label better, and we'll discuss each in turn here.

Producer or Brand

All commercial wine labels will feature the producer or brand name. This may take the form of big, prominent lettering front and centre, or may be in fine print elsewhere. Brand names may be created by individual producers, or by distributors. Many consumers perceive grape varieties or regions of production much like brand names. "Chardonnay" or "Sauvignon Blanc" are clearly not brand names in the traditional sense, though consumers use these generic terms to make purchasing decisions all the time. The same is true for regional terms like "Bordeaux" and "Champagne".



On the above label, Pétrus is the producer and Pomerol is an appellation/ commune within the Bordeaux region. Grand Vin has no legal definition but it is something you often find on French wine labels.

Vintage

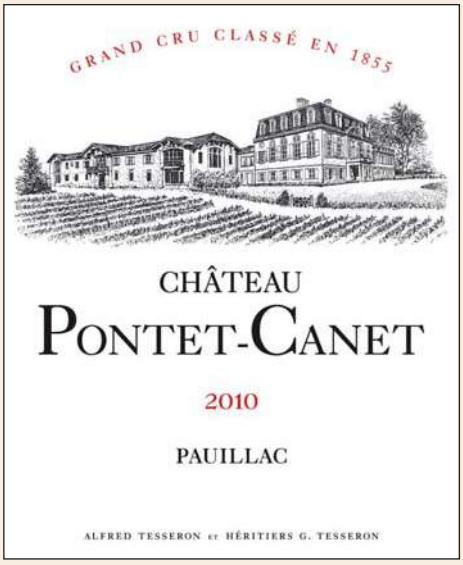
Most commercial wines will state a vintage on the label. This is the year that the grapes were harvested. Sometimes, the vintage year will correspond to the year of the wine's release onto the market, though this is not necessarily the case in many regions as producers age their wine in their cellars for some months or years before release.

For the most part, it is wise to drink wine when young, immediately upon release. Most wines are intended to be enjoyed shortly after release and will lose their flavour and vibrancy over time. It is advisable to thus seek out recent vintages of these wines, for example Pinot Grigio or Provence Rosé.

Vintage is particularly important for high-end wines from regions with changing growing conditions from one year to the next. A classic example here is fine Bordeaux, where vintage can have a massive impact on the quality - and price - of the wine from the same producer from one year to the next. 2009 and 2010 were excellent years in Bordeaux and produced excellent wines. 2007 was a wet and cold year, and thus the wines are generally of a lower quality, will be unable to age for quite so long, and will cost less. This is significant when making purchasing decisions: Pétrus 2010 costs almost twice as much as Pétrus 2007, for example, a difference of nearly €2,000 per bottle.

As the seasons are reversed in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, harvest correspondingly takes place at different times of the year in different parts of the world. Southern hemisphere countries harvest in February, March or

April, whereas northern hemisphere countries harvest in August, September or October. Therefore, a 2015 New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc will be up to half a year older than a 2015 Sancerre. This is an important consideration when purchasing wines that are intended to be drunk when young and fresh.



Pontet-Canet is the name of the producer and it is made in the appellation/ commune of Pauillac which is located in the region of Bordeaux.
Grand Cru Classé has a legal definition and on this label it relates to the classification made in 1855 in Bordeaux (page 132). On other labels when you see Grand Cru it will refer to different classification systems but as soon as it says Grand Cru, it is part of an official legal classification system.

Geographical Indications

The concept of geographical indication (GI) is key in wine legislation and also in wine history, as the geographical area in which any grapes are grown will shape the wine's style, flavour profile and overall quality. GI designations are used in all wine regions and are a prominent feature of most wine labels. A GI is a specific vineyard area within a specified country. This may be a tiny, very specific plot of land, such as Romanée-Conti, or it may be a broader indication covering an entire region, such as Bourgogne. The use of these indications is very strictly controlled to ensure that the end consumer gets what they pay for. In the above example, the difference in style and quality between a generic Bourgogne wine and the top wine from Domaine de la Romanée-Conti is vast, with around €15,000 in the difference too!

In the European Union (EU), wines with a GI are divided into two quality-driven subcategories, Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). PDO and PGI are the official, EU-level terms, though for the most part individual producers use historically established terms specific to their own country, such as Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP), used in France for PDO-level wines.

Geographical indications are controlled and impose rules and regulations upon producers that wish to use the designation for their wines. PDO regulations are stricter than PGI regulations, though in both cases producers will be subject to the rules set out by the GI's governing body. These rules set out the winegrowing and winemaking techniques that producers can use, the grape varieties they can use, and more.

Here we see that Côte-Rôtie, which is the appellation has been given most attention. E.Guigal is the producer and La Landonne is a single vineyard within the appellation of Côte-Rôtie.

All of these factors come together with the natural environment – things like soil type, elevation and exposure to the sun - to give the wines of a PDO a unique character and flavour that cannot be replicated outside of the area. PDO wines rarely mention the grape variety on the bottle, as it is the place that is very much in focus.

Some producers find PDO rules excessively restrictive, and opt instead to make PGI wines, as the category has looser regulations and offers the winemaker more choice and freedom. This is beneficial for producers who wish to use non-traditional grape varieties that would not be permitted in PDO wines. The PGI category allows producers in France and elsewhere to compete with large New World producers by offering inexpensive wines from internationally-known grape varieties in large quantities. The most flexible option regarding production rules is to produce a "wine without a GI", enabling the producer to source grapes from vineyard sites spanning an entire country, such as the generic Vin de France designation.

GI Terms in Individual Countries

France is probably the most important producing country in the yachting industry, so it's important to understand its labelling terms. PDO wines are labelled as Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP), with older bottles bearing the terms Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC). PGI wines were traditionally labelled as Vin de Pays (VdP), though the more modern term Indication Geographique Protégée is increasingly popular. Wines without a GI are labelled simply as Vin de France.

Italian wines are also big in yachting and will be useful to understand. Italian PDO wines are labelled with one of two terms. A select number of top regions have the

Here we see that La Tâche, which is a very famous vineyard in Burgundy, have been given practically all the focus. The producer behind this name is Domaine de la Romanée-Conti and despite being one of the world's most famous producers their name is barely seen on the labels. Instead the producer wish to give all the focus to the place the wine comes from.

status Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG), and the rest are labelled as Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC). PGI wines use the term Indicazione Geografica Tipica (IGT).

In Spain, PDO wines have a number of equivalent terms, with the two most significant being Denominación de Origen Calificada (DOCa) and Denominación de Origen (DO). PGI wines are labelled with the term Vino de la Tierra (VdlT).

German PDO wines are labelled either Qualitätswein and Prädikatswein and must come from one of 13 designated wine regions. The term Prädikatswein is further divided into six subcategories, depending on the level of sugar in the harvested grapes. PGI wine is not especially common in Germany, though the term used is Landwein.

Most wines produced outside the EU will have a GI. At the national level, each country delineates its vineyard area in one way or another, be it across political boundaries, smaller regions, zones, counties or something else. These GIs are tightly controlled, though related terminology rarely features on the label. One exception is the American Viticultural Area (AVA) system used in the USA.

Quality Indications

Geographical indications do not always equate to quality. It is quite possible to find AOP-level wine from France that is of a poor quality, and VdP or IGP wines that are of particularly good quality. Most EU countries have developed legally-defined labelling terms that indicate quality, as well as geographical origin.

In France, many appellations and regions are broken down into a quality classification or hierarchy. The exact system will vary from one region to another, and even within regions, there may be different classification systems. In Burgundy, the quality hierarchy is a sort of pyramid, in ascending order: Regional-level wines, Village-level wines, Premier Cru, and, at the top, Grand Cru.

Here we see that Montrachet, which is considered being the finest Grand Cru vineyard in the world for Chardonnay, has been given all the focus. The producer is Domaine Leflaive and although being considered as one of the finest white wine producers in the world the name is in small print. The Grand Cru refers to the legal classification within Burgundy and is the top of the pyramid (see page 138).

Bordeaux has some different classification systems covering its various sub-regions, with wines at the top tier in each case being commonly referred to as "First Growths", or Premier Grand Cru Classé.

The important quality terms in Italy are Classico and Riserva. Classico means that the vineyards belong to the 'heart area' of that region, the historical original part

with often better quality and well drained soils. Like for example Chianti Classico will come from better vineyards then simply Chianti. Riserva refers to the period of ageing, for example, Brunello di Montalcino Riserva will have received an extra year of ageing prior to release than for a classic bottling of Brunello. Note though that Riserva will have different legal requirements depending on the region.

In Spain, there are legally-defined quality indications based around how a wine is aged before release. From shortest to longest ageing time you will find Joven, Crianza, Reserva and Gran Reserva.

In Germany, the PDO category Prädikatswein is further broken down into a hierarchy based on the sugar level in the grapes at harvest time. From low to high minimum levels of sugar, you will find Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese (BA), Eiswein and Trockenbeerenauslese (TBA).

Though not as widely appreciated as EU producers, all wine producing countries have legislation to control production techniques and labelling terms. Furthermore, any wine imported to the EU must meet strict EU laws and regulations.

Style and Production Techniques

Many wine labels will also feature some words or phrases that describe the wine's style, or how it was made. This is useful information as it can help you when making recommendations and advising clients. Sometimes, these phrases will be in English and quite easy to understand. Terms like "estate-bottled" or "hand-harvested" are straightforward and even self-explanatory. There are some terms that may not be so straightforward, and we will discuss some of the most common ones in this section.

"Barrel-fermented" (sometimes "barrique-fermented") is a term used to describe white wines that have undergone alcoholic fermentation in oak barrels. This is a labour-intensive and costly process and imparts balanced oak flavours upon the wine. Barrel-fermented whites are relatively common in Bordeaux and Burgundy.

"Barrel-aged" (sometimes "barrique-aged" or "élevé en fût de chêne") indicates that the wine has been matured in oak barrels before bottling. Ageing times, type and age of oak will vary from region to region and producer to producer. New oak barrels impart the strongest oak flavours, whereas used barrels will lead to milder flavours. Many producers use a combination of new and old oak barrels.

"Oaked" is a more general term that indicates that the wine has had some contact with oak. This term is usually used for wines that have been matured in larger oak vessels than French barriques used above, or for those that have been in contact with oak staves, chips or other additions. These additions are not used for premium wines and are most common in inexpensive, mass-produced wines.

"Organic" wine is produced from grapes that have been grown without using any synthetic fertiliser, pesticide or herbicide products. There are different legal definitions and governing bodies depending on where in the world you are.

"Biodynamic" wine is a type of organic

wine produced according to the teachings of Rudolf Steiner. Producers of biodynamic wine treat their vineyard, or farm, as a self-contained, living organism, and carry out vineyard work in conjunction with lunar cycles, among other particularities.

"Unfined" and "unfiltered" indicate that the wine has not undergone the process of fining and filtering, respectively. These terms may appear together, or may not. These processes are used to remove haziness and sediment from the wine before bottling. Some producers feel that these processes can have a detrimental effect on the wine, by removing its character or essence, and thus will choose to forego either or both. Wine that is unfiltered or unfined is more likely to have deposit or sediment and may require careful decanting.

"Botrytis cinerea" (or just "botrytis" or "noble rot") is the naturally occurring fungus that is responsible for the sweet wines of Sauternes and elsewhere. In the right circumstances, botrytis gives rise to decadent sweet wines, though it can also damage grapes beyond repair. Wines labelled with this term will be sweet.

"Cuvée" is a French term that is used throughout the world to indicate a wine that comes from a specific blend or otherwise special selection. There is no legal definition of the term and thus it is not indicative of the wine's quality.

"Vieilles vignes" (or "old vines") is another French term, indicating that the wine has come from particularly old vines. Older vines tend to give lower yields and produce more concentrated fruit, and theoretically better quality wine. As the term has no legal definition, however, it is not a reliable indicator of quality.

"Estate" (or "Château" or "Domaine") indicates that the wine comes from grapes grown on the producer's own vineyard land.

"Merchant" (or "négociant") indicates that the wine has been made by a producer who blends together wines or grapes purchased from other producers and farmers. These terms may not be explicitly stated on the bottle, but most wine brands that are produced in big volumes are the work of merchants.

"Co-operative" indicates that the wine has come from a production facility owned and managed by a communal group of grape farmers.

Faulty Wines

As a crew member in the yachting industry, you've likely seen your fair share of faulty wines. Storage conditions on yachts are often inappropriate or inadequate for wine. The dry, hot and moving environment may cause wine to mature faster and sometimes oxidise prematurely.

Unfortunately, it doesn't stop there. Wine faults extend beyond oxidation to cork taint, heat damage, sulphur problems and more. Here is a very brief introduction to shed some light on this highly technical subject.

Cork Taint

A "corked" wine is one that has been contaminated by the chemical trichloroanisole (TCA). TCA is naturally occurring and can be found in oak barrels, the cellar and the cork. When it's a barrel or cellar problem, entire batches of wine can be contaminated. When it is the cork, single bottles will be affected. For the most part, TCA is a cork-related problem and has nothing to do with the way the wine is stored. As corked wine is the most commonly known defect, other defects are often misinterpreted as cork taint too. It is common to hear clients attribute several crossings as contributing to their wine being corked. This is not possible, as the TCA chemical is inherently present in the cork, or occasionally the barrel, and doesn't appear due to inadequate storage.

How to spot it: A corked wine will have lost most of its fruit aroma and will often smell of wet cardboard, damp earth, mouldy cellar and something reminiscent of a dirty swimming pool. Somewhere around 4% of all wine sealed with a cork is affected by TCA, so remember to check every bottle before serving! Another important thing to know is that you cannot tell merely by looking at the cork that a wine is corked; the cork might be wet and mouldy and the wine beautiful, or the cork in perfect condition and the wine spoiled by TCA.

What to do: A corked wine is the responsibility of the producer. It doesn't have anything to do with bad storage, the supplier or age. If you come across a corked bottle, save it and give it back to the supplier. They can then send the bottle back to the producer who will perform a chemical analysis and should supply a new bottle if TCA is found.

Oxidation

Oxidation is a defect linked to a chemical breakdown in the wine due to excessive oxygen. It is the second most widely spread problem in wine after cork taint, and is quite common in the yachting industry due to the lack of appropriate storage conditions, as warm temperatures speed up this process. Over time, all wine will become oxidised. Wines intended for youthful drinking, such as simple Provence Rosé and Pinot Grigio, will become oxidised within three to four years. Before this, the fresh fruit flavours will fade, and the wine will seem flat and less vibrant. Other wines, like top quality Bordeaux and Burgundy, can age for decades before becoming oxidised. However, it's important to note that some wines are made in an oxidative style, and in such cases, oxidation is not a fault but rather a desired characteristic, adding to the complexity of the wine.

How to spot it: An oxidised wine will lose its bright colour and fresh fruit aromatics. White wines turn darker, while reds will develop a brownish hue. The vibrant fruit aromas will give way to a flat and tired nose. White wines tend to smell like apple purée, and red wine like a bad or cooked Madeira.

What to do: Unfortunately, there is nothing you can do here. If the wine has come directly from the shop and is young, you should contact the supplier. If the wine has spent a longer time on board, it's likely that it has become oxidised due to storage conditions.

Sulphur Compounds

This is a very technical topic, referred to in the wine trade as "reduction". It is linked to sulphur dioxide (SO2), which is used as an additive in winemaking to prevent oxidation and bacterial spoilage. It often involves dissolved oxygen in the wine, known as redox potential.

How to spot it: There are many different sulphur compounds, and they each have different smells. Some have pleasant aromas like passion fruit and pink grapefruit, which is not a problem. Others, however, smell of garlic, rotten eggs, rubber and burnt matches. A little of this can add to a wine's complexity, but when too intense it is a wine fault.

What to do: In some cases, airing the wine can help. Decanting it vigorously a few times in a pot before putting it in the decanter can give enough air to the wine to lose its unpleasant odours. Placing a copper coin in the decanter and moving it around may also remove the reduction problem, sometimes entirely. Copper is a catalyst for oxidation, which can counteract the reduction.

Heat Damage

A "cooked" wine is one that has been exposed to too much heat. Exposure for short periods may have very little effect on the wine, though longer exposure can cause considerable damage.

How to spot it: The wine loses its freshness, starts to smell like canned, jammy fruit, and becomes quite flat. This may be combined with oxidation if the wine has been stored in hot and dry locations for a long time. You may be able to visually detect heat damage too: If a wine is exposed to too much heat, the cork may be slightly pushed out of the bottle.

What to do: The same as for oxidation.

Oak and Wine

The use of oak barrels in the wine industry initially came about as a consequence of transportation. Before this, wine was transported in animal skins. Somewhere along the way, it was discovered that storing the wine in oak actively improved it, giving it added complexity. Centuries later, the science behind oak and wine has become an essential element in winemaking. Nowadays one doesn't simply talk about "oak," but about its provenance, its type, its toasting levels and even the cooperage from which the barrel has come!

New oak barrels are expensive, so in the past decade, various alternatives have been developed, including oak staves and oak chips.

Provenance and Origin

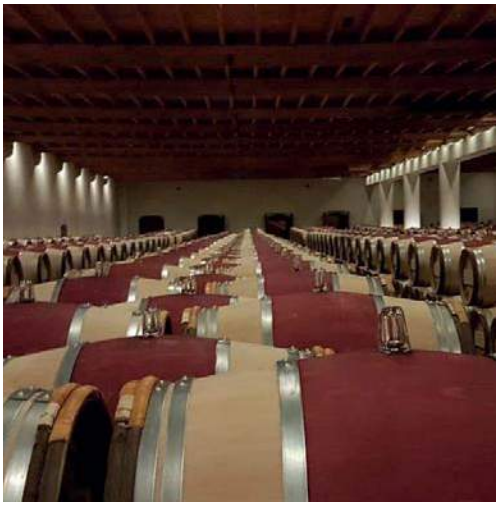
France is the primary source of oak barrels and is considered to produce those of the best quality. Other sources include the Baltic states and Eastern European countries, as well as Portugal. When selecting oak for a barrel, the cooper considers not only the origins of the oak but also whether it is tightly or loosely grained. The tightly grained types, less porous, are considered the best for wine ageing as they are more watertight and less likely to leak. The flavours coming from the tightly grained oak also give a more elegant taste to the wine.

The main French forests that supply wood suitable for barrel making are in Vosges, Limousin, Nièvre and Allier. Certain forests, such as Tronçais in the central region, are particularly well known. Though it may not sound particularly important, the provenance of the oak is highly significant because the climate affects the grain size, which is of great importance. Another factor affecting the size of the grain is the spacing between the planted oaks. In a wild forest the trees grow far apart and can be loose-grained, but in a planted forest the trees are planted tightly together. Consequently, they must dedicate all their energy towards becoming tall to gain access to the sunlight. Hence the wood grain becomes tight.

French oak is considered the best and is certainly the most expensive, costing around €600-€700 for a new barrel. However, American oak is also widely used, with particularly good results in Spain and Australia. American winemakers tend to use mostly French oak for their top wines. Stylistically the American oak is richer in tannin and offers exotic coconut and vanilla aromas.

Cooperage

Once the staves have been formed, either by splitting or by saw, there is still a long process ahead before the barrel is finished. Firstly, the wood must be dried. This can be done in the open, exposed to the elements and the different seasons (which is why it is known as "seasoning"). It can also be done inside using fans. This method is far quicker, but the results are not as good as traditional seasoning. Once the staves are dry, they are reassembled and prepared for toasting. The level of toasting can be light, medium or strong. Light toasting is done for white wines while medium to strong toasting is reserved for red wines.



Balance

The size of the container also influences the wine in different ways. A small barrel will provide a greater ratio between surface area and volume of wine, and the flavours will be more pronounced than in

wine matured in a large barrel. The standard size is 225 litres, but many producers are experimenting with other sizes to optimise the level of oak aromas in the wine.

The balance of oak aromas and flavours in wine is very important. A few years ago, there was a move towards excessive oak ageing, but lately, most winemakers have returned to a more balanced approach. Oak is merely a complement to a good wine and should not be its primary flavour. Depending on the concentration and style of a wine, a producer may choose to use only new oak, which gives full on toasty oak flavours, or perhaps 50% new and 50% one-year-old to soften the impact. In extreme cases, which luckily are not common, a producer may choose to use what is known as 200% new oak. Here, the wine is aged for around six months in new barrels, before being transferred into another set of brand new barrels, to maximise the oak expression.

Alternatives

Given the high cost of oak barrels, numerous less expensive alternatives have been developed. These include, for example, putting oak chips and staves into a stainless steel tank during the fermentation and maturation. This is a far less expensive way of bringing oak flavour to a wine and is suitable for mid-range quality levels.

Oak chips

The Importance of Vintage

You may have heard people talking about good vintages and bad vintages. Perhaps you have also noticed a considerable price difference between one vintage and another, of the same wine. There is a lot of media hype, and commercial significance, around certain years. Thus it can be easy to forget that it all comes down to the weather of that specific year. Good weather means a good vintage and cool, rainy conditions will produce a lesser one. In many classic wine regions with more marginal climates like Bordeaux, Burgundy, Rhône, Champagne, Piedmont, Tuscany and Rioja, the vintage can have a significant impact on both the price and quality. In hotter wine regions, vintage variation tends to have less importance.

In Bordeaux, the difference between a good and bad vintage can be extreme, regarding both price and quality. Pétrus is a prime example, where the price between an average vintage, like 1987, and a top-rated one, like 2000, can differ by as much as €3,000 a bottle! Regarding quality, it is interesting to look at the vintages of the early 1990s. Top wines from the famed 1990 vintage are still drinking beautifully, while the 1991 and 1992 are lean and slightly diluted, due to an excess of rain during those years. Those wines are now past their optimal drinking window.

Given the financial implications on vintage quality, it is understandable that there is a degree of politics behind the judging and scoring of different vintages. Those wine journalists and critics that professionally assess the quality of a vintage travel to Bordeaux in March following the vintage for an intense week of tasting and spitting. At this early stage, the wines have been in

oak for barely five months and are thus very tannic and harsh. These barrel samples are not pleasant to drink, making tasting and judging quite difficult for those that are not highly skilled or experienced tasters. A couple of months later, the verdict comes, in the form of critics' scores, and subsequently, the châteaux will decide the price that they'll charge for their wines. Those wines that are highly rated by the most powerful and influential critics will charge the highest prices, and vice versa. In other classic regions, price fluctuation is less significant, and therefore slightly less attention is given to these scores. Many consumers have the mistaken impression that a good vintage in Bordeaux equates to a good vintage throughout the world. This is not the case, as the weather is different from one region to the next, and different grape varieties require different weather patterns for optimal quality and ripeness.

"Many consumers have the mistaken impression that a good vintage in Bordeaux equates to a good vintage throughout the world

Vintage Considerations on Wine Inventory

Vintage is certainly important, though not in every case. Most wine is intended to be consumed shortly after release, when still young. Common examples in yachting are Provence rosé, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc and Italian Pinot Grigio. When ordering these wines, always ask your supplier for the most recent available vintage, and avoid replenishing stock with last season's vintage. With higher-quality whites, such as Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé, it is also normal to order young vintages, though there are exceptions.

If a client has requested a specific vintage from more classic regions such as Bordeaux, Burgundy or Tuscany, try to stick to that particular vintage, as the difference between one vintage and another will be considerable regarding both quality and price. Note also that while two vintages may be close together chronologically, such as 2002 and 2003 in Bordeaux, they may be very different stylistically. If a vintage is difficult to find, ask your supplier for a similarly-rated vintage as opposed to sourcing an alternative from the closest calendar year.

Assessing the quality of a vintage requires an experienced palate. The best way to find information about years and regions is to look at vintage charts written by the most acclaimed critics, such as Robert Parker and Jancis Robinson MW.

www.robertparker.com/resources/vintage-chart
www.jancisrobinson.com/learn/vintages

In the yachting industry, there can sometimes be a tendency to drink "the label", high-profile wines acting as a status symbol, with the nuance and subtlety of the wine taking second place. If this is the case, you should choose a good vintage from a top name, instead of a great vintage from a lesser-known name. This way, your client has the pleasure of drinking the most exclusive and well-known wines without paying the highest price.

Closures

Winemakers have a number of options when it comes to the closures they use to seal their wine. It is important that bottled wine have an adequate closure to protect it from the external environment until it is served. There are three common forms of closure: cork, synthetic cork and screwcap. The choice of closure type will depend on numerous factors, including the style of wine, the sort of bottle ageing intended, and cost.

Cork

Cork is the most widely used wine closure and was the only available option for quite some time. What we call cork is a permeable and buoyant material that is harvested from the bark of the Cork Oak tree, Quercus suber. Most cork is harvested from forests in Europe and Africa, with around half of all cork coming from Portugal.

Its buoyancy means that cork is easily compressed and is thus ideal for sealing wine bottles, as once inserted it can expand to form a tight closure. The material's permeability also means that wines sealed with a cork can maintain a minute transfer of air between the bottle and its external environment, which can be desirable for bottle maturation. Quality corks keep this transfer to a minimum, protecting the wine from oxidation. Most of the world's finest wines are sealed under cork, and producers of premium wines favour it for those wines that will be laid down in cellars and

bottle-aged for years, or even decades, before drinking.

Consumers may prefer cork-sealed wine as they perceive the wine to be of a higher quality than a wine sealed with either alternative below. A study by PricewaterhouseCoopers found cork to be the most environmentally sustainable wine closure, which may be a plus point for environmentally conscious consumers.

Cork closures are not perfect, and have two major downsides: Issues with the cork can lead to cork taint and oxidation. Cork taint, or trichloroanisole (TCA), is naturally occurring in some corks and gives the wine an unpleasant aroma of mould, wet cardboard and old newspaper. Cork taint is perhaps the best-known wine fault and is thought to affect somewhere between 1% and 5% of cork-sealed wine. Advances in winemaking technology and greater quality control efforts may have contributed to fewer incidences of cork taint, but it is still a problem. Some cork producers are attempting to eradicate this fault altogether, and are investing in sensory testing as well as gas spectroscopy technology. Some top wineries also carry out individual tests on the corks they receive from suppliers and will refuse or send back those that fall outside certain quality parameters.

Another issue of cork-sealed wine is the threat of oxidation: Should the cork fail to protect the wine sufficiently, too much oxygen may come into contact with the wine and lead to oxidation or premature ageing, neither of which are desirable.

Some consumers may find cork-sealed wines undesirable or irritating as corks require external equipment to open, though this issue can be overcome easily in yachting by keeping a sufficient stock of corkscrews and other related equipment on board. Older corks from very mature wines may call for special equipment or training, so ensure that you are comfortable with this practice should the need arise.

Synthetic Cork

An alternative to the traditional cork is the synthetic cork. Generally made from plastic, these closures are cheaper than the real thing. They are most commonly used to close inexpensive wines and those that are intended for consumption shortly after bottling. Over time, synthetic corks do not offer the same protection against oxygen as real corks, and so they are not appropriate for sealing premium, age-worthy wines like Grand Cru Classé Bordeaux. At their worst, poor quality synthetic corks can harm the wine's flavour, though again advances in technology and quality control mostly prevent this.

Screwcap

The final common closure is the screwcap, which has overtaken cork in Australia and New Zealand as the closure of choice. Screwcaps create a hermetic seal between the wine and its external environment, protecting it from oxidation and preserving its fruit flavours. There is a tiny incidence of oxidation from imperfections in the metal cap, though this is far from common. As the cap is made of metal and not cork, there is no risk of cork taint from the cap itself. There are other sources of TCA possible, such as in the winery and wooden ageing vessels, but the closure itself will not impart this fault upon the wine. Another key benefit of the screwcap is that the wine is easier for the consumer to open – there is no need for any special equipment or know-how. The cap is also easy to screw back on, making it easy to transport or to stick back into the refrigerator as necessary.

Consumer perceptions of screwcaps can vary, and a common conception may be that wine under screwcap is cheaper and thus of a lesser quality than cork-sealed wine. However, the popularity of screwcap use among premium brands in New World countries surely helps to reinforce a quality message, and proponents will argue that with a screwcap the consumer can taste the wine exactly as the winemaker intended it to be tasted. There is some debate about the ability of wine to age under screwcap, as there is traditionally no transfer of air between the wine and its external environment. Screwcaps will also mask the effect of heat damage on a bottle of wine – while a cork will visibly swell and protrude if the wine is "cooked" or exposed to too much heat, this will not happen with a screwcap, and the fault may only be discovered upon opening and serving the wine.

The future of wine closures is unclear. It is hard to envisage cork ever going away, though screwcap is growing in popularity while synthetic cork is declining. Iconic Australian producer Penfolds uses a combination of all three closures and is continuing to invest in research and development for the future, including the use of glass closures.

WINE MAKING

The following pages on wine making are far from being yacht specific, yet if you are interested in wine and would like to understand the differences in style and quality it is helpful to also have a look at the wine making processes of each style. For example, how does the bubbles end up in Champagne, why is rosé wine rosé and do you add sugar to sweet wine? These questions and many more will be answered and you will gain a deeper understanding of wine in general.

Before looking at the differences in wine making for sparkling, white, rosé, red and sweet wines let's look at what they all have in common. As you know, wine is made out of grapes and they generally come from the Vitis Vinifera species of the grape vine. There are also other species (especially American ones) but these are seldom used for wine making. Apart from grapes we also need yeast in order to start a fermentation which will convert the sugar in the grape juice to alcohol and hence converting it to wine. Yeasts are present naturally on the bloom of the grape and in the atmosphere surrounding wine cellars but for the majority of wine made today, yeast is added. During fermentation three things are created; alcohol (ethanol), carbon dioxide and heat. Although it's the alcohol we find the most interesting, both heat and the carbon dioxide will be of importance for certain wine styles.

Champagne and Sparkling Wine Production

Sparkling wine can be produced in a number of different ways.

The world's finest sparkling wine, Champagne, is made using a technique known as the "traditional method".

Other sparkling wines made using this technique include French Crémant, Italian Franciacorta and Spanish Cava. The hugely popular Italian sparkling wine Prosecco is produced using a different technique known as the "tank method" or "Charmat method". We will explain the traditional method in detail, and will briefly outline the tank method.

The Traditional Method

Grapes are harvested and quickly brought to the winery for pressing. Pressing is a gentle process, traditionally using a shallow vertical press called a Coquard Press, though pneumatic presses are also used. It is important that pressing is gentle, and that the grapes are not crushed, to avoid extraction of colour and tannin. In Champagne, the regional authority dictates that a strict maximum of 102 litres of juice be pressed per 160 kilogrammes of fruit. Of these 102 litres, the first 82 are known as the "cuvée" while the balance is known as the "taille". Makers of high-quality Champagne will only use the "cuvée".

The primary alcoholic fermentation normally takes place in temperature-controlled vats of stainless steel, though some producers will opt for oak barrels or vats. The primary fermentation produces the "base wine", a bone-dry still wine of neutral flavour, high acidity and a moderate alcohol level. The base wine will usually undergo malolactic fermentation, though this is a choice on the winemaker's part and is not mandatory. This base wine will be used to blend future Champagne, generally the following year, though in some cases it will be stored in reserve for use considerably later in the future.

> "Blending is crucial in Champagne

Blending is crucial in Champagne, where most wine is a blend of wines from different villages, grape varieties and vintages. The vast majority of vintage Champagne is also a blend, though its constituent wines only come from one vintage. Depending on the style of wine being made and its desired characteristics, the winemaker may combine as many as 70 different base or reserve wines to make up the blend. Once the blend has been decided, the wine undergoes tartrate stabilisation.

The next step is the secondary alcoholic fermentation, which takes place in the bottle. With the blend finalised and stabilised, a mixture known as liqueur de tirage is added, and the wine is bottled. The mixture contains wine, sugar, yeast, yeast nutrients and a clarifying agent. The bottled wine is then sealed with a crown cap, like a beer cap. The bottles are cellared horizontally at a temperature of around 10-12°C, and secondary fermentation takes place over the course of around six to eight weeks. Over this time, the wine develops flavours, its alcohol level rises, and, vitally, the carbon dioxide generated by the yeast dissolves into the liquid and gives the wine its sparkle. Significantly, this also creates a huge amount of pressure inside the bottle.

Following secondary fermentation, the dead yeast will form a sediment known as lees. Over time, the lees break down and release various chemical compounds into the wine. This naturally-occurring process is known as "yeast autolysis" and imparts various signature aromas and flavours upon the wine, notably of bread, toast and biscuit. This process may go on for months or years, depending on the

winemaker's choices. The longer the wine spends in contact with the lees, the more complex it may become.

When the winemaker wishes to separate the wine from the lees, the wine must undergo two particular processes called "riddling" and "disgorgement".

■ Riddling, also known as remuage, is a delicate task that involves moving the bottle very gradually from its horizontal position to an inverted vertical position. This concentrates all the sediment into the bottle neck. This work was traditionally done by hand and many producers still do things this way. In modern times, various machines have been developed to assist in this process, most significantly the gyropalette.

■ Disgorgement involves freezing the wine, and, by extension, the sediment, in the bottle neck. This is done by submersion into a cold solution. Once the contents of the neck have been frozen, the bottle can then be stood upright and the crown cap removed.
The pressure causes both the frozen wine and the sediment to shoot out of the bottle, leaving the wine clear. The wine is then topped up with a mixture of wine and cane sugar known as liqueur d'expédition, and the wine is sealed with a cork and secured with a wire cage. The sugar added by this mixture is known as the dosage, and here the winemaker can decide whether to make a dry Champagne, a sweet Champagne, or anything in between. Some winemakers may opt for a so-called "zero dosage", which will lead to a bone-dry wine with incredibly high acidity, as the dosage is used to balance acidity and develop flavour.
The finished wine is then aged in bottle, to allow the liqueur d'expédition to become integrated with the wine, and in some cases for further development of flavours.

The Tank Method

Best known for making the Italian sparkling wine Prosecco, the tank method is another approach for producing sparkling wine. The secondary alcoholic fermentation takes place not in the bottle, but rather in large sealed tanks. The winemaker places the dry base wine into the tank alongside a mixture of sugar, yeast nutrients and clarifying agent (similar to the liqueur de tirage used in the traditional method) and seals the tank for fermentation. The sparkling wine is then separated from its sediment by filtration and is bottled under pressure.
The costs of producing sparkling wine in this way are considerably lower than for traditional method wines, and so this method is used for inexpensive wines. As the winemaking process does not involve significant contact with the lees, tank method wines lack the nuanced flavour that yeast autolysis gives traditional method wines.

White Wine Production

Upon arrival at the winery, the freshly harvested grapes are sorted. This may be a manual or mechanical operation, or a combination of both. The fruit is examined and checked for impurities, such as unripe or rotten berries. Such unwanted grapes are discarded before the good grapes pass to the next phase.

Next, the winemaker will usually destem and crush the fruit. Neither step is mandatory, though many modern wineries have a machine which can do both. Destemming involves removing the stems from the bunches of grapes. Crushing involves breaking the grape skins and gently releasing some of the juice, known as free-run juice. This process should be gentle enough to release the juice without damaging the pips. Both the stems and pips are high in tannin, which is generally not desirable for white wines.

The next step is pressing, which is the separation of the liquid and solid parts of the grape. For most white grapes, this is done immediately after the free-run juice is removed. There are certain aromatic grape varieties, such as Riesling and Muscat, that may benefit from a little more skin contact before pressing. Typically, this will last for a couple of hours and has the effect of increasing the aroma and flavour intensity. In either case, pressing will separate the solids from the fresh grape juice, known as the “must”.

Afterwards, the fresh grape juice may be clarified in order remove cell fragments. Whether and the extent to which this is done will depend on the grape variety. The cell fragments are a valuable source of natural yeast that will aid in fermentation, though can also impart additional characteristics that will be more welcome with some grape varieties than others. Fresh and aromatic varieties

may require considerable clarification, while high-end Chardonnay may benefit from the additional complexity. In any event, the finished wine will be clarified later in the process before bottling.

Next: Fermentation, which is the natural process of grape sugars being transformed into alcohol and carbon dioxide by yeast. These yeasts may be native to the vineyard and reside on the grape skin (specifically on the waxy outer surface known as the "bloom") or may be commercial yeasts added by the winemaker.
In effect, this process transforms grape juice into wine. The yeasts will naturally continue to convert sugar to alcohol either until there is no sugar left, or until the wine reaches an alcohol content of around 15%, at which point the yeasts will die. Alternatively, the winemaker may choose to add sulphur to kill the yeast. The winemaker has several options for white wine fermentation, including the type of fermentation vessel, and the temperature at which the wine is to be fermented.

> "Fresh and aromatic varieties may require considerable clarification, while high-end Chardonnay may benefit from the additional complexity

For fresh and aromatic whites, the winemaker will use a neutral vessel of stainless steel or concrete. Here, the characteristic of the grape can be expressed without any other influences. For other varieties, such as high-end Chardonnay, oak barrels may be used to impart complexity of flavour and subtle oak influences. The winemaker may compromise by adding oak staves or oak chips to an otherwise neutral container.
The optimum temperature at which to ferment white wine ranges from 12°C to 22°C, lower than for red wine and encouraging a slower fermentation and the development of aromatic character. The lower the temperature, the longer the process will take. White wine fermentation may take as little as a few weeks or as much as several months to complete. It is important for the winemaker to control the temperature, as there will be adverse effects from fermentation at excessively high and low temperatures: Too low, and the wine may develop unpleasant aromas or fail to develop desired fruit aromas. Too high, and desired fruit aromas may be lost altogether. In modern wineries, temperature control is easily managed electronically and is thus not a major worry.

After fermentation, the wine is racked and the dead yeast cells, known as lees, are removed. Though the large sediments, known as gross lees, are removed, there are some grape varieties that benefit from extended contact with or later ageing on the fine lees.

The process of malolactic fermentation is not mandatory for white wines, though the winemaker may decide that it is appropriate depending on the grape variety. Malolactic fermentation is another naturally occurring process and occurs when lactic bacteria transfer malic

acid into lactic acid. Malic acid is harsh and tart, while lactic acid is soft and creamy. This process can reduce the wine's acidity and make it rounder on the palate, as well as impart flavours such as butter and hazelnut, though this may come at the expense of the more varietal fruit aromas.

The winemaker may add sulphur dioxide to stabilise the wine, and now must make a decision on whether, how, and for how long to age the wine before bottling. The wine may be aged in a neutral vessel, in oak, and/or on the fine lees as mentioned above. Lee ageing can impart a variety of flavours including caramel, brioche and vanilla. Decisions about ageing can depend on the grape variety as well as on local regulations in specific wine regions.

> "The winemaker may blend the wine numerous times during the ageing period

The winemaker may blend the wine numerous times during the ageing period. This may involve taking wine made from distinct plots or grape varieties, or simply those vinified in separate vessels and blending them together to achieve a particular style or expression. Blending is necessary if the winemaker is seeking to achieve a consistent style from one vintage to the next, among other considerations.

The final decisions involve clarification and stabilisation. Clarification involves removing any unwanted sediment to leave a crystal-clear liquid, and stabilisation ensures that the wine will remain stable and develop as normal when in the bottle. The winemaker has numerous tools at his disposal here: The process of sedimentation removes the remaining lees through "racking", the gentle process of pumping the liquid from one vessel to another and leaving the sediment behind. Filtration removes solid particles from the wine by passing the liquid through a filter. Fining encourages tiny particles in the wine to band together to form a deposit, and effectively to fall out of the wine. This may be done for the purposes of clarification or stabilisation.

Rosé Wine Production

Rosé wine production has numerous steps in common with red and white wine production, though has its own distinct techniques too. Understanding the basics of rosé wine production is worthwhile in yachting, particularly given the popularity of ultra-premium rosé wines from the Côte de Provence.

Rosé wine is derived from red wine grapes, which are harvested and brought to the winery as normal. Here, the grapes are destemmed and crushed, and then will undergo maceration, pressing or other technique depending on the overall production method being used. Four such methods are explained in greater detail below. Alcoholic fermentation usually takes place in large vessels of stainless steel, wood or concrete. Fermentation can last between eight and fifteen days. Most rosé wine is allowed to complete its fermentation naturally and is thus bone dry. Some more inexpensive rosé wines are known to have some residual sugar, such as branded White Zinfandel from California intended for mass market consumption. The majority of higher end rosé, which is of interest to the yachting industry, will be dry.

Most rosé is made to be enjoyed young and fresh, immediately upon release. Oak ageing is very rare, though not unheard of. We will now outline four common methods for producing rosé wine.

Direct Pressing

Direct pressing is a technique where black grapes are pressed, as in the production of white wine. Gently pressed, the grapes will give off a delicate colour, though the winemaker must take care not to extract excessive tannin. This action does not leave the red skins and clear juice in contact for any considerable length of time, hence the wine's light colour. Immediately after pressing, the juice is removed and brought to the fermentation vessel, which is usually a large stainless steel tank. Direct pressing produces the lightest colour of all these techniques and is the most common method used in producing Provence rosé.

Drawing Off

This technique is identical to red winemaking until alcoholic fermentation begins. After between 6 and 48 hours of maceration, the juice is drained or "drawn off" from the skins. The shorter the wine is in contact with the skins, the lighter the colour, and vice versa. Having been drawn off from the skins, the juice continues to ferment, at cool temperatures in order to keep its fresh fruit aromas and flavours.

Saignée

Saignée, or bleeding, is a variation on the drawing off process. Again, maceration takes place, usually for between 2 and 20 hours. Here, however, only some of the juice is drawn off – the rest stays with the skins in order to produce a red wine. The primary focus is to make a highly-concentrated red wine, with the rosé something of a by-product. As the red is the priority, the winemaker will tend to select grape varieties that are suited to red wine as opposed to rosé, and thus rosé made using the saignée technique may not be as good as rosé made from purpose-grown rosé grapes.

Blending

This relatively simple method involves blending a small amount of red wine into a white wine, thus producing a hybrid wine of a pink colour. With the exception of pink Champagne, this technique is not permitted in the EU and is mostly used in inexpensive New World wines.

Red Wine Production

Grapes are harvested and brought to the winery, where they are sorted. This can be done by hand or by machine, or a combination of both. Grapes are examined and checked for impurities such as unripe or rotten berries. Many wineries will use technology such as optical sorting, often in conjunction with traditional hand sorting. Unwanted grapes are discarded before the good grapes pass to the next phase.

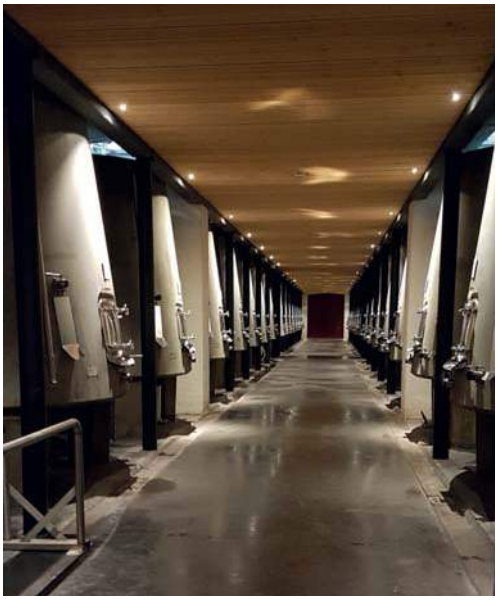
Next, the winemaker will usually destem and crush the grapes. Neither step is mandatory, though many modern wineries have a machine which can do both. Destemming involves removing the stems from the bunches of grapes. Crushing involves breaking the grape skins gently to release some of the juice, which is known as free-run juice. This process should be gentle enough to release the juice without damaging the pips.

With destemming and crushing complete, the winemaker may decide to use a technique called cold maceration. This is an extraction technique where the grapes are left at cold temperatures for a period of time, which encourages the release of colour from the skins. Both duration and temperature should be carefully managed. Handled incorrectly, this technique can cause the juice to lose its primary fresh fruit aromas and negatively affect the wine's aromatic character.

Further extraction takes place during

alcoholic fermentation. For the most part, alcoholic fermentation takes place in inert vessels such as stainless steel, wood or cement vats. 225-litre oak barriques are not practical for the alcoholic fermentation of red wines as it would be incredibly difficult to maintain contact between the skins and the juice, a vital component in successful extraction. Alcoholic fermentation for red wines usually takes place between 30°C and 32°C, and in most modern wineries the temperature is carefully controlled. Higher temperatures can improve extraction of colour and tannin, but come at a risk: Should the temperature rise higher, around 35°C to 38°C, fermentation can cease altogether. Different wine regions and grape varieties will call for different temperature ranges. During fermentation, the grape pulp and skins will naturally form a thick mass or "cap" on the surface of the juice. Left alone, the cap will impede successful extraction as the juice will be unable to extract much colour given the limited surface contact and concentration of the cap. The winemaker has a number of techniques at his disposal that he can employ to overcome this challenge.

"Pumping over" is a method whereby the winemaker draws off wine from the bottom of the vessel and, quite literally, pumps it over to the top and back into the vessel, in effect breaking up the cap. Pumping over has the benefits of dissipating heat and promoting oxygenation, assisting the growth of yeast



at the beginning of the fermentation. Oxygenation also protects the wine from reduction and the unpleasant aromas associated with it, such as cabbage and rotten egg. This is a very common technique for most red wines and is usually carried out twice per day.

Another way to break up the cap is "punching down", which involves breaking up the cap by punching down upon it with paddles. This was traditionally done by hand, though this can present a health risk for the worker. Wineries that use this method today can do so with mechanical paddles and tend to punch down between once and three times per day.

> "Alcoholic fermentation for red wines typically lasts between one and three weeks

Alcoholic fermentation for red wines typically lasts between one and three weeks. The length of time that the fermenting juice stays in contact with the skins will impact the wine's style, largely for reasons of extraction. Extraction of

colour occurs quickly in the early stages of maceration and begins to slow down during fermentation. On the other hand, extraction of tannin begins slowly and then increases during fermentation, as heat and alcohol levels increase. The winemaker can thus impact the wine's style with his choices regarding the duration of time the juice spends in contact with the skins. Extended skin contact is often used for high-quality, age-worthy wines that are high in tannin, like Barolo, Barbaresco and classified growth Bordeaux. Lighter, fruitier reds can be produced by drawing the juice off the skins earlier and finishing the fermentation without them.

> "Extraction of tannin begins slowly and then increases during fermentation

The winemaker drains the wine from the mass of skins and pulp, and then presses the mass to create the "press wine". The press wine is very high in both tannin and colour, and the level of extraction will depend on how vigorous the pressing is.

Press wine is not usually sold by itself, but may be used in blending or is sometimes shared with winery staff for their own private consumption.

Now, the wine undergoes malolactic fermentation. This is the process of converting the harsh and tart malic acid into softer and creamier lactic acid. This process can soften the wine's acidity and smooth out some of its harsher characteristics. The free-run juice and press wine may both undergo this process.

After malolactic fermentation, the winemaker will usually blend the wine. This may be a blend of different parcels, press wine and free-run wine, or some combination of both. After blending, the wine is usually aged or matured. This can take place in a number of different vessels, with Bordeaux-style oak barriques being most common for high-end wines. Other options include larger oak vessels such as Italian botti, clay amphorae, or inert vessels like stainless steel, perhaps with the addition of oak chips or staves. The duration of the ageing can vary and may be the winemaker's choice or a legal requirement from the governing body of the local area. It is common for Grand Cru Classé Bordeaux to be aged for between 16 and 24 months, though there are exceptions. In Bordeaux, most high-end wine is actually sold in advance of being finished, while it is still ageing in barrel. These wines are sold on a futures system known as en primeur, and around April each year, the wine trade and media head to Bordeaux to taste barrel samples

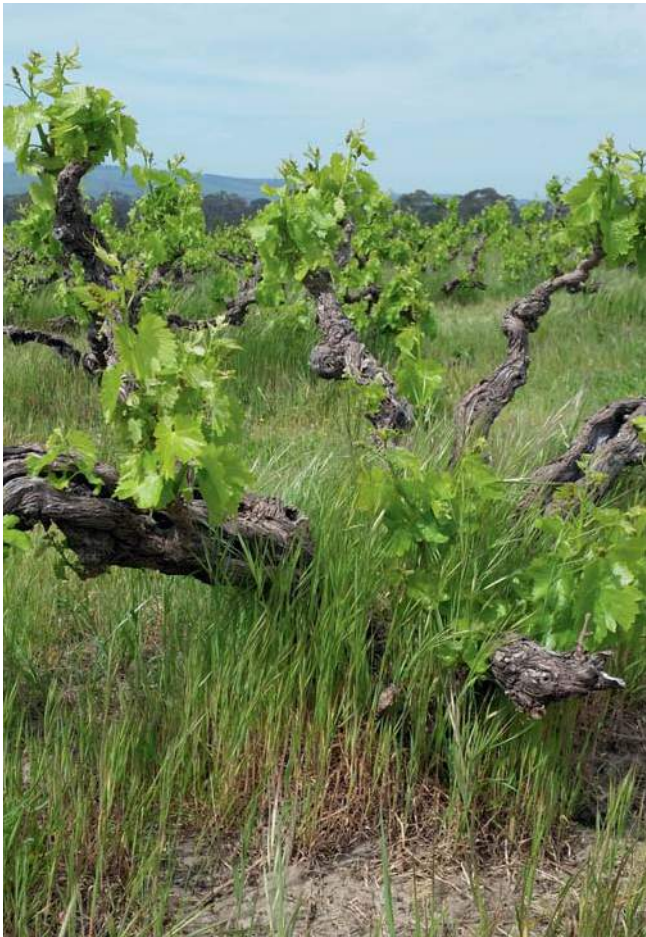
of the latest vintage to help inform later buying decisions, and, crucially, the producer's pricing decisions.

Following ageing, the wine may be blended one final time. The winemaker will have meticulously tasted the wine from barrel during the maturation and monitored its progression. This knowledge will inform final blending decisions. The final blend will then be clarified, either by sedimentation or filtration. Fining may follow, and is often done using egg whites. This can be followed by tartrate stabilisation or cold stabilisation, the winemaker's efforts to isolate and remove tartrate crystals from the wine. Finally, the wine must undergo microbiological stabilisation, a process for stabilising the wine and protecting from unwanted microbial activity such as refermentation in the bottle and other spoilage. This can take the form of filtration, known as "cold bottling", or pasteurisation, known as "hot bottling".

> "It is common for Grand Cru Classé Bordeaux to be aged for between 16 and 24 months

Some red wines, notably those from the Beaujolais region in France, are made using a particular technique called "carbonic maceration". Here, the winemaker takes uncrushed, whole bunches of grapes, stems and all, and places them in vats filled with CO2. This environment has no oxygen, and so the grape cells must source their energy by converting grape glucose into alcohol, carbon dioxide and energy. This process takes place without yeast and culminates in the grapes bursting. They are then pressed, the juice and skins are separated, and the juice finishes fermentation with the addition of yeast. The result is high colour extraction and very low tannin extraction. Carbonic maceration is classically associated with aromas like banana and bubblegum, and wines made in this way are generally not intended for long ageing.

The final step is packaging, and the winemaker has many choices here including glass bottle, bag-in-box, plastic bottle, aluminium can and more. Most wines are released shortly after bottling or packaging, though in some regions, notably in Spain, it is common for further ageing in bottle prior to release.



Sweet Wine Production

All other things being equal, the process of alcoholic fermentation will naturally create a dry wine, as the yeast will consume all the grape sugar. This is what happens for most table wines. As a majority of consumers prefer the taste of dry wine, this is how most of the world's wine is made. Most of the fine wine consumed in yachting is dry, though sweet wines have their place too, with the wines of Sauternes and Tokaji being the leading examples.

Though dry wines represent the majority, winemakers can also create sweet wines, and they have a number of tools at their disposal to do so. The choice of whether to produce a sweet wine - and the technique used - will depend on the winemaker's preference, local growing conditions and local regulations.

Interrupting Fermentation

The winemaker can halt the fermentation through fortification, adding sulphur dioxide (SO_2), or chilling the grape must.

Fortification is the addition of a neutral spirit during the fermentation, which kills the yeast and stops the fermentation process altogether. This has a considerable impact on the structure of the wine, in particular affecting sweetness and alcohol levels, both of which will be typically very high. The most prominent fortified wines are Port and Sherry, with other examples including Madeira, Marsala and French vins doux naturels.

Adding SO_2 or chilling the must will effectively pause the fermentation, as opposed to stopping it permanently. Following this step, the wine must be filtered to remove any residual yeast. The resulting wine must be kept away from any yeast, or else the fermentation process will resume.

Addition of Sweetening Component

Winemakers can sweeten otherwise dry wines before bottling by the addition of unfermented grape juice or Rectified Concentrated Grape Must (RCGM), a sugar solution from grape juice extract. The former is particularly popular in Germany, where dry wines are made medium-sweet by adding unfermented grape juice known as Süssreserve. The addition of RCGM is most commonly associated with mass market New World wines, where adding a little sweetness appeals to broad consumer tastes. Some off-dry and medium sweet German wines are also made in this way. It is unlikely that you will encounter such wines in yachting.

Concentration of Grape Sugars

Grapes that have very high levels of natural sugar create the best sweet wines, as they have high levels of acidity to create balance alongside the sweetness.

Noble rot wines are those made from grapes affected by botrytis cinerea, notably the fine dessert wines of Sauternes and Tokaji. Beerenauslese and Trockenbeerenauslese wines from Germany and Austria are also made in this way. This technique produces the world's finest and most sought-after sweet wines, including the iconic Château d'Yquem from Sauternes and top Tokaji Aszu and Tokaji Essencia from Hungary. These wines are capable of incredibly long ageing and can rival and even outdo fine red wines in this regard. Producing noble rot sweet wines is incredibly labour-intensive and costly, so the wines tend to be very expensive as a result. It is also a risky business, as the winemaker relies in large part on nature, which does not always behave as the winemaker might like. Taken to the extreme, this can cause the winemaker to lose an entire vintage, as was the case at Château d'Yquem in 2012. Aromas typically associated with noble rot wine include honey and dried fruits.

> "Producing noble rot sweet wines is incredibly labour-intensive and costly

Passerillage, or drying grapes on the vine, is a technique where the ripened grapes are not picked and instead allowed to dry out and turn to raisins on the vine, leading to huge sugar concentration. Producers in Sauternes use this technique for a proportion of their fruit because, as mentioned above, noble rot cannot always be relied upon.

Drying grapes after picking is a technique used in the production of Pedro Ximénez Sherry and the passito wines of Italy. It is a prerequisite that conditions are dry and warm and that care is taken to remove any rotten grapes to prevent the spread of unwanted rot. After they are picked, the grapes are dehydrated which leads to great sugar concentration and wine with a raisiny flavour profile.

Freezing grapes on the vine is a technique used to produce Canadian Icewine and German Eiswein. Here, grapes are picked and pressed while frozen. The ice stays behind in the press and the resulting grape must is very high in sugar. This technique leads to wines with strong varietal characteristics.

KEY GRAPE VARIETIES

There are thousands of different grape varieties grown in the world and although many have much in common there are characteristics that set them apart. Chardonnay will taste different from Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet different from Pinot Noir as will the resulting wine. Luckily the market place is dominated by a more limited number of grapes than the full spectrum and following is a brief introduction to the most common black and white grape varieties and the typical characteristics one would expect in the wine.

Black Grape Varieties

Cabernet Sauvignon

Home: Bordeaux, France

Also found: All over the winegrowing world

Tasting terms: Blackcurrant, tobacco, green bell pepper (in cooler areas)

Cabernet Sauvignon is one of the most famous black grape varieties in the world. If Chardonnay is the queen, then Cabernet is its worthy king. Cabernet is a powerful grape with plenty of tannin, acidity and flavour. As tannin and acidity are two of the main components necessary for long ageing, Cabernet tends to age well. Its historical home is Bordeaux, and particularly the region's Left Bank. Due to the international fame of Bordeaux wines, it was the natural choice for winemakers across the world to make their version of the "king of grapes". It has small, blue-black berries with thick skins, and grows well in hot to moderate climates. The wines are usually aged in oak, resulting in aromas of cedar, tobacco spice and chocolate.

Merlot

Home: Bordeaux, France

Also found: California, Chile and Italy

Tasting terms: Black and red plums

Merlot is another classic Bordeaux variety, but this time from the Right Bank where the regions of Pomerol and Saint-Émilion are located. It is softer and fuller than

Cabernet and has lower levels of acidity and tannin. The fruit profile is no longer blackcurrant, but black and red plums, cherry and prune. The grapes are larger than the Cabernet and have a thinner skin and hence a lower level of tannin. The grape quickly loses its acidity in hotter climates and can become jammy and lack structure. Therefore, it is often blended with the firmer Cabernet variety. Merlot is also an important grape in some of the Super Tuscan wines from Italy and has had success in California. Much of Merlot's success dipped after the movie Sideways came out in 2004. The film's main character was famously critical of the grape and this, in turn, led to a decrease in consumption and production of Merlot in the USA. Oak is often used for ageing the wines, resulting in aromas of Christmas spices, cedar and tobacco.

Pinot Noir

Home: Burgundy and Champagne, France

Also found: Chile, New Zealand, parts of Australia and USA

Tasting terms: Elegance, fragrance and subtlety. Strawberry, raspberry, truffles and vegetal nuances

It may be every winemaker's dream to make great Pinot Noir, and many wine lovers' "desert island wine" is surely a top Burgundy, also from the Pinot Noir grape. No other grape, except perhaps Riesling, can express the elegance, finesse and depth that the best examples of Pinot Noir can. It is also a very tricky grape, both to grow and to vinify. Whereas Cabernet can grow in both hot and moderate climates, Pinot Noir is more sensitive to heat and grows best in cooler climates to retain freshness and elegance in the glass. Pinot Noir grapes have thin skins, fresh acidity and relatively soft, silky tannins. Oak is used during ageing and gives the wines complexity in the form of spice, leather and toast. With age, Pinot Noir develops subtle nuances of farmyard and earthy notes. The best examples of Pinot Noir can age for a long time, but most examples are made for early consumption. The wines from Burgundy are restrained, earthy and savoury, while those from the New World will be lusher, with denser, riper fruits and are often darker in colour.

Syrah (Shiraz)

Home: Northern Rhône Valley, France

Also found: Australia, California, Chile, New Zealand

Tasting terms: Blackberry, black pepper, black olives and sweet spice

Although Syrah's origins lie in Northern Rhône appellations like Côte-Rôtie, Cornas and Hermitage, more consumers are familiar with its Australian name, Shiraz. Examples from the Northern Rhône are medium in body with aromas of herbs, leather and

black fruit, while Australian Shiraz is full-bodied, packed with rich, ripe blackberry fruit and spice, and is high in alcohol. Oak is often used for ageing, and the best examples can keep for a very long time.

Sangiovese

Home: Tuscany, Italy

Also found: Almost nowhere outside of Italy

Tasting terms: Sour cherry, prune, vegetal hints, high acidity and firm tannins

If there is one Italian grape to remember, it´s Sangiovese. It is grown extensively throughout the country, and particularly in Tuscany where it is the key component of Chianti and the sole variety of Brunello di Montalcino, Brunello being another name for the grape. The best examples can age for a long time due to the grape's naturally high acidity. The sour cherry aromas are enriched using oak ageing, resulting in aromas of prune and toffee.

Nebbiolo

Home: Piedmont, Italy

Also found: Almost nowhere outside of Italy

Tasting terms: Sour black cherry, prunes, tar, leather and floral hints, very tannic and with high acidity

This is a fantastic grape variety, capable of producing stunning wines in the regions of Barolo and Barbaresco in Piedmont. The grapes have very thick skins and therefore have plenty of tannins. Acidity is high, which allows for considerable ageing, and its colour changes to a brown or red garnet shade very early on in its development. The name "Nebbiolo" is derived from nebbia, a fog which hangs over the Piedmont vineyards during autumn. Although Barolo and Barbaresco are two of the greatest wine regions in the world, these wines are not very common in yachting. If you have an open-minded owner or charter guest who can see beyond Grand Cru Classé Bordeaux, Montrachet and Cristal, suggest a top quality Barolo and give them a pleasant surprise!

Grenache

Home: Spain and Southern France

Also found: Australia and California

Tasting terms: Strawberry, white pepper, cloves and liquorice

Grenache may not be the world's best-known grape variety, but it is one of the most widely planted. It is used as the base in most red wines made in the South of France and is a key variety for Gigondas, Vacqueyras and Châteauneuf-du-Pape in the Southern Rhône. Grenache is also responsible for many of the pale rosé wines in the Côte de Provence. In Rioja, Spain, it is frequently blended with Tempranillo. It is often high in alcohol, with moderate tannin and acidity. It is not considered to be a top-quality grape, but examples from Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Priorat and Rioja are evidence that this variety can produce stunning wines as long as yields are kept low and the soil is right.

Tempranillo

Home: Rioja and Ribera del Duero, Spain

Also found: All over Spain

Tasting terms: Warm strawberries, black tea, leather and vanilla

Tempranillo is Spain's premier grape and is responsible for the country's finest wines. It grows all over Spain under many different names. Traditionally, fine Tempranillo wines are aged extensively in oak, particularly in the Rioja region. Therefore, many of the characteristics often associated with Tempranillo result from the winemaking and maturation rather than the grape itself.

Malbec

Home: Cahors and Bordeaux, France and Mendoza, Argentina

Also found: Argentina, Australia and Chile

Tasting terms: Blackberry, black cherry, violets, chocolate, raisins (in hot climates). Full-bodied with firm, dense tannins

Though its historical home is the south-west of France, Malbec has over the past 20 years become recognised as the signature grape of Mendoza, Argentina. Here, it tends to produce deep, dark wines with great flavour intensity and richness. Oak is almost always used for maturation, giving a sweet spiciness to the wine.

Zinfandel

Home: California

Also found: Italy (under the name Primitivo)

Tasting terms: Blackberry, black and red cherry, chocolate, raisins (in hot climates). Full-bodied with medium and dense tannins; many wines have a touch of residual sugar

Zinfandel is viewed as California's signature grape. From the off-dry, blush wines known as White Zinfandel, to top quality full-bodied reds with excellent ageing potential, California Zinfandel is made in a wide range of styles. Zinfandel tends to ripen unevenly, so some grapes in the bunch will be raisins when harvested. This often results in the wine having a distinct raisin character and high alcohol.

Gamay

Home: Beaujolais, France

Also found: Virtually nowhere else

Tasting terms: Light to medium in body, aromas of bright red fruit like cherry and raspberry, rather soft tannins and fresh acidity

The Gamay grape is quite large and has thin skin, and therefore the tannin will be soft. It can easily over-crop, so the best wines will come from the poor granite soils of the different cru villages of Beaujolais. Like Tempranillo, many of the flavours associated with this grape are not from the grape itself, but from a winemaking technique. In Beaujolais, carbonic maceration results in bright red fruit aromas, sometimes even in a candied fashion.

Cabernet Franc

Home: Bordeaux and parts of Loire

Also found in; Argentina, Chile, Tuscany and to a lesser extent in other New World countries

Tasting terms; Fragrant dark brambly fruit, violet, leafy, graphite, often medium bodied with fresh acidity

Cabernet Franc is wildly planted on the Right Bank in Bordeaux and especially in Saint-Émilion. It also grows in Médoc but to a lesser extent. Other French appellations where this grape has a unique expression is Chinon and Bourgueil in the Loire Valley. Here the climate is cooler and more fragrant and lighter styles are produced compared with Bordeaux. Cabernet Franc is also becoming increasingly popular in Argentina and Chile.

White Grape Varieties

Chardonnay

Home: Burgundy and Champagne, France

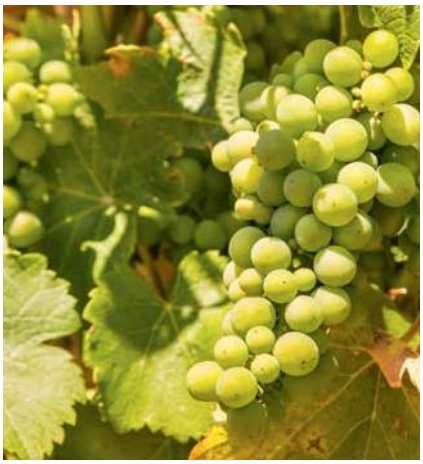
Also found: All major regions

Tasting terms: Tropical fruits, citrus, melon and peach

Chardonnay is one of the world's most famous grape varieties. Its popularity is related to its highly adaptable nature – it lends itself well to a wide range of growing conditions and winemaking techniques. Perhaps even more to its credit, Chardonnay is the grape behind white Burgundy; Chablis, Puligny-Montrachet and Meursault are considered to be some of the very best in the world.

Regarding winemaking, Chardonnay is often fermented or aged – or both – in oak barrels, giving the wines a nutty and toasty quality. Many Chardonnay wines undergo malolactic fermentation, a winemaking process which converts harsh malic acid into soft, creamy lactic acid. This imparts creamy and buttery aromas and texture that is typical of much of the world's great Chardonnay. Aside from its historical home regions of Burgundy and Champagne, fantastic Chardonnay is made throughout the world in regions like Australia, New Zealand, California, South Africa, South America, the South of France and Italy.

Sauvignon Blanc



Home: Loire Valley and Bordeaux, France

Also found: Australia, Austria, California and New Zealand

Tasting terms: Green fruits, such as lime and gooseberries and tropical fruits in warmer climates

When tasted blind, Sauvignon Blanc is one of the easiest varieties to recognise. The typical Sauvignon Blanc is pale, has light to medium body, is usually unoaked and has very refreshing, crisp acidity. The dominant aromas are of green fruits such as gooseberry and lime. Most examples are consumed when the wine is young and the fruit in its prime. It is the grape variety behind the famous Loire Valley whites of Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé. It also plays a major part in white Bordeaux, in both the dry styles and the sweet wines of Sauternes and Barsac. More recently, New Zealand has developed Sauvignon Blanc as a regional speciality thanks to their refreshing, pungent unoaked style. California has a wine style called Fumé Blanc; these wines tend to be slightly riper in style with some oak influence.

Semillon

Home: Bordeaux, France

Also found: Australia

Tasting terms: Lime, honey, wax and lanolin

Apart from the Semillon produced in Hunter Valley, Australia, this grape variety is only found in blends. It is often blended with Sauvignon Blanc, as is the case in the dry and sweet white wines of Bordeaux. This grape is thin-skinned and is sensitive to noble rot, the fungus responsible for the sweet wines of Sauternes. It can age well, developing toasty and honey characteristics with time.

Riesling

Home: Alsace, France and Germany

Also found: Australia, Austria and New Zealand

Tasting terms: Lime, floral and mineral

Many people think of Riesling only as a sweet wine. This is because most Riesling comes from Germany, and traditionally German wines are off-dry or medium-sweet. It's important to note, however, that, as with any grape variety, Riesling

can be made sweet, dry or anything in between. Today, there are many dry examples from Germany, Alsace, Austria and Australia. A typical Riesling will be pale in colour, light in body, and have a very crisp and refreshing acidity. Riesling is rarely oak aged and offers aromas of minerals and lime. As the wine ages, it will develop notes of honey, petroleum and diesel.

Viognier

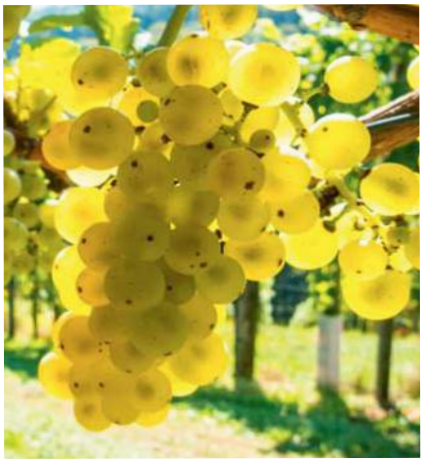
Home: Northern Rhône, France

Also found: Australia, California, South of France

Tasting terms: Peach, apricot, violet and orange blossom

Viognier is an aromatic grape that produces full-bodied, creamy wines with aromas of peach, apricot and orange blossoms. The acidity is moderate, and oak is often used during the winemaking and ageing processes to impart extra complexity. The best examples come from Condrieu in the Northern Rhône Valley in France. Here, the wines offer elegance, finesse and a certain minerality that is often lacking in New World examples.

Chenin Blanc



Home: Loire Valley, France.

Also found: South Africa

Tasting terms: Bruised apples, honey and wet wool

Chenin Blanc is perhaps not as famous as some of the varieties mentioned above, though it is certainly a classic variety when one considers the quality and ageing potential of its wines. Chenin's home is the Loire Valley, where it is used to produce sparkling, sweet and dry wines. Some of the best sweet and off-dry wines in the world come from the regions of Quarts de Chaume, Bonnezeaux and Vouvray. The only other area where Chenin has significant plantings is South Africa, where it is known locally as "Steen". Although the South African expression can be of excellent quality, it lacks the intensity, finesse and age-worthiness of the Loire wines.

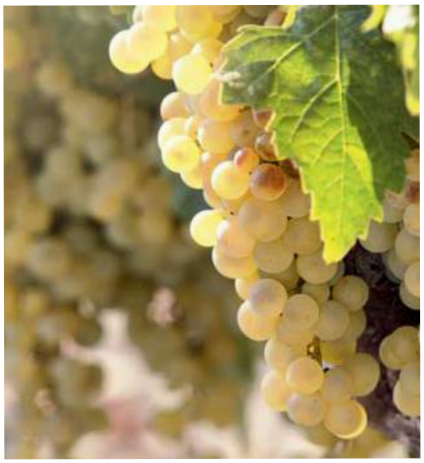
Pinot Gris (Pinot Grigio)

Home: Alsace, France (formerly known as Tokay Pinot Gris)

Also found: North-east Italy and New Zealand

Tasting terms: Peach, spice, blossom and often a viscous texture. Pinot Grigio from Northern Italy, however, tends to be lighter and crisper with aromas of pear and citrus.

The Pinot Gris variety is related to the noble Pinot Noir. Though it's a white variety, it has relatively dark skin and can give wines a slightly darker hue than other whites. The acidity of the wines produced is moderate, and most examples are unoaked. In Alsace, both dry and sweet wines are produced, the latter being labelled as Vendange Tardive and Selection de Grain Nobles. The wines from Italy and New Zealand are dry, fresh and fruity.



Gewürztraminer

Home: Alsace, France

Also found: North-east Italy and New Zealand

Tasting terms: Peach, spice, rose petal, a perfumed scent and often a viscous texture

Gewürztraminer is a classic Alsace grape variety and is packed with aromatics. Due to its heavily perfumed, floral nose, it does not have universal appeal. Take care not to recommend a Gewürztraminer to just anybody, as it can come as quite a shock to a novice palate. Something of an acquired taste, the wines are unoaked, medium to full-bodied and have moderate acidity. There are both sweet and dry versions, though most styles are off-dry to medium.

WINE REGIONS OF THE WORLD

The following chapter is a brief presentation of the wine regions and wine producing countries of the world. It is simply here to give you an overview of what wines, regions and grapes can be found in each country, a light introduction to the very vast, complex and wonderful world of wine. In the next chapter however, a more detailed description will be given of the key wines in yachting.

France: Champagne

Champagne is probably the most famous wine in the world. Although not all Champagnes are great, the best sparkling wines in the world do indeed come from this region.

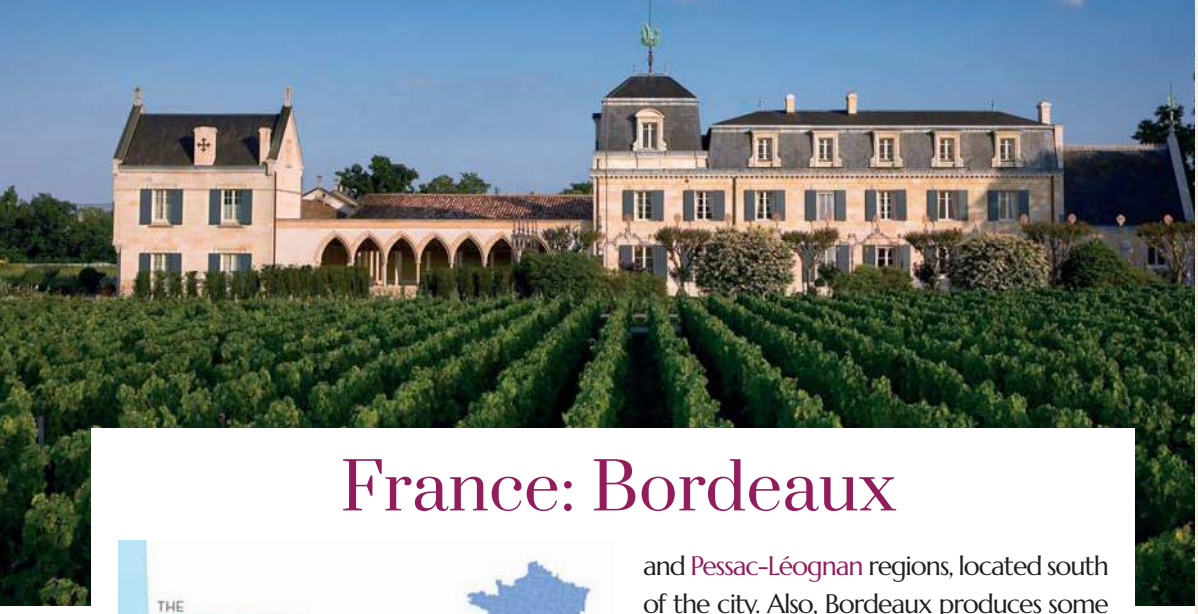
The wine must come from the region of Champagne and is made from three different grape varieties, Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier, and Pinot Noir. Champagne labelled as Blanc de Blancs is made solely from Chardonnay, while Blanc de Noirs is made from black grapes.

As Champagne has a marginal climate and the vintages can vary considerably in quality from one year to the next, most Champagne is made from a blend of different vintages and villages to create a consistent house style. Vintage Champagne, however, is made only from grapes harvested during one particular year. Producers here only make vintage Champagne during years where the grapes have had exceptional growing seasons, and the wine is aged longer than non-vintage Champagne before release.

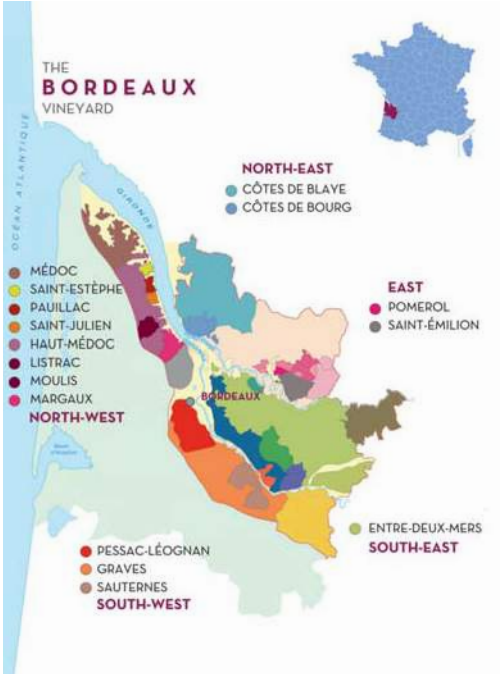
Making Champagne is a complex and elaborate process. First, there is a still base wine, appropriately blended to maintain the house style. Then a dose of sugar solution and yeast, known as liqueur de tirage is added, and the bottle is sealed with a crown capsule. Thanks to the yeast and the sugar, a second fermentation will take place which will create some alcohol and, more importantly, the signature bubbles - the CO_2 produced during this second fermentation is captured within the wine.

The dead yeast cells left over from the second fermentation in the bottle provide a source of aromas and complexity for the wine. The longer the wine is left on the yeast bed, the more complex it will be. For non-vintage Champagne, the minimum is 15 months, and for vintage Champagne, the minimum is 36 months. The wine is then separated from this sediment and closed with a champagne cork before being sold.

For more information, see page 118



France: Bordeaux



Bordeaux is arguably the centre of the fine wine world. No other region has influenced the rest of the world regarding winemaking and style to the extent that Bordeaux has, and the grape varieties here are some of the most popular on the planet - Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot above all, but also Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec.

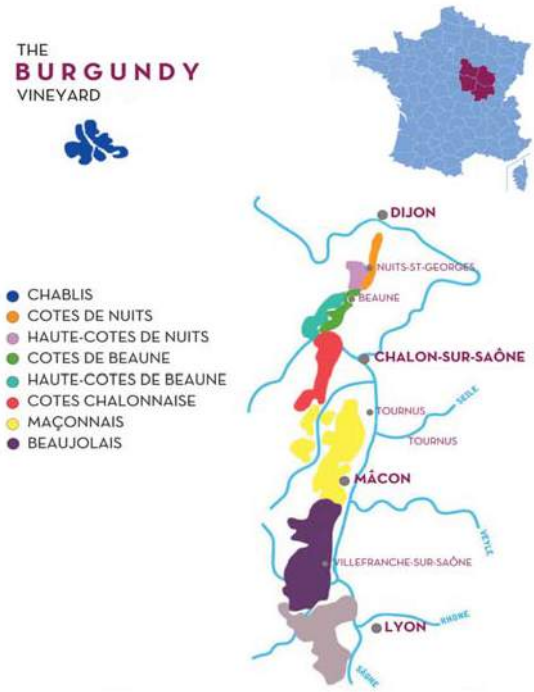
Although Bordeaux is most famous for its red wines, the white wines made from Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc can also offer excellent quality, especially from the Graves and Pessac-Léognan regions, located south of the city. Also, Bordeaux produces some of the finest sweet wines in the world, particularly those of Sauternes.

For red wines, different communes in Bordeaux offer slightly different styles. In the first instance, the overall region can be divided into the vineyards on the Left and Right Banks of the Gironde river. On the Right Bank, Pomerol and Saint Émilion are the two main communes, whose wines are both predominantly based on the Merlot variety. On the Left Bank, Margaux, Saint Julien, Pauillac and Saint-Estèphe are the names to remember, all specialising in Cabernet Sauvignon. Saint-Estèphe and Pauillac tend to have firmer tannins and structure than the slightly softer Saint Julien and the more fragrant and elegant Margaux.

The best wines from Bordeaux are classified as Grand Cru Classé. This is a famous classification system that was introduced in 1855 whereby the estates were classified according to the average price of their wine. Despite the fact that the classification is more than 160 years old is still of great importance.

See page 131 for a more in depth look at Bordeaux and its different classifications and communes.

France: Burgundy



Burgundy is one of the most complex wine regions in the world and when looking closer at how it's structured it is easy to understand why. The region is divided into five main sub-regions, namely Chablis, Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune (collectively known as the Côte d'Or), Côte Chalonnaise and Mâconnais. So far it's not too bad but then we have to add around 600 premier cru vineyards and 30 grand cru vineyards to get the full picture and even more producers. This complex mosaic creates what many feels to be the greatest wine region in the world, both for red and white wines. White Burgundy is made from the famous variety Chardonnay, while reds are made from Pinot Noir. Chardonnay actually originated in Burgundy, where there is a village called Chardonnay, near Mâcon.

The heartland of white Burgundy is the Côte de Beaune (southern part of Côte d´Or- ´the golden hill site´) with its three great villages, Meursault, Puligny-Montrachet and Chassagne-Montrachet. Here, the vineyard classification system comes into its own. On the

flattest land, the wines are classed only as generic Bourgogne Blanc. As the slope begins to rise, the wines are classified by village-level appellation and even higher up the slopes the 1er cru and Grand Cru vineyards (see page 141).

> “The heartland of white Burgundy is the Côte de Beaune with its three great villages, Meursault, Puligny-Montrachet and Chassagne-Montrachet.

The white wines of the Côte de Beaune are quite different from those of Chablis. In Chablis, the Kimmeridgian clay soil is full of mineral fossils, giving the wine a crisp acidity and the winemakers here use much less oak than in Côte d'Or. Chablis tends to be less creamy and textured, and instead has a leaner style with aromas of citrus, green apples and minerals.

The greatest red wines of Burgundy are also found in the Côte d'Or but mostly from the northern part, Côte de Nuits. Here the most famous villages are Gevrey-Chambertin, Morey St Denis, Chambolle-Musigny, Vougeot, Vosne-Romanée and Nuits-St-Georges. In the Côte de Beaune, look out for Volnay and Pommard, two sub-regions making beautiful yet very different wines. Volnay is perfumed and elegant with soft strawberry fruit and silky tannins, while Pommard is considered to be the Pomerol of Burgundy, more structured and sturdy.

The classification system of Burgundy is very different to the one in Bordeaux. Here, the classification is tied to the land itself, and not the producer or château. Many would argue that that the famous concept of terroir has its birth place here in Burgundy. The word “Terroir” in French can be translated to “somewhereness”, that each plot of land has its own distinct qualities that one can taste in the wine. This concept of identifying the different terroirs of the region was developed by winegrowers (mostly monks at the time) over several centuries. Generations of research were necessary to uncover the best sites of Burgundy which ultimately received official recognition, resulting in regional, village, premier cru and grand cru classification.

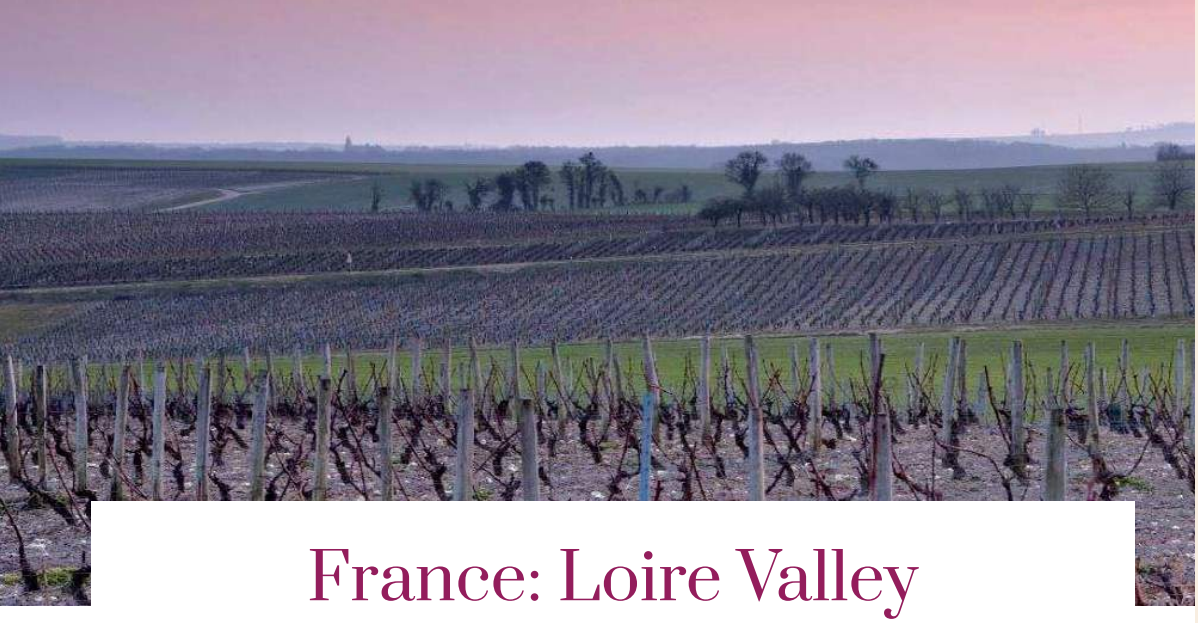
For more information on Burgundy, see page 138

France: Rhône Valley

Even though the Rhône Valley produces some of the world's best wine, the region tends to be overlooked in yachting. This lovely and beautiful area offers a vast selection of top quality wines in different styles. The Rhône river begins in Switzerland, and as it makes its way down through the length of France, it widens to become the central feature of the Rhône Valley, which spans roughly between Lyon and Avignon.

The Northern Rhône is a land of steep slopes carved into granite hillsides and planted with the grape variety Syrah, known as "Shiraz" in Australia. The wines are dark, firm and tight with black fruit and spicy notes. They are long-lived, and the top villages are Côte-Rotie and Hermitage. There is also some great white wine produced in the northern Rhône. In the regions of Condrieu and Château-Grillet, the grape variety Viognier provides the wine with lovely floral, peachy fruit and a creamy texture. In Hermitage, one can also find some stunning white wines with long ageing potential made from Marsanne and Roussanne.

Towards the south, the steep slopes give way to a broad valley floor which is baking hot in the summer. Here, the growers tend to blend different grapes, including Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Cinsault, Carignan and more. The wines are less firm and have softer, red fruit and broader structure. Châteauneuf-du-Pape tends to produce the best wines in the south, though Gigondas and Vacqueyras are also capable of excellent quality.

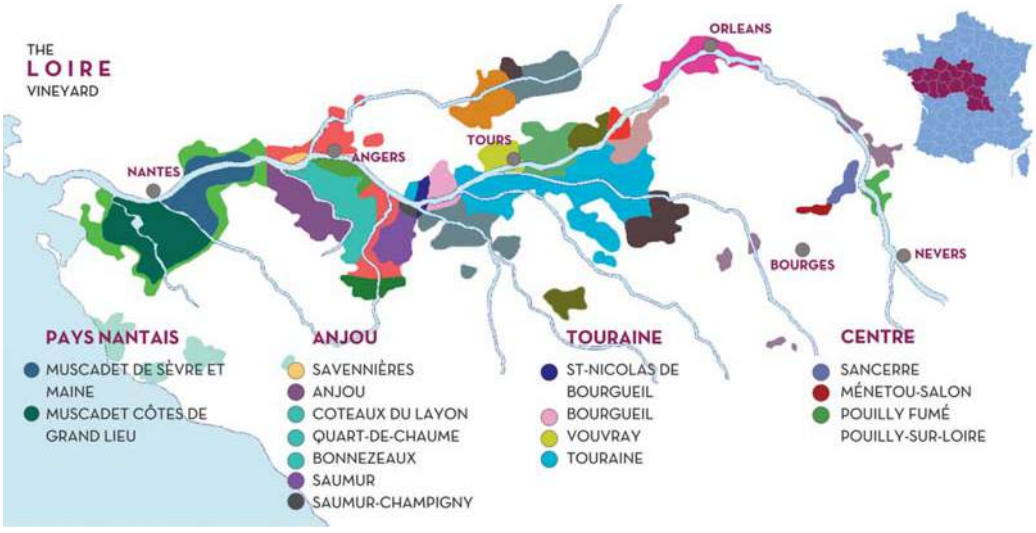


France: Loire Valley

The Loire Valley is a very exciting region where white, red, dry, sweet and sparkling wines are all produced. Some of the wines from the Loire are world famous and others somewhat obscure, and among the latter group are some of the best-kept secrets in the world of wine.

Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé are familiar names to most wine lovers and these wines are very popular in yachting. The whites are crisp, fresh and have aromas of gooseberries, lime and minerals. They are made from the Sauvignon Blanc grape variety, and, as with most Sauvignon Blancs, are not made for ageing. Though Pouilly-Fumé can produce only white wine, Sancerre also produces red and rosé wines from Pinot Noir. Further west in Touraine, the Vouvray appellation produces white wines from Chenin Blanc. One can find fantastic wines with great ageing potential and offering great value.

For more information on Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé see page 123.

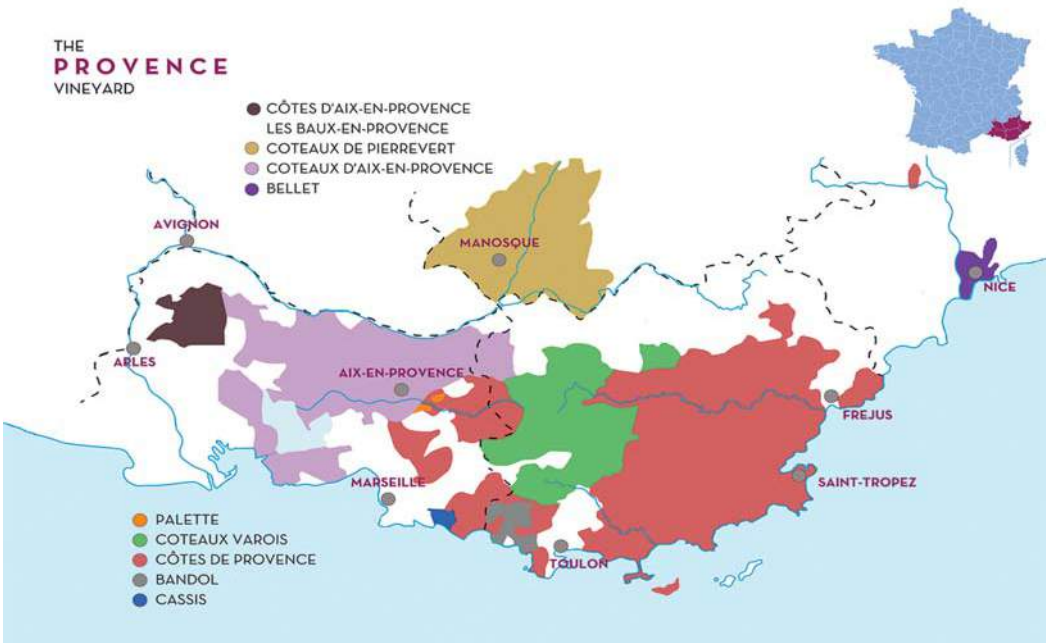


France: Provence

What could be nicer on a hot summer's day on a yacht than a glass of rosé? With more than 300 days of sunshine per year and mild winters, Provence benefits from a beautiful Mediterranean climate. Around 80% of the wine produced in Provence is rosé, mostly from the grape varieties Syrah, Carignan, Cinsault and Grenache. There are also great red and white wines made here, and the dry climate is ideal for organic winegrowing. The red wines permit up to 30% of Cabernet Sauvignon in the blend, lending the wines greater structure and power. White Provence wines are made from Rolle and Ugni Blanc, are usually unoaked and are quite refreshing.

Côtes de Provence AOC is by far the largest appellation in Provence, stretching from Toulon to the Massif des Maures, near Fréjus and Saint Raphael. Bandol is another appellation and is perhaps the most significant for quality red wine production. The main grape variety here is Mourvèdre. These are dark, full-bodied wines with plenty of tannins and meaty flavours of brambly fruit and oak spice.

For a more in depth look at Provence and premium rosés please have a look at page 125.



France: Alsace

Despite its location in the far north of France, Alsace has a very favourable and dry climate because of the protection of the Vosges mountains. It has almost as many sun hours as Saint Tropez, allowing for an extended ripening period, enabling the grapes to reach their full aromatic potential. The wines are mostly white, fragrant and usually varietally labelled. The so-called noble varieties are Riesling, Pinot Gris, Gewürztraminer and Muscat. It can sometimes be difficult to know the sweetness level of Alsatian wines. Many of them are slightly off-dry with a purity of fruit that makes them a perfect match for local food. Wines labelled as Vendange Tardive, meaning "late harvest", will be medium-sweet. You will also find wines labelled as SGN or Sélection de Grains Nobles. These are made from grapes affected by noble rot – like in Sauternes – and are fully sweet with refreshing acidity. Both Vendange Tardive and SGN wines are excellent matches with foie gras.

Italy

Italy is the largest wine producer in the world. Around 1,000 different grape varieties are used to produce a vastly diverse range of wines. Italy defers from other prominent wine producing countries largely in its focus on indigenous grape varieties, instead of classic varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay. This can be somewhat confusing for the consumer, though is demonstrative of the pride and confidence that Italian producers have of their heritage.

TUSCANY

For the yachting industry, the most important Italian region is Tuscany. This is the home of the so-called Super Tuscans, iconic labels such as Sassicaia, Tignanello, Ornellaia and Solaia. The principal grape of Tuscany is Sangiovese, a grape with aromas of sour cherry, dusty tannins and crisp acidity. Sangiovese is often blended with other varieties, and for most Super Tuscans this will be with the Bordeaux varieties Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Super Tuscans are full-bodied and dark with concentrated aromas of black fruit, cherry and plenty of spice from new French oak barrels (see page 128 for an in-depth look in this important category). Other important wines from here are Chianti and Brunello di Montalcino.

For a more in depth look at Tuscany and the Super Tuscan wines please have a look at page 128.

Chianti

Chianti is a DOCG within Tuscany that produces one of the most widely exported Italian wines. Quality levels will vary depending on the producer and village. The blend must be a minimum of 80% Sangiovese, and the remainder can be made up of Merlot, Colorino, Canaiolo or Cabernet Sauvignon. The best wines come from Chianti Classico and Chianti Rufina. Traditionally, Chianti is aged in large oak casks called botti, which are often made from Slovenian oak. Many producers still use these, though lately more producers have been moving towards the use of smaller French barriques of 225 litres. The latter makes the wines less oxidative and gives them a more pronounced oak aroma.

Brunello di Montalcino

From nearby Montalcino comes Brunello di Montalcino, another famous Italian red wine. Like Chianti, this is another DOCG wine made from the Sangiovese grape, which is known locally as Brunello. Brunello di Montalcino is one of Italy's finest wines, of a similar standing to Barolo. It has a long ageing potential and offers complex aromas of cherry, prune, nutmeg and leather. If it says "Riserva" on the bottle, it will have been aged for five years before release, which is the longest requirement for any Italian region. Rosso di Montalcino is another red wine made in the same area but intended for early consumption. The wines are fruitier, given their shorter ageing, and much less expensive than Brunello Di Montalcino. From a good producer, Rosso di Montalcino can represent good value for money.

PIEDMONT

Piedmont is best known for Barolo and Barbaresco. These two red wine regions are presented together since they produce wines from the same grape variety, are geographical neighbours, and very few people can tell them apart. They come from the Piedmont region, and

their sole grape variety is Nebbiolo. This is a very tannic, flavoursome and elegant variety which takes its name from the word nebbia, meaning "fog" in Italian. Barolo is often described as having the aromas of tar and roses, and the wines are noted for their ability to age. As Barolo wines begin to mature, they tend to develop a garnet tinge in their appearance. The wines are traditionally aged for a long time in oak. Wines labelled "Riserva" are aged for a minimum of five years.

In the past, Barolo and Barbaresco wines were very tannic, and could take more than ten years to soften up and become ready for drinking - hence the need for long oak ageing. Several producers, however, have recently started to age their wines in new French barriques in place of traditional botti, and shorten skin contact times to extract fewer tannins.

> "Suggesting a top quality Barolo may thus be a very welcome addition!

This has largely been to appeal to modern international tastes, with a preference for fruitier styles and toasty new oak flavours.

So-called "traditionalists" criticise this approach, arguing that wines produced in this way are not recognisable as Barolo, and taste more of new oak than of wine. Regardless of personal preference in production style, the wines of Barolo and Barbaresco are undeniably some of the best in the world. Despite this, these wines are rarely seen on yachts.

Spain

Spain is the world's third-largest wine producer and has the largest area under vine planted at low densities. Rapid and recent modernisation and considerable EU funding have led to significant improvement in the vineyards and the cellar. Iconic wines such as Pingus – considered the "Pétrus of Spain" by Robert Parker – and Ermita did not even exist in 1990, yet they now run among the world's greatest wines and command prices to follow. The finest wines are produced in the areas of Rioja, Ribera del Duero and Priorat.

Spain is most famous for its red wine, but in the past decade, there has been a substantial development in high-quality white wines, especially from the regions of Rueda and Rías Baixas. Ageing is important in traditional Spanish winemaking, with most wines aged for lengthy periods in oak and further ageing in bottle before release. This ageing process makes for softer and more mature wines that are ready to drink upon release. You may be familiar with terms such as Reserva and Gran Reserva, which refer to the time in oak and bottle. In recent times, there has been less emphasis on such extensive ageing, and many modern wines are released earlier, with considerably less time spent in oak.

"Iconic wines such as Pingus – considered the "Pétrus of Spain" by Robert Parker – and Ermita did not even exist in 1990, yet they now run among the world's greatest wines and command prices to follow

Rioja

Rioja is Spain's most famous wine region. Its name is derived from the river Rio Oja, a tributary of the Ebro river. It lies in the north of the country, not far from Pamplona. Though there were vines here in Roman times, it wasn't until the end of the 19th century that the modern wine history of the region began. Following the disastrous outbreak of the phylloxera louse on the vineyards of Bordeaux, French winegrowers moved to Rioja and began to plant vines. Red Rioja wines are produced mainly from the grape varieties Tempranillo, Grenache, Mazuelo and Graziano.

There are three sub-regions in Rioja. In Rioja Alavesa, the climate is quite cool and the main grape variety is Tempranillo. The wines from this sub-region are Rioja's lightest and most elegant. In Rioja Alta, the soil is based on clay and iron and is suitable for the classic Tempranillo and also for the two varieties producing white Rioja, namely Viura and Malvasia. In Rioja Baja, the third and last sub-region, the soil is heavy clay, and the predominant variety is Grenache. Most of the easy-drinking styles of Rioja come from this region.

The traditional styles of red Rioja, Reserva and Gran Reserva, spend a long time in oak, resulting in controlled oxidation and the development of savoury notes of baked red fruit, sweet vanilla spice, leather and toffee. The modern style of Rioja, however, is more fruit-driven and less oxidative in style, and the colour is often darker and lacks the garnet rim of the traditional styles.

Ribera del Duero

Ribera del Duero is a relatively new DO, located in the Duero Valley. Here, only red wines are produced and the sole officially permitted grape variety is Tempranillo. However, there are some old plantings of the Bordeaux varieties as well, such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec. The wines here are full-bodied, tannic, oaked and filled with earthy aromas of baked red fruit and toasty oak. Some of the best, and certainly the most expensive, wines of Spain come from this region – Vega Sicilia and Pingus are the most high-profile examples.

Priorat

Priorat is the new fashionable wine region of Spain and one of only two regions with the denomination DOCa. It is located in the north-east of the country and has a very particular soil called llicorella, consisting of red slate and mica. This poor soil is one of the main reasons for the high-quality wines coming out of this region. Another contributing factor is that the yields are very low, as a high-yielding vine gives lesser quality than a low-yielding one. The wines are dark with rich, intense, black fruit and firm tannins. Additional aromas of minerals, cloves and liquorice add to the complexity of these wines which are often capable of lengthy ageing. The main grape varieties used are Grenache, Carignan, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Austria and Germany

AUSTRIA

It is rare to see Austrian wines in yachting, though they are certainly deserved of a place on your wine list if you can convince your owner or charter guest to try them! High-quality red wines are produced here from indigenous grape varieties like Zweigelt and Blaufränkisch, but it is for the white wines of Riesling and Grüner Veltliner that Austria is most famous, and these whites are especially suitable for the yachting industry. As the Alps cover the whole western part of the country, all the wine regions are found in the east. There are sixteen wine regions in Austria, and the finest white wines will be found in regions of Wachau, Kamptal and Kremstal. Stylistically they are rather similar, so we will look at them in a group together with the grape varieties instead of by region.

Grüner Veltliner

Austria's signature grape variety, this is practically only grown here and has become Austria's point of difference in a crowded export market. It is capable of producing stunning, concentrated wines from the regions above, offering aromas of citrus, stone fruit, floral notes and sometimes a whiff of white pepper. Age-worthy examples tend to have crisp acidity, good concentration and be medium to full-bodied. The wines are mostly unoaked, though there are exceptions. The richest and most exclusive wines often come from Wachau, particularly the sub-region of Smaragd.

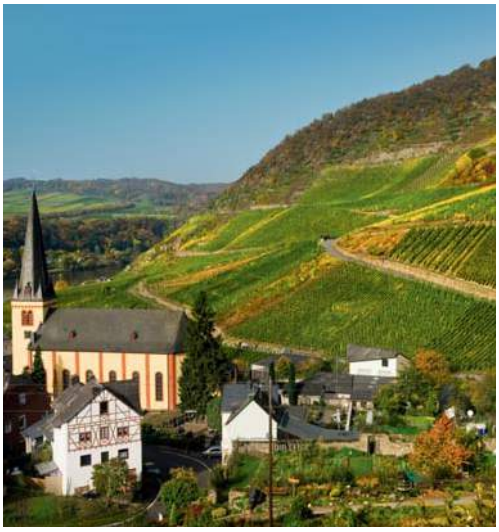
Riesling

Compared to the lighter, more mineral-driven style of many German expressions, Austrian Riesling tends to be medium to full-bodied, given the warmer climate and often longer ripening seasons. These wines have high acidity, are usually unoaked and offer aromas of ripe lime, peach and floral notes. Concentrated examples with high acidity can age for a long time, developing notes of honey and toast.

GERMANY

German wines are, sadly enough, even rarer in yachting than those of Austria. This is despite the fact that Germany produces some of the finest white wines in the world - often considered the very best by many wine professionals. One would think that these top wines would have their place in our prestigious industry, but they are nowhere to be found. There are several reasons for this, but perhaps the biggest is a question of perception: most consumers still see Germany as capable of producing only medium-sweet wines. While there are still plenty of these wines made in both entry-level quality up to ultra-premium, the focus in the past decade has been on dry wines.

Riesling is the most widely planted grape here, finding its best expression on steep south-facing hill sites surrounding the different rivers, notably Mosel and Rhine. The best wines offer firm, refreshing acidity and light to medium body with complex aromas of lime, floral notes and minerals. With age, beautifully complex aromas of honey and kerosene can develop. These wines can vary from bone-dry to lusciously sweet, depending on what the winemaker wants and also on the weather conditions. There are thirteen wine regions in Germany, and the most significant are Mosel, Rheingau, Nahe, Rheinhessen, Pfalz, Baden and Franken.



> “Germany produces some of the finest white wines in the world - often considered the very best by many wine professionals

South America

ARGENTINA

Argentina is the sixth largest producer of wine in the world. The main grape varieties here are Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon and Bonarda for reds, and Chardonnay and Torrontés for whites. One particularity with Argentinian vineyards is their altitude. North of Mendoza, the Salta region would be too hot to plant grapes were it not for the altitude, and indeed this is home to some of the world's highest vineyards, at 3,000 metres above sea level. By contrast, the southern region of Patagonia has its vineyards at around 300 metres above sea level - it would be too cold to plant at higher altitudes in this part of the country. Given the favourable dry climate in the country, fungal diseases are rarely a problem, and Argentina is, therefore, a significant producer of organically grown grapes.

Mendoza

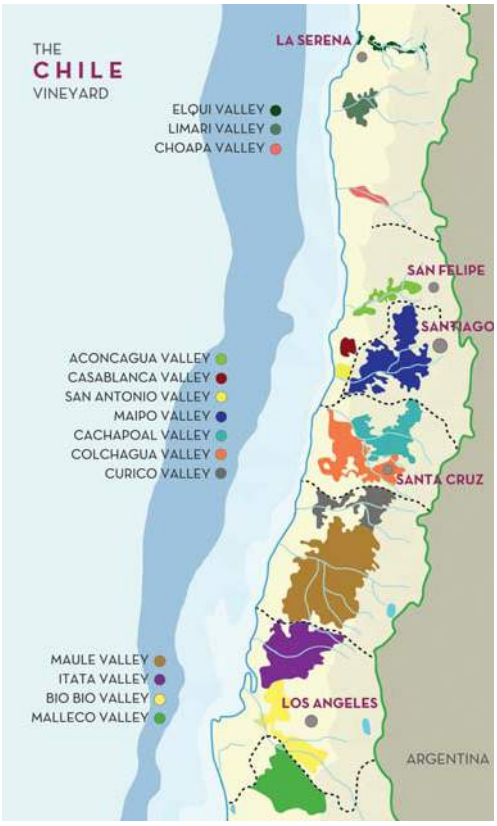
The most significant area of production is Mendoza, accounting for around 70% of Argentinian wine. Most vineyards are found on the slopes of the Andes, at between 600 and 1,500 metres of altitude. The vineyards benefit from the protection of the Andes, resulting in warm, sunny days and cold nights. This is a dry, desert climate, so most vineyards require irrigation. Luckily, there is plenty of melting water from the Andes making this possible. The large range in temperature and altitude draws out a full and impressive range of aromas and flavours from the grapes. The variety here is Malbec, and the wines are dark, full-bodied and intense, with sweet ripe tannins and aromas of chocolate, raisin and blackberry. They are frequently

oak-aged and concentrated. Regarding price, there are some wines with ultra-premium price points, but overall Argentinian Malbec offers great value for money.

Salta

The Salta province is close to the Bolivian border in northern Argentina and is home to some of the highest vineyards in the world, some at over 3,000 metres above sea level. The cool climate produces wines of great purity and freshness, and the main grape variety here, Torrontés, is another signature variety of Argentina. Torrontés wine is white and highly aromatic, and in blind tastings, it is sometimes confused with the aromatic Alsace variety Gewürztraminer. Premium Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec are also produced here but often in a fresher and more restrained style than typically found in Mendoza.

CHILE



The vineyards of Chile stretches over 900km from north to south but are rarely wider than 100km from east to west. This narrow strip of land lies between the Andes in the east and the Pacific Ocean in the west. This create an excellent climate for wine growing with cooling influences from the sea, sunny skies and plenty of melting water for irrigation. The differences in soil and altitude also allows for many different macro climates and different styles of wine to be produced.

The main grape varieties of Chile are Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Carménère and Syrah for reds, and Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc for whites. Almost all the world's Carménère is grown in Chile, which is the country's signature grape. It was long thought to be Merlot, but DNA research has shown that it is, in fact, the old Bordeaux variety Carménère. The variety does very well here, offering full-bodied, dark wines with ripe, brambly fruit flavours coupled with an herbal, minty touch. The bulk of Chile's wine production comes from the Central Valley zone inland area between the Andes and the coastal mountain ranges. Wines with more depth

and complexity come from the smaller regions, with better drained soils which often also have a cooling influence from the sea or mountain breezes.

Talking about the wine industry in Chile is like taking a snapshot in time, it is a very dynamic scene with new wine regions being introduced almost every year. Here is a list of the main ones from North to South.

Elqui and Limarí Valley : Elqui Valley is quite cool and shows great potential for cool-climate Syrah. Here, it's made in the more restrained European style, with notes of fruit, pepper and black olive. The Limarí Valley also produces Syrah, though it is better known for its cool-climate Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

Casablanca and San Antonio Valley, a bit further south, are located between the Pacific Ocean and the coastal mountains. This results in cool growing conditions thanks to morning fogs and cooling ocean winds making the regions suitable for aromatic white wines. Sauvignon Blanc tends to dominate plantings here but there are also elegant and defined Chardonnays to be found. Pinot Noir and some peppery Syrah is also made in these regions.

Central Valley Region is the largest wine growing area in Chile but includes several smaller regions with different specifies due to soil, altitude and aspect. It runs from Santiago down to Itata Valley and lies between the Andes and the coastal mountains. The majority of the wines here are planted on the fertile valley floor producing easy drinking fruit forward wines or every day quality. These wines will be simply labelled as Central Valley. In the sub regions the soil tend to be better drained and less fertile resulting in more concentrated wines with greater quality and ageing capacity. Maipo Valley for example, is one of the oldest wine regions in Chile and is located just outside Santiago. It has an excellent reputation for its Cabernet Sauvignon and Bordeaux blends. Located within the Rapel Valley, Colchagua and Cachapoal has a warm inland climate, making it suitable for powerful red varieties such as Syrah, Cabernet and Carménère. Some excellent Malbec is also grown here.

Further south there are three regions with distinctly cooler climate but it is the Bío Bío area that has shown the greatest development in terms of quality wines. This relatively new wine region and has specialised in aromatic varieties such as Gewürztraminer and Riesling. Also, classic varieties such as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are used to make excellent, crisp wines here.

Australia, New Zealand and South Africa

AUSTRALIA

Though vines were transported with the very first cargo to the New World, it was not until Scotsman James Busby started producing wines in the Hunter Valley around 1830 that serious wine production took off in Australia.

Until quite recently, beer was the beverage of choice for the masses in Australia. Wine was considered the reserve of the wealthy, or only for women. The domestic market has remained quite small and static while the export market has exploded. This has been driven by competitive pricing, consistent quality, inventive and attractive packaging, and successful marketing.

Most Australian wines are still multi-regional blends from the vast area of South East Australia, encompassing South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. There are, however, many unique wine regions specialising in certain grape varieties and styles. The past decades have seen a clear focus on family producers with a local story to tell. This move from large scale to smaller, quality-focused producers has changed the image of Australia's wine scene and they are today producing some of the finest wines in the world. The most important grape varieties are Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon for reds, and Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon for whites. The most successful regions are Barossa Valley for Shiraz, Coonawarra for Cabernet, Clare Valley and Eden Valley for Riesling, and Margaret River for Bordeaux blends, to name but a few.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Barossa Valley

Perhaps the most famous region of Australia, Barossa lies north of the state capital of Adelaide. The climate is very hot, and the soil is limestone and ironstone. Although the region produces outstanding Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache and even Riesling, the classic wine of Barossa is Shiraz. It is full-bodied, soft and earthy with spicy black fruit. The wines drink well when young, though they can also age well and will develop aromas of leather and gentle spice. Barrel ageing is common, with both American and French oak used.

Eden Valley and Clare Valley

Not far from Barossa, in the surrounding hills, lie the cooler regions of Clare and Eden Valley. The cooler climate makes Riesling a suitable variety. These wines tend to be medium-bodied, dry, and with a crisp, refreshing acidity. The aroma is reminiscent of lime sherbet when young, and more like honey and toast when mature. While Riesling is the main variety here, some outstanding Chardonnay and Shiraz are also made in a cooler, lighter style than in hotter areas.

Adelaide Hills

Adelaide Hills lies to the east of the city and has a cool climate allowing for the production of elegant Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. The wines are often medium-bodied and crisp in style, with aromas of nectarines and citrus.

Coonawarra

Coonawarra lies within an area called Limestone Coast, and the climate is influenced by cooling breezes from the Antarctic. Coonawarra has a particularly iron-rich limestone soil that is especially suitable for Cabernet Sauvignon. The wines are full-bodied with intense cassis aromas and notes of eucalyptus and chocolate.

VICTORIA

This region produces some excellent wines, particularly from the coastal areas of Yarra Valley and Mornington Peninsula, where some lovely and fragrant Pinot Noir is made. Elegant, Burgundy-style Chardonnay and top sparkling wine is also produced in the area with great success. Pyrenees and Heathcote are top sources

for peppery and earthy Shiraz made in a more restrained style than in Barossa. From Rutherglen comes a unique sweet wine, which is almost syrupy in texture, dark brown, and intensely sweet. It is made with the Muscat grape variety and is fortified. It has aromas of raisins, figs and floral notes along with toffee and caramel.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Here we find Hunter Valley, one of the most classic wine regions of Australia. Some great Shiraz is produced here in a soft and earthy style. However, the main grape variety is Semillon. The grapes are harvested quite early, when slightly unripe. This results in wine with high acidity and low alcohol that is quite neutral when young. With age, however, the Hunter Valley Semillon develops complex aromas of toast, honey and wax, and can age for a very long time.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

It is often said that Western Australia wins 30% of the medals in Australian wine competitions, despite producing only 5% of the country's wine. Some of the country's most famous producers are in this area and the wine regions, with cooling influence from the nearby sea, produce some lovely Bordeaux-style wine and some excellent Chardonnay. Margaret River is the most important region in Western Australia.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand extends 1,600 kilometres from sub-tropical Northland to the world's most southerly wine region, Central Otago. All areas are influenced by the moderating effect of the maritime climate, with long sunshine hours and nights cooled by sea breezes.

The wines are famous for their purity of fruit, vibrancy and intensity. The long ripening period is a result of cool temperatures and enables flavour development while retaining fresh acidity, a balance for which New Zealand wines are renowned. Despite its fame, New Zealand wine production is relatively small in global terms, barely entering the top 30 producing countries worldwide. With a limited domestic market, most

producers rely on the international export market. The production of fine wine is very recent, with the first vines being planted in the 1970s. The industry is centred on international varieties, and particularly on Sauvignon Blanc.
There are several distinct winegrowing regions spread throughout New Zealand, with the majority on the east coast of the islands, in the rain shadow of the mountains.

Marlborough

For the yachting industry, the only New Zealand wine sold in any larger quantities is Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc from Marlborough. This shows the typical style of a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc with pungent, grassy green and lime aromas, coupled with mango and passion fruit. The wines are mostly unoaked, crisp and lean in style, and are made for early consumption when the fruit is in its prime. Marlborough is located at the north tip of the South Island, and although the key variety is Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are also widely planted. The past decade has seen a development in the sub-regional segmentation of Marlborough to reflect the differences in climate and soil relating to wine style. Awatere and Wairau are the most prominent of these sub-regions.

Central Otago

Central Otago is located further south on the South Island near the Southern Alps. The climate here is rather cool and the large diurnal ranges – the difference in temperature between day and night - make it a perfect place for Pinot Noir. Here, it has enough time to develop complex flavours and richness. Central Otago produces New Zealand's finest Pinot Noir, though it also produces beautiful whites from the Riesling and Pinot Gris grape varieties.

Hawke's Bay

Located on the east side of the North Island, protected by the mountains, Hawke´s Bay is the warmest of New Zealand's major wine regions. Thanks to its beneficial climate, this is the only place in the country that can properly ripen Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, which have become the main varieties of the area. Syrah also does very well here and is growing in popularity.

SOUTH AFRICA

The production area of South Africa is similar in size to Bordeaux's total vineyard area, and the country produces around 4% of the world's wine overall.

Though wine has been produced here for 350 years, South Africa is a New World wine country. Since the fall of apartheid in 1994, the wine industry has come a long way. Beforehand, much of the production was in the hands of a state cooperative. Today, there are many eager, ambitious and innovative producers determined to show the world that South Africa can make wine of the finest quality. The most widely planted red wine varieties are Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinotage. The important white varieties are Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

South Africa's climate is Mediterranean, with wet winters and long, dry summers. The cold Benguela Current has a substantial cooling effect on the wine regions and allows for more elegant wines to be produced. It cools the vineyards during the summer afternoons, slowing down the ripening process and intensifying flavours.

Much of the inexpensive wines of South Africa come from the Western Cape, a catch-all appellation covering most of the country's wine regions. The better wines come from smaller regions where more attention is paid to the combination of soil, climate and grape variety. The best white wines tend to come from the cooler coastal areas. Below is a short presentation of some of the key South African wine regions.

Constantia

On the southern slopes of the Table Mountain lies the historic Constantia Valley, the cradle of winemaking in the Cape.

It is here the world-famous dessert wine Constantia is made from the Muscat grape. The vineyards climb the east-facing slopes of the Constantiaberg, where the vines benefit from the cool sea breeze's contribution to finesse and elegance. Some of the country's best Sauvignon Blanc also comes from this region.

Durbanville

The vineyards of Durbanville, like those of Constantia, lie very close to Cape Town and border on the northern suburbs. The wineries here, situated mainly on the rolling hill slopes with their various aspects and altitudes, continue to make a wide variety of wine styles. Some of the vineyards grow at a height of as much as 380 metres above sea level. Wines from this ward attracting attention are

Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Cooling sea breezes, night-time mists and proximity to the ocean are beneficial factors when it comes to the quality of the grapes.

Stellenbosch

Stellenbosch is the most famous wine region in South Africa and is the home to some of the country's best producers. The mountainous terrain, good rainfall, deep, well-drained soils and diversity of terroirs make this a great area for viticulture. The main grapes grown here are Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Swartland

Swartland means "the black land", and the area takes its name from a native dark bush which gives the landscape a dark colour at certain times of the year. Originally, the main wines produced here were full-bodied reds and Port-like fortified wines followed by a reputation for inexpensive table wines. Recently, however, there has been a tremendous transformation and the area is now the centre of innovation in terms of quality and pushing limits. The region is particularly famous for old vine Chenin Blanc and some complex and spicy Syrah but also produces excellent Sauvignon Blancs and Chardonnays.

Tulbagh

Surrounded by mountains on three sides, the area is characterised by extreme differences in day and night temperatures. The mountainous terrain also creates various soil types and different microclimates, which can be beneficial to viticulture. With today's high-tech water management and advanced viticultural practices, the real potential of this area is starting to be realised. There are many avant-garde and ambitious winemakers in the region that are growing different grape varieties, though Shiraz has been the most successful thus far.

Walker Bay

This district is mostly famous for its Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. It has a cool climate due to the cooling ocean currents, making it possible to produce elegant, Burgundy-style wines. Fine examples of Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, and Shiraz are also produced here.

USA

Although wine is made in all 50 of the United States, California is by far the most significant, accounting for around 85% of the country's production. Other key areas include Washington State, Oregon, Idaho and New York State.

California

California makes some of the world's greatest Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. This was confirmed in 1976 when a famous blind tasting of California's best beat a group of leading French wines (The Judgement of Paris).

The exercise was repeated in London in 2006 when the Californians, again, defeated the French. California is also known for the Zinfandel grape.

> "California makes some of the world's greatest Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay

It is sometimes difficult to appreciate just how young the Californian wine industry is. A widely considered starting point was when a Hungarian winemaker brought with him some 300 vine cuttings from Europe in mid-1800 and planted a vineyard. Before this, the wine consumed was made primarily of the local Mission grape which does not have the same high quality as the Vitis vinifera varieties from Europe. The wine industry flourished, in large part thanks to the gold rush, and then came to a rapid end with the introduction of Prohibition in 1920. Since then much has happened, and the USA has overtaken both Australia and France as the top performer by volume in the UK off-trade, and there is growing domestic consumption.

As California is by far the most significant region, let's now take a closer look to discover what it has to offer.

California extends for some 1,100 kilometres from north to south. As such, there are significant climatic differences, though the entire region shares a common lack of rainfall during the growing season. Almost all plantings must be irrigated, particularly now due to the changing climate and even less rainfall during winter.

The best vineyard areas are the cooler sites that are influenced by sea breezes and fog. You may be familiar with regions such as Napa Valley and Sonoma Valley. Further inland, behind the mountain range, lies Central Valley. The cooling sea breeze cannot reach here, and the climate is much hotter. Therefore the wine becomes less complex. Most of California's wine production, however, comes from here. Wine labelled simply as "California" will most likely have been sourced from this area.

Napa Valley is the most famous vineyard area in California, and the most expensive Chardonnay and Cabernet wines are produced here by producers like Opus One, Beringer, Kistler and Stags' Leap, to mention but a few. Both the Cabernets and the Chardonnays tend to be full-bodied, opulent, and intense. In the south of Napa, there is a small area called Los Carneros. Being close to San Francisco Bay, the climate is cooler here than north of Napa, and this makes it possible to produce great Pinot Noir and lighter, more elegant Chardonnay. To the west of Napa lies Sonoma Valley, whose top area is Russian River Valley. Here they make elegant and complex Pinot Noir in the Burgundian style, and Dry Creek Valley is known for great, spicy and concentrated Zinfandel.

Fortified Wines

Although this category is far from being a popular one in our industry, Port and Sherry are nonetheless two very classic wines that it is good to be familiar with. Therefore a brief introduction to the different styles and production methods are included here.

PORT

Portugal produces world-class dry wines, both red and white. In yachting, however, only one category of Portuguese wine matters, and that's Port. Port is a fortified sweet wine produced exclusively in the Douro Valley in northern Portugal. It was defined and established as a protected region as early as 1756, making it the oldest classified wine region in the world. Most Port is red, accounting for some 95% of the production, with the balance made up of white and rosé Port. It is often served as a dessert wine, or after dinner. In some countries in southern Europe, however, lighter styles of Port are sometimes served as an apéritif.

Production

Port is produced from local varieties like Tinta Roriz (the same as Spain's Tempranillo), Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca and Tinta Cão. Given the steep, terraced vineyards, all grapes must be harvested by hand. When grapes arrive at the winery, they are crushed before

fermentation, and this is still done by foot-stomping for some of the best vintage Ports. Lesser styles may use technical fermentation tanks. During the crushing, the colour and tannin are vigorously extracted, and the fermentation begins.

Before all the sugar in the grape must is converted to alcohol, the fermentation is stopped by the addition of neutral grape spirit. This kills the yeast, and so fermentation cannot continue. This fortification leads to wines that are both sweet and high in alcohol, usually around 20% alcohol-by-volume (ABV). Until this point, the production of all styles of Port is virtually the same. How the wine is aged will decide the ultimate flavour profile and character of the finished Port.

Ruby Port

This is the most basic and least expensive of all the Port styles. It is a blend of wines from several different vintages and vineyards. Ruby is often lighter in body and lower in tannin than vintage Port, and is made for easy and early drinking. It is a fruit-driven wine with intense aromas of red and black fruit along with Christmas spice.

Reserve Ruby Port

This is a similar style to the above, though is produced from better quality grapes and will be aged for longer in oak, sometimes as long as five years. This results in greater harmony and complexity in the wine.

Late Bottled Vintage (LBV) Port

LBV is a single-vintage Port of a higher quality than the Ruby styles. These wines are usually produced in years of high quality that are just a step below the greatness of a true vintage Port. As the name suggests, LBV is bottled later than a classic vintage style, usually after around five years in cask. It is harmonious and ready to drink upon release, and will not have any sediment in the bottle, thus decanting is not necessary.

Vintage Port

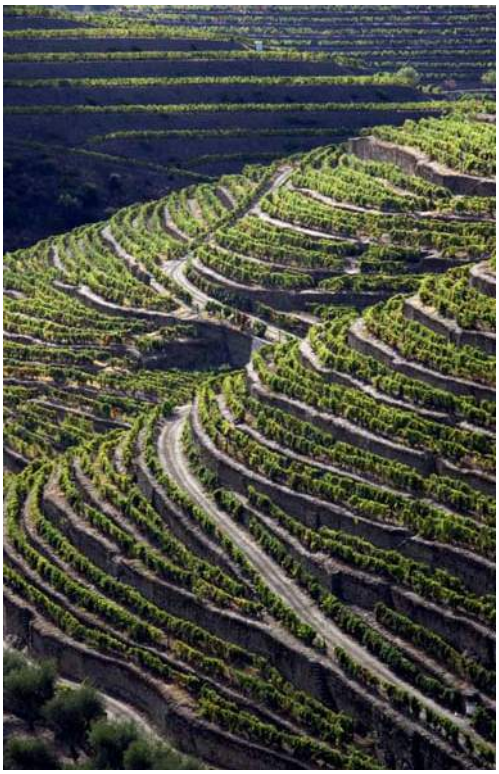
Like LBV, vintage Port comes from a single year. It must be of excellent quality and can only be made in years officially declared by the authorities. Such a year only tends to come around about three times per decade. Vintage Port is dark, intense and tannic. Because of the relatively short period of cask ageing - around two years - this wine needs many more years in the bottle to mature gracefully and expose its full potential. A vintage Port from a quality vintage will usually need around fifteen years in the bottle before drinking, and will also hold for another 20-30 years, or more. Port's first vintage was declared in 1734. Vintage Port spends a long time maturing in the bottle, and as it is rich in tannin and colour, there is often quite a lot of sediment in older bottles. It is thus crucial to always carefully decant a vintage Port before serving.

Tawny Port

A tawny Port is a blend of several different vintages that spends several years in oak casks before bottling. The wine takes its name from the tawny colour it develops due to the slow, oxidative ageing process. Tawny Port develops flavours reminiscent of Christmas pudding, with aromas of caramel, nuts, vanilla and strawberry. The long ageing results in very low tannin.

Tawny Port with Indication of Age (10, 20, 30 Years or More)

These tawny Ports are made in the same way as above, though spend a longer time in cask and thus develop a greater depth of flavour and complexity.



SHERRY

Sherry is a fortified wine produced in southern Spain near the town of Jerez, from which it derives its name. This category is not especially important in yachting, though it is widely misunderstood and thus a brief presentation is useful. Depending on the production method, Sherry can range from bone dry to intensely sweet, and everything in between. Thus, if you ever receive an order for "a bottle of Sherry" it is worthwhile – that is, essential – that you ask the guest which type of Sherry he is looking for specifically!

Production

The main grape variety used for Sherry is the neutral white grape Palomino Fino, and most of the flavour of Sherry comes from its very complex ageing system. After the first fermentation, the wines are fortified to different levels depending on the style being made. The wine is then put into old oak barrels, beginning an ageing process which must last for a minimum of three years but will often continue for much longer. During barrel ageing, a naturally-occurring yeast known as "flor" will develop and give characteristics to certain styles of Sherry, namely the Fino and Amontillado styles. This is known as biological ageing. Fino spends its whole maturation period under the flor layer and is therefore pale lemon in colour, as the flor has protected it from

oxidation. The Amontillado style will start its ageing under flor, but then undergo oxidative ageing after a few years to allow nuttier caramel flavours to develop. Due to the oxidation, its colour will be amber. The Oloroso style will not see any protective flor at all.

Fino and Manzanilla

These are light, dry, pale and delicate examples of Sherry. These wines have been aged under flor, and will show tell-tale signs such as aromas of fresh almonds and chamomile. They will be around 15% ABV. The only distinction between the two styles is their geographical origin: Manzanilla comes from the Sanlúcar district located along the coast, whose proximity to the sea gives the wine a hint of salinity. Nonetheless, this difference is very slight and few tasters can tell the two styles apart.

Amontillado

This style of Sherry starts its life ageing biologically as a Fino, but then the flor is removed and ageing finishes in an oxidative fashion. It is, therefore, deeper in colour and will show flavours of nuts and caramel. The alcohol level is higher than Fino, with around 18-20% ABV.

Oloroso

This Sherry is deeper and darker still, with aromas of walnuts, toffee and coffee. This style undergoes no biologically ageing, having been exposed to oxygen from the beginning. This imparts a darker colour. Oloroso is the most powerful style of Sherry.

Cream Sherry

This is an artificially sweetened Sherry. It can be any of the above styles, though it will always be sweet. Sweetened Fino Sherry is labelled as "Pale Cream".

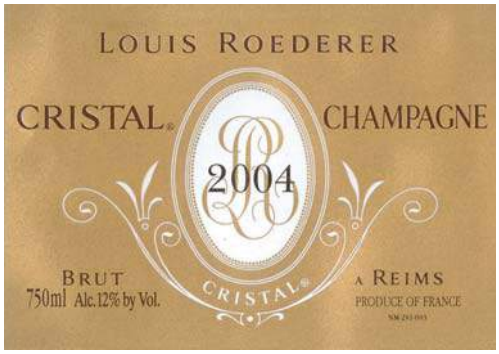
Pedro Ximénez

Pedro Ximénez (PX) Sherry is very rich, lusciously sweet, and is a popular dessert wine. It is naturally sweet, produced from the raisins of sun-dried PX grapes, and contains around 18% ABV.

KEY CATEGORIES IN YACHTING

For some reason, most yachts tend to carry similar wines from the same regions and wine lists tend to be dominated by Champagne, Loire, Bordeaux, Burgundy, Provence rosé and Tuscany. All of which have been introduced in the previous chapter. However, in order to shed some extra light on the complexity of the classifications in Bordeaux and Burgundy as well as the recent development in Provence and Tuscany this chapter will look at these regions a bit closer.

Champagne



We have in previous chapters looked at the production technique of Champagne and also given a brief introduction to the region but given that it is one of the main categories in yachting we will present it in more detail here. To get an understanding of Champagne it is important to first consider the climate which has had a tremendous impact on the way the Champagne trade is organised and how the wine is produced. The region has a cool continental climate and viticulture is challenging; spring frost, winter freeze and wet weather are often a major problems. Hence, producers have found solutions to counterbalance problematic years resulting in lesser quality grapes and made the blending process into a very refined art. Most Champagne today is a blend of grape varieties, of vintages and of different sub regions. This allows the Champagne Houses to produce a stylistically and qualitatively consistent wine year after year. Of course there are exceptions to this blending which will be discussed below.

GRAPE VARIETIES

Chardonnay

Chardonnay represents around 30% of the total plantings. The best area for Chardonnay is found on the south-east facing slopes in the chalky sub region of Côte de Blancs. As the popularity for the variety increases however it now also grows extensively in other sub regions and especially the Côte de Sézanne. Although it can give a certain austerity to young Champagnes, it also impart elegance, fragrance, floral and citrus note and a vibrant acidity. The wines are generally long-lived and develop a honeyed, and toasty complexity with age.

Pinot Noir

Pinot Noir, which accounts for just over a third of the total acreage at 38% grows mainly in the sub regions Côte des Bar and Montagne de Reims. It provides elegance, firm structure and delicate red fruit notes as well as giving ageing potential.

Pinot Meunier

Pinot Meunier (also simply known as Meunier) is mainly grown in Vallée de la Marne and represents around 32% of the plantings in Champagne. It´s hardly found anywhere else in the world it gives a broad palate, a richness and accessible fruit to many Non-Vintage Champagnes. It used to be considered slightly less complex and elegant than Pinot Noir and Chardonnay but this is changing and today several houses are increasing the use of Meunier even in their prestige blends.

SUB REGION AND CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Although Champagne is one single appellation there are several sub regions in Champagne in which you will find 44 villages rated premier cru and 17 rated grand cru. The heart of the region is centered between the towns of Reims and Epernay, in the sub-regions of Montagne de Reims, Côte des Blancs, and Vallée de la Marne. Côte de Sézanne and Aube are also sub regions of increasing importance and they all add to the complex landscape and quality of Champagne.

Located south of the city of Reims and toward Epernay, the Montagne de Reims has some of the most diverse soil in Champagne, making it suitable to all three major varieties. However, the area is most famous for Pinot Noir from its many Grand Cru villages.

In Côte de Blancs the chalky soils makes a perfect home for some of the most elegant and complex Chardonnays.

In Vallée de la Marne, located along the Marne River west of Epernay, Pinot Meunier is the most widely planted variety. The soils are dominated by clay and sand rather than chalk making it perfect for the late budding and early ripening Pinot Meunier.

Côte de Sezanne is located south of the three main regions and is very well suited for Chardonnay. It doesn't have the status of the 'big three' but is gaining in reputation thanks to innovation and grower Champagnes.

As can be seen from the map, Côte des Bar is quite a distance from the heart of Champagne and the soil here has less chalk and the wines tend to be a bit softer and broader on the palate. Pinot Noir dominate the plantings and although the Aube region is still a source for many large scale Champagne brands it is also gaining in recognition thanks to a dynamic terroir driven growers.

LABELLING TERMS

One would think that learning about different grape varieties, blending vintages and different sub regions would be enough to make Champagne complex, then there is also the confusing labelling terms.

Vintage vs. Non-Vintage

Non-Vintage Champagne

Around 90% of all Champagne is Non-Vintage (NV) meaning it will be a blend of different vintages. Although this blending tradition started out as a mean to increase the quality of the wine in less ripe years it now serves as an excellent tool for large Champagne houses to produce constant house style champagnes year after year. Non – vintage champagne spends less time on the lees (see page 61) than for vintage Champagne. The law states a minimum of 15 months on the lees before disgorgement. The majority of these bottles are to be consumed whilst young and fresh.

Vintage Champagne

Vintage Champagne is produced entirely from a single vintage and represents a tiny part of the production. It's only produced in good years and on an average it is around 5 vintages per decade. It is always more expensive than the NV due to quality and availability. Instead of the minimum 15 months on the lees the regulations stipulates at least 36 months, yet most houses keep their wines far longer, between 5-7 years. This adds a complex bready, toasty brioche character to the wine and also a textural element. As opposed to NV Champagne where consistency of style is one of the main objectives, for Vintage Champagne it is the specificities of each vintage that should be shown.

Champagne House vs. Grower-Producer

Champagne House ("Négociant Manipulant")

The wine trade in Champagne is very different to anywhere where in the world. Instead of growing their grapes and producing their wines most Champagne brands you would know of are in fact Négociant Manipulant. This mean that they don't own vineyards or grow grapes (although many do to own a proportion of what they need) but buy in their grapes or wines from other growers and then do the blending and ageing themselves.The majority of the region's production are made in this way from world famous brands such as Moët et Chandon, Veuve Clicquot and Lanson.

There are around 320 Négociants Manipulants in Champagne and the represent 70% of the total production.

Grower-Producer (Récoltant Manipulant)

As can be deduced from the name, this is a Grower Champagne. Here the producer is in charge of the vineyard, harvesting the grapes and making the wine. The past 10-15 years there has been an important increase in these types of Champagnes which are often made in a more authentic and personal manner with less focus on consistency and house style. Instead these Champagne Producers focus on expressing the quality and style of the terroir in the specific area.

Blanc de Blancs, Blanc de Noirs, and Rosé

Blanc de Blancs

Blanc de Blancs literally translates to "white from whites," meaning that the wine will be made of 100% Chardonnay. They tend to be paler in color that the normal blended Champagnes and steely, citrus-driven, slightly leaner in structure with a high acidity.

Blanc de Noirs

Blanc de Noirs, or "white from black," is the opposite of Blanc de Blancs: a white Champagne made from black grapes which of course are Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. The reason one can make white wine out of red grapes is that all the color in the grape is located in the skin so if pressing is done swiftly there is no time to allow for skin contact and the juice will stay white. Still, the color is slightly more golden than for the Blanc de Blanc and the structure tend to be richer and broader with aromas of baked apple and red fruit along with the classic brioche characters.

Rosé Champagne

The rose category in general has had a phenomenal success the past few years and so also in terms of Rosé Champagne. As we have seen in the wine making chapter, rosé wine is generally produced with a brief skin contact to allow for the wine to become pink. In Champagne however, it is also allowed to produce rosé wine by blending a small proportion of red wine into the Champagne (this red wine will be made of often Pinot Noir and will also be made in Champagne). Whilst this is the most common method there are also houses opting for a short skin contact.

Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé

It is probably safe to say that Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé can be found on just about all yachts (and in just about any restaurant too for that matter). Yet they represent a tiny part of the Loire Valley. Located to the far east of the river Loire in northern France, these two appellations are the spiritual home of Sauvignon Blanc and offer to the world some of the finest expressions of this variety.

The two regions are very similar to one another both in terms of climate, soil and styles of wine and even to well-trained experts it is difficult to tell the two wines apart in a blind tasting. So if you have limited storage space on board, it's perfectly ok to only carry one of these wines but either or is a must on any complete wine list.

Stylistically the wines are pale and dry with light to medium body and a crisp firm acidity. Often with aromas of goose berries, nettles, lime and smoky mineral notes. The vast majority of the wines are unoaked to favor the purity of the varietal character of the wine.

Sancerre

In Sancerre there are three distinct areas: the 'white' western vineyards which consists of clay and limestone soils with some Kimmeridgian marne, especially in the cru of Chavignol. This famous village produce some of the most powerful whites of Sancerre and also make excellent goat cheese and the two marry magnificently. The area between the town of Sancerre and Chavignol have more gravelly soils and the wine tends to be lighter and more delicate. Close to the little town of Sancerre the soils are high in silex (flint) and here you will find the more structures and long lived wines.

Although 80% of the wines are white made from Sauvignon Blanc there are also some lovely Rosé and Red made here from Pinot Noir. The reds are of a distinctly lighter style than those of Burgundy due to the cooler climate. We rarely see these latter styles on yachts but it can be a welcomed alternative to both red Burgundy and to Provence rosé.

Pouilly-Fumé

Pouilly-Fumé, takes it names from the smoky character some of the wines can exhibit especially when grown on the more silex rich soils. As mentioned the two regions are very similar but Pouilly-Fumé is considered more homogenous by many experts. Perhaps is it simply down to the fact that it's half the size of Sancerre. The best wines will be grown on the famous silex soils giving here too the firm structure and concentration resulting in wines with greater ageing ability then the majority.

Generally however, both Sancerre and Pouily-Fumé are wines to be consumed whilst youthful, vibrant and fresh. As with everything in wine there are always exceptions but as an average rule the optimum drinking window for Sancerre is 1-4 years and slightly longer for Pouilly-Fumé.

The Development of Ultra-Premium Rosé in Provence

Those that have been in yachting for a while may have noticed a recent change in the variety and price of premium rosé wines on board. Around ten years ago, you would find Domaines Ott and Château Minuty, and not much else. Today, there is a vast selection of ultra-premium rosé (UPR) wines available - with ever increasing prices. The rosé category is rather important in our industry, so it is worthwhile to look closer at this recent development, and how it started.

In 1912, Marcel Ott founded Château de Selle in the Côtes de Provence. This was to be the first UPR of the region and, to this day, Domaines Ott is considered a market leader. Some other noteworthy producers followed in his footsteps, though it is only since 2006, when Sacha Lichine bought Château d´Esclans, that the UPR movement started to grow in popularity. Lichine's intention to produce the best and most expensive rosé in the world has created a phenomenon in a region where the average price per bottle is around €6. According to Andrew Jefford, a top wine writer, "This is the best chance pink wine has ever had". Despite the success surrounding Côtes de Provence rosé in recent years, it is wise to approach the category with caution. Before we go into why that's the case, let's look at the background.

Background

Provence has, throughout the centuries, been marked by poverty and drought. To assure food supply in this climate, the primary crops grown had to be cereals, vegetables and olives. In the 19th century,

viticulture came to the area, and wine became a principal agricultural product. Polyculture became the norm, and poor winemaking methods led to wines of modest quality, despite it being a time of relative prosperity for Provençal winegrowers.

Things changed for wine here around 1870. The outbreak of phylloxera and the European Depression saw a decrease in both production and consumption. Following years of economic stress, and the costly replanting of vineyards, there was little cash left to modernise production facilities and improve techniques. The solution was for the industry to adapt through cooperatives. This resulted in increased quality and homogeneity, thanks to the know-how of technically trained producers. It did, however, lead to a lack of individual character, as the cooperatives mostly listened to market trends and adapted their product accordingly. Today, 60% of all Côtes de Provence wine is produced by cooperatives. Paid holidays became mandatory in France in 1936, and so the post-war era became a time of significant growth for the tourist industry in Provence, and the production of rosé wine along with it.

Though historically, Provence wine has not focussed on quality to the extent of some other French appellations, it has created an excellent platform from which the rosé category can develop. The modern rosé industry here has been shaped by numerous factors, including the flourishing tourist industry, appellation laws, grape varieties and the trade structure.

Grape Varieties

Regarding red wine, Provence is arguably missing a signature grape variety that it can call its own. However, the varieties grown here are perfectly suited to produce the aromatic, pale and crisp style for which the region's rosé wines are so highly regarded. The primary red grapes used are Cinsault, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Syrah and Tibouren, with Cabernet Sauvignon and Carignan playing a smaller role. The most important white varieties are Semillon, Ugni Blanc and Vermentino.

The Development of UPR

Although the UPR movement is a recent phenomenon, there are some noteworthy exceptions. Apart from Domaines Ott, other early adopters include Château Minuty and Régine Sumeire. However, it

was Sacha Lichine's significant 2006 investment in Château d'Esclans that led to a significant increase in the production and popularity of UPR. With the trend-sensitive beach clubs of Saint Tropez and the wealthy tourists of the Côte d'Azur in its backyard, the Côtes de Provence is the ideal place for this category to thrive. In addition to fame and image, price has been a decisive factor in the mentality change around UPR. With prices ranging from €16 to €90 and a clever marketing strategy, the wines of Château d'Esclans have certainly contributed to this change. Herein lies the risk: there is a tendency among certain producers to take advantage of the UPR trend and develop questionable pricing practices. I have attended several tastings where a producer shows me their entry level wine, priced around €7, followed by their supposed ultra-premium offering, at €20 or more, and I have been unable to taste any difference in quality.

Nonetheless, the category has huge potential, and there are some absolutely stunning rosés produced in the Côtes de Provence. When the focus is on increasing quality at every stage of the production, the rosé category is capable of delivering the goods. Château d'Esclans is a prime example of a producer with this mindset. With utmost attention to detail throughout the whole production process, substantial investment in both know-how and equipment, as well as a clear difference in style between their standard and top wines - Whispering Angel and Garrus, respectively – they are an example to follow.

Other top UPR producers to watch out for include Château Minuty, Mas de Cadenet, Clos Cibonne, Château Leoube, Domaines Ott and Château Gassier. These estates are driven by passionate people who really believe in the category, and are committed to quality and sustainability. It is thanks to people like this that the UPR category will stand a chance in the future and perhaps even one day be accepted as a fine wine.

Super Tuscans for Super Yachts

Sassicaia, Ornellaia, Tignanello and Masseto are all big wine names in yachting - but what are they? They belong to an innovative group known as "Super Tuscans". This term was given to a rebellious style of wine in the early 1980s when Tuscan producers wanted to experiment with non-traditional grape varieties. Not content with the indigenous varieties like Sangiovese, Canaiolo and Colorino, they started to plant Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc.

Most wine regions in Europe have strict regulations when it comes to grape varieties, and Italy is no different. Choosing to produce wine in the Chianti area with such grapes, for example, has consequences. Regulations dictate that producers must declassify these wines to a lower classification.

A producer of traditional wine in Chianti Classico can enjoy the highest official classification in Italy, Denominazione di Origine Controllata et Garantita (DOCG), while a producer in the same area using Cabernet Sauvignon would have to label his wine as Vino di Tavola (VdT), the lowest qualification. This led to a strange situation whereby some of Italy's best and most celebrated wines, in fact, belonged to the lowest classification. In 1992, then, the authorities created a new category, Indicatione Geographica Typica (IGT). Though this is still a relatively lowly designation, it enjoys a higher status than VdT. Today, even greater progress has been made, and some of the top Super Tuscans have been upgraded to Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC) level, where the regulations have been adjusted to allow for greater flexibility and choice of grape varieties.

Stylistically, Super Tuscans are fuller-bodied, denser and have a greater concentration of fruit than their more traditional siblings.

Regarding winemaking, Super Tuscans are often aged in new French oak barriques, adding plenty of toast and spice aromas to the wine. This is quite contrary to the traditional Tuscan style, where ageing in large, old, oak casks is the norm, resulting in aromas of stewed fruit like prunes and figs.

The yachting industry has the privilege of handling some of the most prestigious Super Tuscan labels on a regular basis. Here are a few from which to choose, accompanied by some interesting and useful facts.

Sassicaia

Sassicaia is one of the world's most sought-after wines, especially in yachting. The name Sassicaia means "place with many stones", and the vineyard's gravel soils have been compared with the well-drained soils of Bordeaux. The estate is owned by the energetic Mario Incisa della Rocchetta, and it is in large part thanks to his vision that Sassicaia enjoys such a stellar reputation. The first vintage was released to universal acclaim in 1968 and Sassicaia is today accepted as one of the great Cabernet-based wines of the world. Maceration lasts around 14 days, and the wine is aged in French oak barrels, a third of which are new, for 24 months.

Tignanello

Antinori is probably the most famous family name in Italian wine. Tignanello is their flagship wine and was one of the first Super Tuscans ever made. In the 1970s they caused a storm by being the first to age their wines in small French barriques. Despite the initial outrage, this trend spread across Tuscany, and Antinori changed the face of Tuscan wines forever. Tignanello is usually 80% Sangiovese, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Cabernet Franc. It's aged in oak barrels for 12 months, and in the bottle for another 12.

Solaia

Another wine produced by Antinori, Solaia is virtually Tignanello's mirror image, with 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Sangiovese. It was created almost by accident when, in 1978, the estate found itself with too much Cabernet Sauvignon. They experimented, and thus Solaia was born. It means "the

sunny one", as the best grapes are picked from the sunniest part of the Tignanello hill.

Ornellaia

A Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot blend, this wine is one of Italy's leading Bordeaux-style reds. This winery was initially established by the Antinori family, the producer of Sassicaia. The vineyards are located on the Tuscan coast in the Bolgheri area, where the Bordeaux grape varieties grow very well. The vineyards are arduously cared for, and attention is paid to the smallest detail by the approximately 80 people working amongst the vines year-round. Ornellaia is a firm favourite of George Clooney, who even ordered it for his wedding!

Masseto

Also made by Tenuta dell'Ornellaia, Masseto is produced from grapes grown on the eponymous single vineyard site in Bolgheri. It is regarded as Italy's finest expression of Merlot and is comparable to the legendary Pétrus of Bordeaux. Typically rich, ripe and concentrated and with a smooth, velvety mouthfeel, this wine perfectly combines plump, fruity character with the elegance and structure typical of Bordeaux wine. It has gained a global reputation amongst wine enthusiasts, and especially yacht owners.

Introduction to the Communes of Bordeaux

Bordeaux is one of the world's most important wine regions, and especially so in yachting. Virtually every yacht carries some of the top wines from communes like Margaux, Pauillac, Saint-Émilion and Pomerol, among others. It's important to note, however, that these Grand Cru Classé wines only represent a tiny proportion of the total production of Bordeaux. Most of the region's output is made up of moderately-priced wines sold under the names Bordeaux AOC or Bordeaux Supérieur AOC. Such appellations do not make it onto the prestigious wine lists in yachting, so only the top communes will be presented below.

Saint-Estèphe

Saint-Estèphe is the northernmost of the six communal appellations in the Médoc. As in most of the Médoc area, the soil is a mix of sand, gravel and clay, though the clay proportion here is higher than in the other communes and therefore the Cabernet Sauvignon can struggle to ripen in some spots. This has resulted in greater plantings of Merlot, which ripens a bit earlier. There are five classified growths from the 1855 classification *(see page 134)* located within the appellation, with Châteaux Cos d´Estournel and Montrose being the two most prestigious. The wines tend to show a certain austerity, firmer tannin structure, great concentration with slightly higher acid than the other communes.

Pauillac

This famous commune is situated on the left bank of the Gironde river, around the small town of Pauillac. The top wines from this appellation are often considered the quintessence of Bordeaux, and the esteemed wine writer Hugh Johnson agrees, saying "If one had to single out one commune of Bordeaux to head the list, there would be no argument. It would be Pauillac." Furthermore, this appellation also includes three of the five first growths from the 1855 classification, giving additional notoriety to the area. The hallmarks of Pauillac wines are power, firm structure, broad palate and depth. Cabernet Sauvignon is the predominant grape, but as with all red Bordeaux, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec are also used – though the last two considerably less extensively. Châteaux Lafite-Rothschild, Mouton Rothschild and Latour are the first growths in this commune, but estates like Châteaux Pontet-Canet, Pichon Baron, and Lynch-Bages are also of outstanding quality and reputation.

Saint Julien

Saint Julien lies between the Margaux and Pauillac appellations on the left bank of the Gironde. Stylistically, the growers talk about two different styles: In southern Saint Julien, the wines tend to be more Margaux-like, smooth and feminine, while wines from the northern vineyards are more robust and sturdy but as a generalisation the wines here are softer and more delicate than the wines of Pauillac or Saint-Estèphe. Regarding grape varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon is king here, with Merlot and the other classic Bordeaux varieties blended in for smoothness and complexity. Châteaux Léoville Las Cases and Léoville Poyferré are two of the top producers, along with Châteaux Ducru-Beaucaillou, Léoville Barton and Lagrange.

Margaux

Margaux is the second largest appellation in the Haut-Médoc, after Saint-Estèphe. The commune is also located on the left bank of the Gironde with very thin gravel soils. The wines are famous for their fragrance and perfume and are considered more feminine and slender than, for example, those of Pauillac. The most famous estate in this commune is Château Margaux, and other big names include Châteaux Palmer,

Malescot Saint-Exupéry, Giscours and Brane-Cantenac, to mention just a few. Cabernet Sauvignon is the predominant grape.

Médoc and Haut-Médoc

These two appellations are also located on the left bank of Gironde, and the zone spans nearly 60 kilometres along the length of the river. Its southern edge borders the city of Bordeaux, encompassing fifteen communes exclusive to the appellation. The soils in Haut-Médoc and Médoc do not have the quality of drainage as the communes above, and thus the wines are not as deep, long-lived or concentrated. However, there are excellent estates here producing very complex and fine wines, and the most celebrated examples are Châteaux La Lagune and Camensac. In total, there are five estates from the 1855 classification within these two AOCs, and a great many of the top producers of the Cru Bourgeois classification can also be found here.

Pessac-Léognan

Pessac-Léognan is located in the northern part of the Graves region, south of the city of Bordeaux. Unlike most Bordeaux appellations, Pessac-Léognan is equally famous for both red and white wines. The red wines are made primarily from Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, and the whites from Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon. Furthermore, one of the finest first growths of 1855 is found here, Château Haut-Brion. To complicate matters, Pessac-Léognan has its own classification system of Grand Cru Classé, created in 1959. Typical tasting terms for Pessac red wines are blackcurrant and cedar, in a restrained and earthy style. The white wines are often barrel-fermented and show aromas of apricot and nectarine when young and more toast and honey with age. Other top wineries include Châteaux La Mission Haut-Brion, Smith Haut Lafitte and Pape Clément.

Pomerol

Pomerol is Bordeaux's smallest fine wine appellation, located in the Libournais region of the Right Bank. The wines produced here are based primarily on Merlot, with Cabernet Franc playing a supporting role. The soils have a higher content of clay than on the Left Bank, which is very well suited to the Merlot variety. Though it is now one of the most prestigious appellations in Bordeaux, this has only been the case since the second half of the 20th century. Its recent success is down to exceptional quality, coming relatively late as no Right Bank châteaux were included in the 1855 classification. There is no internal classification within Pomerol, though the uncrowned king is Château Pétrus. Other top producers include Châteaux Le Pin, Lafleur, La Conseillante and L'Eglise Clinet.

Saint-Émilion

Saint-Émilion is the other prestigious appellation on the Right Bank, bordering Pomerol to the west. The wines are mostly from Merlot and Cabernet Franc. The climate here is slightly cooler and damper and the soils are less well drained than on the Left Bank, so Cabernet

Sauvignon often struggles to achieve full ripeness. The quality of the wines within Saint-Émilion varies quite substantially, and there is an internal classification to give an indication of the best wines. The top wines are divided into two groups, Premiers Grands Crus Classés A and B. There are currently four wines with the highest classification, Châteaux Ausone, Angélus, Cheval Blanc and Pavie.

Sauternes

Sauternes is arguably the most famous region in the world for dessert wines. The wines are made from Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle grapes that have been affected by Botrytis cinerea, also known as "noble rot" (see page 73). This causes the grapes to become partially dried and raisinlike, and covered with a particular mould, resulting in concentrated and distinctively flavoured wines. Only the grapes affected by rot are used, so during every harvest it is necessary to make several passages in the vineyard to select only the nobly-rotted bunches. The wines are then fermented in oak and aged for 12-24 months. Château d´Yquem is the most famous wine from this region, though others, including Châteaux Rieussec and Suduiraut, also produce stunning wines.

BORDEAUX CLASSIFICATION

The fine wines of Bordeaux are organised according to a number of different official classifications. This may sound complicated, but you don't need to know each classification inside and out. Developing a basic understanding of each classification and some of its constituent châteaux will help you to make suitable recommendations and answer questions knowledgeably.

The easiest way to understand the classifications is by dividing the region geographically, into four zones: Médoc, Sauternes, Graves and Saint-Émilion.

Médoc – The 1855 Grand Cru Classification

The most famous Bordeaux classification is the Bordeaux Wine Official Classification of 1855, which classified the red wines of the Médoc and the sweet wines of Sauternes. The story of the classification has been told widely, though you only really need to understand the very basics.

The Paris Universal Exhibition was to take place in 1855, and the Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce was asked to produce an official ranking of the region's best wines. They did this by working with a group of experienced wine brokers, who based the list on existing, unofficial rankings largely based on market prices dating back a hundred years or more.

The Médoc classification spans five quality tiers, descending from First to Fifth Growth (Premier Grand Cru Classé to Cinquième Grand Cru Classé). The classification includes 61 châteaux and is best known for the five First Growths, namely Châteaux

Lafite-Rothschild, Latour, Margaux, Haut-Brion and Mouton Rothschild. These estates are some of the world's most famous, and their wines command very high prices.

There are excellent estates at each of the five levels of the classification; particularly the unofficial group sometimes referred to as the "Super Seconds". Most, though not all, are ranked as Second Growths. Chief among this group are Châteaux Palmer, Léoville Las Cases, Ducru-Beaucaillou and Cos d'Estournel, to name just a few. These estates routinely produce wines considered to be at, or close to, First Growth level. They are, unsurprisingly, very expensive, though less so than the top tier, and thus can represent relatively good value for your clients.

Since its inception, the 1855 classification has undergone only two major changes, most significantly the elevation of Château Mouton Rothschild from Second to First Growth in 1973. The ranking is not without its critics, and common points of contention include the ability of châteaux to buy new, potentially lower quality, vineyard land while maintaining their ranking, and the unchanging rigidity of the system overall.

Interestingly, First Growth estate Haut-Brion is not actually located in the Médoc region and is instead found to the south of Bordeaux city in the Pessac-Léognan appellation of the Graves region. Haut-Brion is the only non-Médoc estate on that list and is also found in the Graves classification.

The British fine wine stock exchange, Liv-Ex, has recreated the 1855 classification on numerous occasions to create an unofficial, modern simulation. This is an interesting exercise that looks at today's market environment and applies to the original classified growths and also includes the wineries of the Graves region. Perhaps surprisingly, many of the rankings remain the same or similar to the original list. Liv-Ex's most recent version, in 2015, saw all the First Growths stay at that level, with the new addition of Pessac-Léognan estate La Mission Haut-Brion. This is not surprising, as that estate is often referred to as the "Sixth First Growth" despite not even being in the Médoc region. Some châteaux have been promoted in the Liv-Ex simulation, reflecting their reputations and market positions today, notably Palmer and Pontet-Canet.

Despite its standing in the wine world, the 1855 classification covers only a small fraction of the wines of the Médoc, a great many of whom are very expensive. An additional system exists to highlight the best of those châteaux that were not classified in the original document: The Cru Bourgeois classification was introduced in 1932, and has undergone many changes since. Today, it is not so much a classification as it is a merit-based status that producers apply for by submitting their wines. The most recent Official Selection of the Crus Bourgeois du Médoc applies to the 2014 vintage and counts 278 producers. The quality assurance protocols required for approval mean that Cru Bourgeois wines usually have a very attractive quality/price ratio, though in most cases lack the name recognition of the Grand Cru Classé.

Sauternes

At the time of the 1855 Médoc classification, the sweet wine producers of Sauternes and Barsac were also ranked.

There are three tiers here, with the iconic Château d'Yquem the sole occupant of the top tier, enjoying the distinguished title of Premier Cru Supérieur. The rest are divided across Premier Cru and Deuxième Cru status. The Sauternes classification is of far less significance commercially than that of the Médoc, though it is useful to know some of the top Premier Cru names to recommend in addition to, or instead of, Yquem. Those estates whose reputation is almost at the level of Yquem include Châteaux Coutet, Climens and Suduiraut.

Graves

The Graves region lies to the south of Bordeaux city on the region's left bank. Trailing the earlier classification by more than a century, the châteaux of Graves were classified in 1959. There are no tiers or rankings here as such - a château is either classified or is not - though there are separate lists for red and white wines. It is worth noting that the Médoc classification does not apply to white wines.

The most significant Cru Classé de Graves châteaux are found in the Pessac-Léognan appellation and include Châteaux Haut-Brion, La Mission Haut-Brion, Haut-Bailly, Pape Clément, Smith Haut Lafitte, and Domaine de Chevalier.

Saint-Émilion

The only classification on the right bank is that of Saint Émilion, and it is tied to the region's appellation system. Entry-level wine from this region falls under the Saint-Émilion AOC, while higher quality estates lie in the Saint-Émilion Grand Cru AOC. It is within the latter grouping that we find the classified châteaux of the region. The rankings, in descending order, are Premier Grand Cru Classé A, Premier Grand Cru Classé B, Grand Cru Classé and Grand Cru.

Premier Grand Cru Classé A is the equivalent of the Médoc's First Growth category. These are some of the finest and most sought-after wines in the world, and thus are very important in yachting. The members of the top tier are Châteaux Ausone, Cheval Blanc, Angélus and Pavie.

The second tier, Premier Grand Cru Classé B, has many high-profile members too, including Châteaux Figeac, Canon, Canon La Gaffelière and Valandraud.

The Saint-Émilion classification dates to 1955, though interestingly it has undergone numerous significant revisions since then. The most recent, in 2012, saw Châteaux Angélus and Pavie promoted to the top tier, joining Ausone and Cheval Blanc, who had been its sole occupants since the classification's inception. The next revision is scheduled for 2022.

It is interesting to note that there is no classification system in the neighbouring Pomerol region. Nonetheless, the top estates here are held in equal (if not higher) esteem than the official First Growths. The very top châteaux, including Pétrus and Le Pin, routinely command the highest prices in all of Bordeaux, at a considerable premium to even the likes of Lafite Rothschild.

Understanding Burgundy

If a wine book were to start with a chapter on Burgundy, most people would probably stop reading after just a few pages. This region is one of the most complex in the world, and, even after studying wine for years it can feel like an enigma. When it comes to Burgundy wine, you can pay a very high price and be disappointed, and equally, you can spend less and be delighted. Some of the absolute greatest wines on earth come from Burgundy, and as such, it is a crucial region in yachting.

GRAPES

Fortunately, one aspect of Burgundy is easy, and that is the grape varieties. All white wines are made from Chardonnay, and all red wines are made from Pinot Noir - though Gamay is used in the sub-region of Beaujolais and for some simple everyday wines. Burgundy is the spiritual home of these two top quality varieties. The typical Chardonnay from Burgundy will have received some oak ageing and have aromas of stone fruit, melon, and white flowers, with a creamy texture. The Pinot Noir grape gives wines that are pale in colour, compared to Cabernet or Syrah, and often show aromas of red fruit and soft spice, often with an undertone of leather or earth. Red Burgundy is typically very elegant and fragrant.

REGIONS

There are six main wine regions in Burgundy which in turn are divided into a myriad of smaller appellations, premier crus and grand crus, but let's start with the main ones.

Chablis

Chablis is Burgundy's northernmost sub-region, and has the coolest climate in the region. It produces crisp, elegant wines with high acidity, minerality and aromas of citrus and green apples. The wines of Chablis are unoaked, though most of the grand cru wines receive some oak ageing. There are four different quality levels within Chablis: Petit Chablis, Chablis, Chablis Premier Cru and Chablis Grand Cru. Only white wines are produced in this region.

Côte de Nuits

The Côte de Nuit and Côte de Beaune make up the Côte d´Or, the "golden slope", truly the heart of top quality Burgundy. The Côte de Nuit is known for its prestigious red wine communes such as Gevrey-Chambertin, Chambolle-Musigny, Vosne-Romanée, Nuits-Saint-Georges and more.

Côte de Beaune

Though home to top red wine communes Volnay and Pommard, the Côte de Beaune is mostly famous for prestigious white wine communes like Meursault, Puligny-Montrachet and Chassagne-Montrachet. These wines are medium-bodied with aromas of melon, stone fruit and often with a floral element. They are oak-aged and have an elegant, creamy yet refreshing palate.

Côte Chalonnaise

The Côte Chalonnaise has little relevance for the yachting industry, as charter guests and owners tend to prefer more celebrated areas. Regarding value for money, though, there are some great villages for us regular consumers to try - Rully, Bouzeron and Montagny, to mention just a few. Both red and white wines are produced here, and often to a very high standard: The quality difference between a €30 Puligny-Montrachet and a €15 Montagny can be very slight indeed.

Mâconnais

With a slightly warmer climate than the Côte de Beaune, the Mâconnais makes wines that are riper and rounder. The bulk of the production here is easy-drinking, light and fruit-driven Chardonnay under the name Mâcon or Mâcon-Village. One commune with a greater reputation that often finds its way into our industry is Pouilly-Fuissé. This is a full-bodied and generous Chardonnay with plenty of ripe peach notes and toasty oak aromas.

Beaujolais

Some wine books include Beaujolais as part the greater Bourgogne region, and some don't. It makes more sense to exclude it, as Beaujolais uses another grape variety, Gamay, and a distinctive winemaking technique, carbonic maceration. The resulting wines are light, low in tannin, easy to drink and filled with crunchy red fruit character and vegetal hints.

Wines labelled simply as Bourgogne Blanc or Bourgogne Rouge are Burgundy's entry level. They can be blended from fruit from all the regions mentioned above and will be quite easy-drinking in a simple, everyday style.

TERROIR AND THE CLASSIFICATION HIERARCHY

The classification system of Burgundy is very different to that of Bordeaux. Here, the classification is tied to the land itself, and not the producer or château. In Bordeaux, a classified estate can buy additional vineyards and keep its Grand Cru Classé designation. Such a situation is not possible in Burgundy: The classified land in Burgundy stays grand cru, premier cru or village, no matter what goes on regarding vineyard sales. This arguably makes the Burgundy classification more terroir-driven and authentic than the economically-driven system in Bordeaux.

In Burgundy, terroir is a broad concept which includes both natural and human factors. It was winegrowers - monks for the most part - who discovered, identified and then developed the different terroirs of the region. Centuries of hard work were necessary to develop the best sites of Burgundy, and this discovery started in the early middle ages. It was passed down over generations and eventually would become officially recognised in the form of regional, commune or village, premier cru and grand cru appellations.

Today, after more than 1,000 years, the terroir in Burgundy has been made into a modern concept which has been copied all over the world. Winegrowers aim to find the truest and most individual expression of their wines and to move away from industrial production.

The classification hierarchy is often presented as a triangle, with the base representing more than half of overall production, with regional appellations like Bourgogne Rouge, Côte de Beaune and Côte Mâconnais, to name a few. The second layer consists of the communes or villages, which represent around 35% of the total. Here, you will find the likes of Puligny-Montrachet, Meursault, Gevrey-Chambertin and much more. The third level is for premier cru vineyards, accounting for about 10% of total production, across no less than 600 different sites. Thankfully, there is no need to memorise them all, as their wines will be proudly labelled as premier cru. The highest quality wines come from the 33 grand cru vineyards, representing barely 1.5% of total Burgundy production.

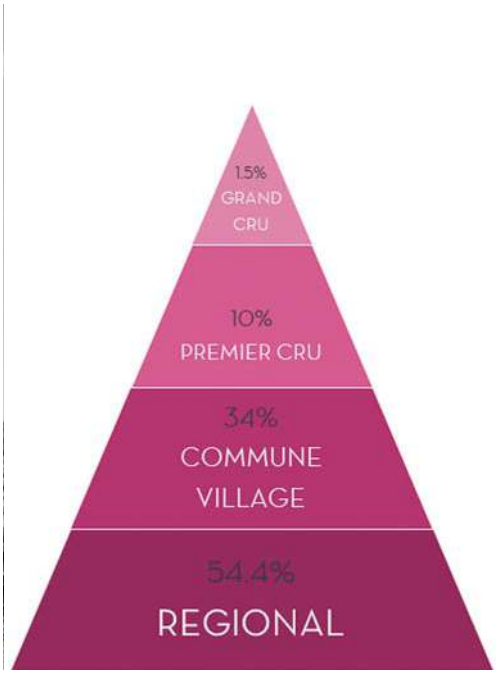
BURGUNDY LABELS

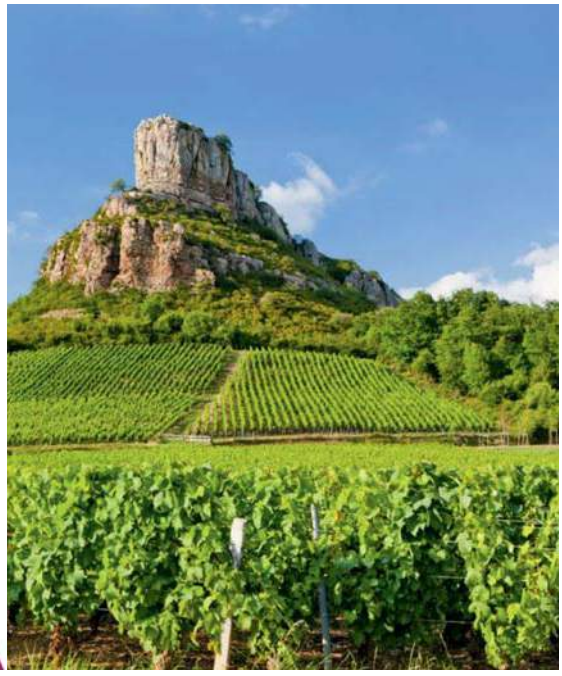
Regional

This wine comes from Côte de Beaune and belongs at the base of the pyramid, the regional appellations. The grapes may be sourced from a large area, and the expression of place or terroir will be less distinctive than at the higher quality levels. These wines are best for drinking young and are not worth ageing.

Communal

Moving up a step in quality, we are now looking at the commune or village level. The grapes will come from better soils and from a smaller, more clearly-defined area. The wine will show a greater concentration of flavour and depth.

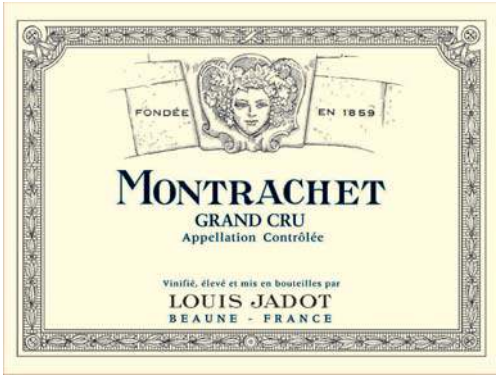




Premier Cru

This is a label from a premier cru vineyard within the commune of Chassagne-Montrachet. It clearly says 1er Cru and bears the vineyard name, Ruchotte. At premier cru level, the wines should be of even higher quality. Expect a lot of complexity, longevity and a real sense of place, along with minerality. These wines tend to be expensive and are aged in oak.

Grand Cru



Finally, at the top of our triangle we have the grand cru level. Montrachet is a prime example of this classification level, as it is considered to be the absolute finest. It is a grand cru vineyard shared between the communes of Chassagne-Montrachet and Puligny-Montrachet. Grand cru wines come from the absolute best vineyards, with perfect exposure and the best soils. The wines are rare and expensive and only represent 1.5% of the output of Burgundy. Understandably, then, they are very popular in the yachting industry. The grand cru wines of Burgundy, red or white, are great wines with lots of depth, complexity, elegance and seemingly never-ending length.

Want to Learn More? Join a WSET® Wine Course!

When we started Riviera Wine we were surprised to find that there was no proper wine training available for yacht crew.

On yachts, the calibre of wines tends to be high – and so do client expectations! I saw room for improvement. So, in 2006 we became the first company to bring the internationally-recognised WSET® wine courses to yachting, and since then we have trained several hundred Stewardesses, Stewards and Captains. It is very rewarding to be able to contribute to a newfound passion in some of my students – several of whom have decided to pursue careers in the wine industry after yachting!

What is WSET®?

The Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET®) is the leading provider of wine and spirits qualifications in the world. It is based in London and has around 600 centres in 60 different countries that can deliver its different courses.

WSET® currently offers five different qualifications, from the one-day Level 1 through to the two-year Level 4 Diploma. For the yachting industry, we think the three-day Level 2 course is a great place to start and gives interior crew the knowledge and confidence needed when it comes to wine.

5 Reasons to Complete a WSET® Course

There are plenty of good reasons to study a wine course, both personal and professional. Here are just five that we hope will do a little to convince you:

1. Feel more confident serving wine in front of guests. We understand that wine can sometimes be an intimidating and daunting subject. With so many different regions, grapes, confusing labels and vintages, it is easy to get confused. You may be serving some of the world's most expensive wine to some of the world's richest people. Wouldn't it be great to be able to serve wine correctly, accurately answer guests' questions and successfully pair wine with food? These courses will give you the knowledge to do this with much more confidence.

2. Feel more confident buying wine and managing stock. Many stewards and stewardesses are responsible for large wine budgets, yet can feel out of their depth. Learning about wine can help you keep a better wine inventory, and to understand that inventory better. You will come to understand which wines are best for drinking young or may need to be used quickly, such as Pinot Grigio and Provence rosé. Your geographical location may preclude you from sourcing a specific wine your guest has requested, but you can develop the knowledge and skills to be able to recommend a valid alternative.

3. You will have the opportunity to taste lots of delicious wine. On the Level 2 course, we try around 35 wines from around the world and on the Level 3, around 100. Experience new wine tastes, learn stories about the wines and maybe even find a new favourite. Every student ends the course liking something very surprising.

4. You will gain an internationally-recognised qualification that you can put on your CV. This qualification is great for yachting, especially if you are a Chief Steward or Stewardess, or are aspiring to become one. Even when you decide to leave yachting, this qualification is widely recognised amongst the hospitality industry and, of course, the wine industry, should you decide to pursue that avenue.

5. Impress your friends and family with your new knowledge! Nearly everyone is amazed when they find out that you have "studied wine". In fact, most people don't even realise these qualifications exist. Without doubt, everyone will be handing you the wine list when you go to a restaurant and asking you for the latest recommendations!

We hope to see you for some wine training soon!

TESTIMONIALS

Knowledgeable teaching, different perspectives from different teachers and a very welcoming approach to teaching making it fun and interesting. I very much enjoyed the course and especially the sessions with Louise - she is lovely and had a grounded approach to wine.

Katie Mitchell
GALACTICA STAR

A fantastic course, enthusiasm of tutors was felt and absorbed. Learnt so much and very happy to have taken part. A privilege!

Renee Wiles
GALACTICA STAR

Louise is extremely knowledgeable and has a friendly, easy and relaxed way of teaching which really helps learning. Excellent course!

Nina Morgan
CHIEF STEWARDESS

It was a fantastic course and I really enjoyed it. It gave a general knowledge about wine while focusing on the most relevant topics and regions, The food and wine pairing session was also very helpful. I also enjoyed very much Louise's way of teaching.

Petrea Roxana
CHIEF STEWARDESS

Excellent course, clear and precise. Louise shows a real passion for wine during the teaching and this really helps learning. I highly recommend it to anyone who would like to learn more about wine and look forward to the Level 3.

Heath McCormack

Fantastic course, Louise passion for wine is intoxicating!

Zoe Reed
CHIEF STEWARDESS

The best course I have ever taken!

Louisa Boardman
CHIEF STEWARDESS

It was an honor being taught by a Master of Wine. I thoroughly enjoyed all the tutors, they were patient and answered all questions thoroughly by giving simple easy examples. I highly recommend Riviera Wine, Thank you!

Berna Lasoki
CHIEF STEWARDESS / MY ARKLEY

Just a quick email to say thank you again for the WSET2 wine course last week. It was so interesting, well explained and has given me a real insight into the fascinating world of wine. You were a great teacher and clearly passionate about what you do. It is amazing how many extraordinary facts and stories about wines and the vineyards you managed shared with us over the three days. The morning on spirits with Campbell was a real eye opener - I do not drink spirits at all - and the peated whisky was quite something! Many thanks once again!

Gayle Patterson
CAMPERS AND NICHOLSON

About Louise Sydbeck MW

When I was 15 years old I got an assignment from our teacher to write a long essay of any chosen topic. I chose Dom Perignon and I have no idea why, as at the time I had not even had a sip of Champagne. I think this essay is what sparked my interest in wine and ever since everything I have done had to do with wine.

After a few years of working in the top restaurants in Sweden and a sommelier program in Stockholm I moved to France to work as a guide at a vineyard in Provence. A few years later I entered a wine university near Avignon for six months. This gave me the confidence to set up my own business and for a few years I organized wine tours in France. Then one day, a dear friend whom was Chief Stewardess on a yacht asked me if I could not sell some wine to her for the boat, and I thought, why not!? That´s now 15 years ago and we have since grown to a much appreciated yacht wine supplier on the French Riviera.

After having worked with yachts for a few years I felt a need and a responsibility to take my wine knowledge deeper, even as deep as it gets by pursuing the notoriously difficult Master of Wine qualification.

I started with the WSET® Advanced certificate to continue with the WSET® Diploma and finally the MW. I am happy to say that several years later I finally made it, I became the 100th female Master of Wine in 2014.

Yet after all those years of studying and receiving this sought after qualification I think the most important lesson I learnt is that there is always more to learn and I will always consider myself as a life-long student, both of wine and life itself!

“Wine is an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, a product of global savoir-faire with huge symbolic importance at the crossroads of religion, art, taste, education, gastronomy and world peace.

MICHEL BETTANE

282 RUE DES CISTES, VILLAGE D'ENTREPRISES EURO 92
06600 ANTIBES - FRANCE
+33 (0) 4 93 34 49 66
INFO@RIVIERAWINE.WINE
RIVIERAWINE.WINE

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