

Red Wines

Red Grape Varietals

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Agiorgitiko

Agiorgitiko is one of the most widely grown red wine grapes in [Greece](#), with its heartland in Nemea, on the Peloponnese peninsula. In general, Agiorgitiko wines display plum fruit and spice, low acidity and medium body, but differences in vineyard topography and altitude can vary the taste profile.

Due to its low acid it is often blended with Cabernet Sauvignon or Syrah. ([Go to top](#))

Aglianico

Aglianico hails from Campania and Basilicata in [Southern Italy](#). It produces full-bodied wines with high levels of acidity, rich tannins, and intense flavours of berry fruit and smoke. ([Go to top](#))

Barbera

Barbera is planted extensively in [Northern Italy](#), especially

in Lombardy, Piedmont (Asti and Alba), Monferrato, Oltrepò Pavese, Gutturmo and Emilia-Romagna. Barbera is known for its high levels of acidity and low tannin levels, making it enjoyable as an everyday food-friendly red, generally meant for early consumption and not for ageing. ([Go to top](#))

Blaufränkisch (a.k.a. Lemberger or Kékfrankos)

Hailing from [Austria](#), Blaufränkisch is known for fruity wines that can be matured in oak and blended with the likes of Cabernet Sauvignon to provide fruit concentration complement the Cab's structure and tannin. ([Go to top](#))

Cabernet Franc

Cabernet Franc is widely planted in the [Loire](#) Valley (Bourgueil, Chinon, Saumur) and in [Bordeaux](#). When grown in cooler climates, it displays raspberry, violet and herbaceous (bell pepper) notes. In warmer climates, it tends to deliver more plum, jam and dried fruit flavours. On Bordeaux's Left Bank (Médoc and Graves), Cabernet Franc adds aromatics and complexity as a minor part of the blend with [Cabernet Sauvignon](#) and [Merlot](#). On the Right Bank, it is leading part of blend, coupled with Merlot. Good examples of the wine are also found in northeast Italy and [California](#). The finest examples (such as the famed Cheval Blanc) can be aged 15-20 years or more. ([Go to top](#))

Cabernet Sauvignon

Cabernet Sauvignon is the offspring of [Cabernet Franc](#) and [Sauvignon Blanc](#). It is typically deeply coloured and full-bodied, with high tannins and acidity, delivering blackcurrant flavours with notes of cedar and mint. In warmer climates, the tannin, acidity can be less pronounced. Although its roots lie in [Bordeaux](#), great wines and blends come from Italy,

California, Australia, Argentina, Chile and South Africa. Italy's "Super Tuscans" blend Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot with traditional Sangiovese, while its Bordeaux-blends from Bolgheri display great examples of the grape. It has a natural affinity to oak and is often matured in barrel. The finest examples of Cabernet Sauvignon can age 30+ years. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Carignan (Carineña or Mazuelo)

Carignan is one of the most widely planted red grapes in the south of France and [Languedoc-Roussillon](#) (especially Côtes du Roussillon, Corbières, Saint-Chinian, Minervois and Faugères).

It has deep colour, high acidity and high tannin levels. Historically considered a workhorse grape, it is often blended with [Grenache](#), [Syrah](#) and [Cinsault](#). Perhaps its best examples are found from old vines in the [Priorat](#), where it demonstrates intensely concentrated and vibrant wines (blended with Grenache). [\(Go to top\)](#)

Carmenère (Grand Vidure)

Carmenère was traditionally planted in [Bordeaux](#), but fell out of popularity and was replaced by [Merlot](#) because of the latter's reliability and relative resistance to pests and disease. Carmenère was brought over to [Chile](#) in the 19th century and wrongly identified as Merlot. It rediscovered (ie properly identified) in 1994 and is now more often cultivated separately. Carmenère is typically deep purple in color, has medium tannin levels and medium to high acidity with ripe berry fruit flavours, as well as a distinct herbaceous, bell-pepper aroma. It is either produced as a single variety or blended in small parts with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Cinsault

Cinsault grows in the south of [France](#) and in [South Africa](#). It displays soft red berry and plum fruit with aromatics, and is

generally a blending partner with Grenache and Syrah in France. In South Africa, Cinsault is crossed with Pinot Noir to create Pinotage. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Dolcetto

Dolcetto is an easy-growing grape from [Piedmont](#), Italy. It produces fruity, aromatic wines. But its low tannin levels and acidity make it unsuitable for ageing. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Frappato

Frappato is a juicy, low-tannin, aromatic grape grown in [Sicily](#), Italy. It is often blended with other varieties, including [Nero d'Avola](#) in places like Cerasuolo di Vittoria. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Gamay

Gamay is best known for the wines of Beaujolais in [France](#). It is a light, easy-drinking wine meant for early drinking and displaying characteristics of red fruits, dried leaves and sometimes even bubble gum or banana depending on how it is vinified. In contrast, some of the best examples, including Beaujolais Grand Cru, are typically medium-bodied wines, matured in oak to provide more structure. These can develop complexity including savoury, mushroom, meaty and smoky aromas, and can age five years or more. Examples can also be found in the [Burgundy](#), the Loire and Niagara. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Graciano

Graciano is found in [Rioja](#), Spain. It is aromatic and spicy, displaying menthol, mineral and dark fruit flavours and crisp acidity but weaker tannins. Its vulnerability to mildew makes it difficult to grow. Due to its lower yields, it is a minor blending partner to [Tempranillo](#) and [Grenache](#) in Rioja. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Grenache (Garnacha or Cannonau)

Grenache is the world's most widely planted black grape variety. It produces a range of wines from easy-drinking rosés to very concentrated, intense wines from low-yielding old vines. Some of the best Grenache comes from the [Côtes du Rhône](#) (Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Gigondas) in France and [Priorat](#) in Spain and can age up to 30-50 years. Other fine examples can be found in [Barossa](#) Valley and [McLaren Vale](#) in Australia, as well as Rioja, Navarra and Penedès in Spain. The grape delivers vibrant red fruits (strawberry) and some white pepper. When it is extra-ripe this can translate to baked, dried or jammy red fruit. With age, notes of toffee and savoury or meat develop. Its low acidity and higher alcohol concentration make it the yin to the yang of [Syrah](#) and [Mourvèdre](#) in the Côtes du Rhône, and of [Tempranillo](#) in Rioja. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Malbec (Auxerrois or Cot)

Malbec originates from the southwest of [France](#). Prior to 1956, it was one of the five original varieties blended in [Bordeaux](#), after which it was increasingly replaced by Merlot. In Cahors, it produces deep, extracted wines with high tannin levels. Malbec's new home, however, is in [Argentina](#), where it delivers raspberry and mulberry flavours with some complexity, balanced by its acidity and tannin. In warmer or higher yielding sites, its flavour profile shifts towards black fruit and the wines lose some of that tannin. Good quality examples from Cahors and Mendoza can age for eight years and more. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Mencía (Jaen)

Mencía comes from northwest Spain. Although it is a less well-known grape, it is the dominant red grape in [Bierzo](#) and it plays an important role in Valdeorras, Monterrei, and [Ribeira Sacra](#). Its wines can range from lighter, easy-drinking styles

with medium tannins and fresh fruit to more concentrated, complex wines that can handle oak ageing. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Merlot

Merlot means 'little blackbird' in Bordeaux patois. While its spiritual home is in Pomerol and Saint-Émilion in [Bordeaux](#), Merlot is grown extensively throughout the world, both as a standalone wine and in blends. In cooler climates it typically presents flavours of red fruits (raspberry and plum), but in warmer climates this flavour profile shifts to baked black fruits, fruitcake and chocolate. In both cases it demonstrates concentration and a smooth, velvety texture that nicely complements the structure and austerity of [Cabernet Sauvignon](#). High quality examples can age 10-20 years (e.g. Pétrus and Le Pin). Great examples can be found in [Tuscany](#), northeast Italy, Margaret River ([Western Australia](#)), [New Zealand](#), [California](#), [Washington](#), [Chile](#) and Stellenbosch ([South Africa](#)). [\(Go to top\)](#)

Montepulciano

Montepulciano is grown throughout central Italy and best known for the fruity, medium to full bodied wines from Abruzzo, Rosso Conero and Rosso Piceno. It is often blended with [Sangiovese](#). [\(Go to top\)](#)

Mourvèdre (Monastrell or Mataró)

Mourvèdre' is at home in the warmer climates of the south of [France](#), southeast [Spain](#) and, more recently, in [Australia](#) and [California](#). It is typically deeply coloured, powerful and tannic. It is a common blending partner of Grenache and Syrah (i.e. GSM) but also appears as a single varietal in places like Bandol in France and [Jumilla](#) in Spain. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Nebbiolo (Chiavennasca, Spanna or

Picutener)

The name Nebbiolo comes from *nebbia*, meaning fog, and refers to the fog that rolls in around the harvest in [Piedmont](#), Italy. It is a difficult grape to grow and ripen, but when it does it produces wines with high acidity, tannins and concentration, best demonstrated by the wines of Barolo and Barbaresco. Aromas of violets, red fruit, mushrooms or truffles, tar, tomato leaf and savoury notes emerge and evolve with age. These are some of the most age-worthy wines you can find, and most deserve 10 years in the bottle before they reward you in the glass. While Barolo and Barbaresco often sell at higher prices, less expensive alternatives include wines from Carema, Gattinara, Ghemme, Valtellina and Langhe. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Negroamaro

Negroamaro is the main red grape variety grown in [Puglia](#), Italy, and is best known for wines from Salice Salentino and Copertino. It produces full-bodied wines with the flavours of ripe fruit and chocolate. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Nerello Mascalese

Nerello Mascalese is an Italian grape found in [Sicily](#) and [Sardinia](#), but you are most likely to find it blended in wines from Sicily's Etna Rosso region. By itself it has delicate, elegant cherry aromas and flavours. It ripens late and retains its acidity throughout the growing season, which enables it to handle warmer climates. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Nero d'Avola (Calabrese)

The most widely planted grape in [Sicily](#), Nero d'Avola produces intense, medium to full-bodied wines that, when matured in oak, are capable of some medium-term ageing. It has high tannins levels and medium acidity, displaying red-fruit (plum)

flavors. The more concentrated, age worthy examples deliver darker fruit and can develop some chocolate complexity on the nose. However, it can also be very smooth if grown at higher elevations where cooler temperatures restrict the alcohol levels. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Petit Verdot

Petit Verdot is a red wine grape traditionally blended in small proportions into [Bordeaux](#) wines. It delivers deep-coloured, intense, tannic wines with aromas of violets, black fruit, coffee and leather. It ripens slowly, making it a good grape for warmer climates, such as [Barossa Valley](#) and [McLaren Vale](#) in Australia, where it can be found as a single variety. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Petite Sirah

Petite Sirah has no relation to [Syrah](#). It is grown in Australia, California, France and South America, as a standalone varietal wine and in blends. It typically displays blackberry fruit, chocolate and spice, with high tannins and acidity that enable good examples to age 10+ years. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Pinot Noir (Pinot Nero or Spätburgunder)

While its spiritual home is in [Burgundy](#), France, great expressions of Pinot Noir are being produced in several cool-climate sites across the world, particularly in places like [California](#), [Chile](#), [Oregon](#) and [Otago Valley](#) (New Zealand). Pinot Noir is a thin-skinned grape that produces wines that are often lighter in body, colour and tannins. It typically delivers intense red fruit aromas and flavours, and is rarely blended with other grapes. It develops complex aromas with age, including mushroom, leather and dried earth. The finest Burgundies can age for 20-30 years. The grape tends to be difficult to grow and produces higher quality wines from lower

yielding vines. When pressed immediately after picking, Pinot Noir produces a white juice that is an important component in Champagne and sparkling wines. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Pinotage

Pinotage is a hybrid created by crossing [Cinsault](#) and [Pinot Noir](#) that is grown almost exclusively in [South Africa](#). Its best examples express concentrated black fruit flavours with distinct cocoa, coffee and spice aromas, and occasionally meaty or gamey aromas. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Prieto Picudo

Prieto Picudo originates in Castilla y León in northern [Spain](#). It produces deeply coloured reds with high acid and medium to high tannin levels, and pronounced aromas of red fruit (strawberries and raspberries) and floral notes. It is often produced as a single varietal and sometimes blended with [Mencía](#) or [Tempranillo](#). [\(Go to top\)](#)

Sagrantino

Sagrantino is found in [Umbria](#) and Perugia in [Central Italy](#). Its low-yield vines produce powerful wines with considerable tannins, body and concentration of black fruit, which all contribute to its ability to age. Sagrantino of Montefalco is made exclusively of Sagrantino grapes, whereas the relatively easier-drinking Montefalco Rosso is a blend of Sagrantino, [Sangiovese](#), [Cabernet Sauvignon](#) and [Merlot](#). [\(Go to top\)](#)

Sangiovese (Brunello)

Sangiovese hails from [Tuscany](#), where it supplies the foundation for Brunello di Montalcino, Chianti and Vino Nobile de Montepulciano. This grape lacks deep colour, but delivers enticing sour cherry aromas coupled with dark chocolate, and is noted for its high acidity and tannins. It produces a range

of wines, from lively young reds with juicy, cherry flavours to more concentrated, long-lived reds carrying that develop flavours and aromas of leather, spice, savoury and herbs. Some examples of Sangiovese also exist in Argentina, Australia and California. It has good potential for ageing. The wine tends to best after five years of ageing but it can last for 10 years or more. Good vintages from Brunello di Montalcino and Chianti Classico will continue to drink well at age 25. [\(Go to top\)](#)

St. Laurent

St. Laurent is one of [Austria](#)'s leading red grape varieties. Best consumed when young, this wine is lively and projects juicy cherry fruit. It is similar in body and style to [Pinot Noir](#) or [Gamay](#). [\(Go to top\)](#)

Syrah (Shiraz)

Syrah is best known for the wines of Hermitage, Côte Rôtie and Cornas in the [Northern Rhône](#), as well as famed Penfold's Grange, in [Australia](#). In cooler climates it delivers notes of blackberry, raspberry, violets, cracked pepper, olive, smoke, and spices, and it develops chocolate, licorice, vegetal, savoury and meaty notes as it ages. In warmer climates like Australia, it tends to display more black fruit, pepper and chocolate. With high tannins and acidity, this grape ages well. Good vintages should be given at least 10 years before drinking, while less optimal vintages should need at least five years before being consumed. Syrah is an important blending partner, especially with [Grenache](#) and [Mourvèdre](#) (GSM) in the Côtes du Rhône (including Châteauneuf du Pape and Gigondas) and [Australia](#). [\(Go to top\)](#)

Tannat

Tannat is best known as the main grape in the wines of Madiran in southwest [France](#) where it is the majority of blends

including Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Fer. It earned its name from the highly tannic wines that result from its thick skin. Although these wines are very austere when young, they can deliver more approachable, spicy red wines with age. Outside of France, Tannat can be found in Uruguay, where Basque settlers planted vines in the 19th century. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Tempranillo (Ull de Llebre, Tinta del País, Tinta de Toro, Cencibel, Aragonês, Tinta Roriz)

Tempranillo is grown all over central and northern [Spain](#), but its spiritual home is in [Rioja](#). It is deep coloured and textured with fine-grained ripe tannins. It produces wines with lush strawberry, mulberry, red and black cherry fruit flavours, and develops flavours of spice, black tea, tobacco, dried leaves and leather as the wine ages. It often makes up 70% or more of a blend, commonly with [Garnacha](#), Mazuelo and [Graciano](#). In Rioja, Tempranillo is traditionally matured in American oak (with increasing use of French oak) to create a concentrated and structured wine capable of significant (40+ year) ageing. It can be found throughout Spain (Cigales, Toro, Navarra) and Portugal, as well as in Argentina, Languedoc-Roussillon, California and Australia. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Teroldego

Teroldego is cultivated almost exclusively in [Trentino-Alto Adige](#) in northeast Italy. It is a deep-coloured, vibrant and juicy red wine with medium to low tannin and moderate acidity. Most Teroldego should be consumed within 3-5 years, but some fine examples can age well beyond that. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Xinomavro

Xinomavro wines predominantly come from Naoussa, Goumenissa

and Amyndeo in northern [Greece](#). Xinomavro means “acidic and black”, and true to its name these wines have high acidity and rich tannins. In Naoussa, the best examples can resemble Barolo. The acidity and tannins of these wines enable them to age for 5-10 years. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Zinfandel (Primitivo)

Zinfandel originally comes from [Southern Italy](#), where it is known as Primitivo. In Southern Italy, it is at home in Campania and Puglia, where it produces deeply coloured reds with berry fruit, full body and higher alcohol. It also grows in [California](#), where it is capable of delivering a range of styles and flavours, from light and fruity reds and rosés with raspberry notes to more structured and concentrated bramble and blackberry fruit with pepper and chocolate. Its best examples come from low-yielding old vines, which provide greater complexity. Except in this latter case, Zinfandel is best drunk within a few years of release. Overall, Zinfandel can age 6-10 years after bottling. [\(Go to top\)](#)

Zweigelt

Zweigelt was created in the 1920s from a crossing of Blaufränkisch and St. Laurent and is currently [Austria](#)’s most widely planted red grape. Its styles range from young, easy-drinking reds to more structured, rich wines that are matured in oak. It displays floral and red cherry notes with texture and spice. [\(Go to top\)](#)