

# White Wines

## White Grape Varietals

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### Albariño (Alvarinho, Cainho Branco)

Albariño is a distinctive white wine grape grown in Galicia, [Spain](#), and the Vinho Verde region of [Portugal](#). It produces light wines that are generally fresh and acidic, reminiscent of a lighter [Viognier](#). The grape's flavour profile comprises peaches, apricots and sometimes with a hint of minerality or almond. These wines can age gracefully and some growers are now experimenting with oak ageing to provide a richer, more rounded texture. The finest Albariño wines come from the [Rías Baixas](#) region of Galicia. ([Go to top](#))

### Arneis

Arneis is a light, delicate white grape from [Piedmont](#), Italy. Once on the verge of extinction, the grape's popularity has rebounded in recent years with the rediscovery of its aromatic

characteristics. Wines made from Arneis display floral, stone fruit, melon and citrus notes. The vines' low yield and susceptibility to mildew make it difficult to grow, but the sandy, chalky soils of Roero in Piedmont suit it just fine. ([Go to top](#))

## Assyrtiko

Assyrtiko is [Greece](#)'s best-known white grape. Its wines are dry with crisp acidity and pronounced aromas and flavours of citrus and mineral notes (often described as 'steely'). It is produced as a standalone wine or blended with [Sauvignon Blanc](#) and [Sémillon](#). Some great examples come from Santorini, where some vines are more than 75 years old. ([Go to top](#))

## Chardonnay

Chardonnay adapts well to a range of climates and soils, making it one of the world's most widely planted white grapes. Its home is [Burgundy](#). Outside of France, it is planted widely in [Australia](#), [California](#), [Chile](#), and [New Zealand](#). When grown in cooler climates, Chardonnay can produce wines with green apple, pear, citrus and sometimes mineral notes. In warmer climates, this wine's aromas can be more tropical, but it can also lose some acidity as it ripens. Chardonnay integrates well with oak, producing richly textured wines, some of which can age for 20-30 years (e.g. Burgundy). ([Go to top](#))

## Chenin Blanc (Pineau de la Loire or Steen)

Chenin Blanc is best known for the wines coming from Savennières and Vouvray in the [Loire](#), but is also found in [South Africa](#). It comes in a range of styles: sparkling, dry, off-dry, sweet and dessert wines. The best examples from the Loire display vibrant aromas and flavours of citrus, green fruit, lanolin, wool, honey and stone or mineral. These wines

wrap these flavours in a steely, fresh, acidic frame that helps make Chenin Blancs some of the most age-worthy white wines in the world. For example, a young Savennières is very closed in its youth and shouldn't be consumed for several years. In South Africa, where it is also known as Steen, Chenin Blanc carries more tropical fruit flavours and less minerality. Chenin is also well regarded for sweet wines in the Loire, including Bonnezeaux and Quarts de Chaume within the Coteaux de Layon. Weather and vintage variations play an important role in the character and style of Chenin Blanc from year to year. ([Go to top](#))

## Falanghina

Falanghina is found in [Campania](#) in Southern Italy. It can range in style from slightly off dry to bone dry and is generally enjoyed as an easy drinking white with concentrated fruit flavours of green apple and orange blossom and sometimes mineral notes. ([Go to top](#))

## Fiano

Fiano hails from [Campania](#) in Southern Italy. In particular, the volcanic soils of Avellino help lead this grape to its best and most aromatic expressions. Fiano is prone to oxidation and did not historically produce compelling wines, but recently this has been solved with the introduction of modern winemaking techniques. Fiano is now known for fresh, easy-drinking and well-balanced wines that deliver citrus, honey and nut aromas and flavours. ([Go to top](#))

## Friulano

Friulano comes from the [Friuli-Venezia-Giulia](#) region in northeastern Italy, and was known as Tocai Friulano prior to 2006. It is known for stone fruit (peaches and apricot), orange/citrus and honey aromas, a light to medium body, and higher alcohol and lower acidity relative to other whites. ([Go](#)

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## **Furmint (Zapfner or Mosler)**

Furmint is best known for being the primary grape in Tokaji Aszú, the famed sweet wine from the Tokaj-Hegyalja region northeastern Hungary. For this wine it is often blended with Hárslevelű and sometimes Muscat. Furmint is prized for its complexity and finesse, but its high acidity enables Tokaji wines to improve after 10 years or more. A well-developed Tokaji should offer peach, apricot, orange, honey, marzipan, nut, spice and smoke aromas and flavours. [\(Go to top\)](#)

## **Garganega**

Garganega is best known as the main grape in the wines of Soave in Italy's [Veneto](#) region. It can produce light-bodied aromatic wines with enough acidity to balance the aromas and flavours of citrus, lemon and, in particular, a telltale almond note. [\(Go to top\)](#)

## **Grenache Blanc (Garnacha Blanca or Garnatxa Blanca)**

Grenache Blanc can be found across southern [France](#) and northeastern [Spain](#). It is often part of white blends in Châteauneuf-du-Pape and the Côtes du Rhône. It is widely planted in Spain's Alella region and found in small amounts in the [Priorat](#). This grape's lower acidity sets it up to 'soften' white blends, and its tendency to oxidize easily requires attentive winemaking to successfully bring it to glass. As a single varietal, it often delivers full-bodied whites with green fruit and stone fruit aromas. [\(Go to top\)](#)

## **Gewürztraminer**

Gewürztraminer is the second-most widely planted grape in [Alsace](#), but great examples are also seen in [Trentino-Alto](#)

[Adige](#) in Northern Italy, and in [California](#) and [New Zealand](#). Gewürztraminer is typically golden hued and gives off truly unique lychee and floral aromas as well as orange blossom, honey and spice. It is naturally high in sugar and acidity, which makes it suitable for very fine sweet wines capable of noticeable longevity (up to 10 years). ([Go to top](#))

## **Glera (formerly Prosecco)**

Glera is an Italian grape, referred to as Prosecco until 2009. (The Prosecco name now refers to grapes grown in a distinct region in Italy including Valdobbiadene and Conegliano.) Glera has a distinctive elderflower aroma as well as those of peach, lemon and green apple. In Prosecco it is often blended with up to 15% of other grapes including Bianchetta, Perera and Verdiso, but the best Prosecco is often from 100% Glera grapes. ([Go to top](#))

## **Godello (Verdelho or Gouveio)**

Godello is a lesser-known white grape grown in Galicia, in northwestern [Spain](#). It is also found in northern [Portugal](#), where it goes by the name Verdelho. Once on the verge of extinction, plantings have recently increased due to its rising popularity. Great expressions of this grape now exist across Valdeorras, [Ribera Sacra](#), [Bierzo](#), Ribeiro and Monterrei. These wines range from crisp and light-bodied to rich and full-bodied when aged in oak. In both cases, these wines often display compelling peach, apricot and mineral aromas and flavours, and have more body than Albariño, for example. ([Go to top](#))

## **Greco (Greco Bianco or Asprinio)**

Greco is an ancient grape grown in Southern Italy. In [Campania](#), it is used to make Greco di Tufo, and in [Calabria](#), it produces the sweet Greco di Bianco. As with Fiano, improvements in cultivation and winemaking techniques have

increased quality of these wines in recent years. Greco di Tufo is a light-bodied white with delicate peach aromas and flavours and balanced acidity. ([Go to top](#))

## **Grüner Veltliner (Zöldvelteleni)**

Grüner Veltliner is [Austria](#)'s most widely planted grape, representing more than one third of vineyard plantings. The best expressions of Grüner can be found in the Wachau, Kamptal and Kremstal regions. It is known for subtle aromas and flavours of citrus, celery, honey and white pepper. ([Go to top](#))

## **Kerner**

Kerner is young. In fact, it didn't exist before 1969, when it was developed by crossing [Riesling](#) and Trollinger. The grape grows mostly in the Rheinhessen and Pfalz regions of [Germany](#). It ripens easily, has high yields and sugar levels, which make it popular among growers. It is often blended into white wines (like Liebfraumilch) but as a single varietal, Kerner wines are light and aromatic. Some very compelling examples have recently emerged from [Trentino-Alto Adige](#) in Northern Italy. ([Go to top](#))

## **Loureiro (Loureira)**

Loureiro is perhaps best known as part of the blend in the light and refreshing Vinho Verde whites from northern [Portugal](#). In Galicia, [Spain](#), it is blended with [Albariño](#) and [Treixadura](#) to produce stunning and delicate white wines in the regions of [Rías Baixas](#) and Ribeiro. ([Go to top](#))

## **Macabeo (Viura, Maccabéo, Maccabeu)**

Macabeo is widely grown across [Spain](#). It is known as Viura in the still white wines of [Rioja](#), while in the Penedès region it is blended with [Xarel-lo](#) and [Parellada](#) to make sparkling Cava.

It endures heat, resists oxidation and provides weight and body to a wine. Its flavour profile can vary widely based on how it is cultivated, from floral and grapefruit aromas to honey and nut notes when aged in oak. ([Go to top](#))

## Malvasia

Malvasia encompasses a group of grape varieties that includes Boal, Malvasia, Malvasia Toscana, Malvasia Puntinata, Malvoisie and Malmsey. These grapes run the gamut of wine styles and colours. At present, it is most relevant in the form of Vin Santo in [Italy](#) as well as Madeira (Boal or Malmsey) in [Portugal](#). In Madeira, it displays deep colour with aromas and flavours of peach, nut, orange peel and honey. ([Go to top](#))

## Marsanne

Marsanne is the most widely planted white grape in the northern Rhône, and forms the backbone of wines from Crozes-Hermitage, Hermitage, Saint-Joseph and other white blends. When blended, it contributes colour, body and weight to white wines, as well as subtle aromas and flavours of citrus, peach, nuts, and mineral notes. It is popular among winemakers, and is either blended with [Roussanne](#) and [Viognier](#), or increasingly produced as a standalone grape in the Côtes du Rhône and [Languedoc-Roussillon](#). (It is not permitted in Châteauneuf-du-Pape.) Further afield, the world's oldest examples of Marsanne can be found in [Victoria](#) (Australia), and other plantings can be found in [California](#). ([Go to top](#))

## Melon de Bourgogne

Melon de Bourgogne is the grape behind Muscadet, a wine made in the western end of the [Loire](#) valley, where it meets the Atlantic coast. It resists the region's cold weather and frost, and produces good, consistent yields. Traditionally, the wine is light bodied and mineral, but is not otherwise

particularly distinctive. As a result, winemakers, especially those in the Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine region, will often let the wine rest *sur lie*, or in contact with leftover yeast, to imbue it with more complexity and depth. Overall these wines should be enjoyed within a year or two of bottling. ([Go to top](#))

## Müller-Thurgau (Rivaner)

Müller-Thurgau is widely planted throughout [Germany](#) and generally produces mild, fruity wines. The grape was developed in 1882, with the intention of crossing [Riesling](#) and Sylvaner to develop a wine with the best of both breeds. Instead it ended up as a cross of Riesling and Madeleine Royale with the best of neither. But the vines grew easily and yielded large quantities, so German winegrowers planted it extensively. Müller-Thurgau is one of the primary grapes in Liebfraumilch-style wines, including Blue Nun. In Italy's [Trentino-Alto Adige](#) region, some producers have discovered that growing the grape at higher elevations leads to lower yields and adds much needed acidity. With some careful vine management, Müller-Thurgau can produce fresh, light-bodied and balanced whites that are easy drinking and deliver great value. ([Go to top](#))

## Parellada

Parellada grows almost exclusively in the Penedès region of [Spain](#), where it provide lemon/citrus flavours and acidity when blended with [Macabeo](#) and [Xarel-lo](#) in traditional sparkling Cavas. It is also made into a simple dry white wine. ([Go to top](#))

## Pinot Blanc (Klevner or Weisseburgunder)

Pinot Blanc is traditionally found in [Alsace](#), in [Germany](#), [Austria](#) and [northeastern Italy](#). It is not a complex wine: it tends to be dry and light-bodied, with simple, green fruit and melon aromas. In Alsace, it displays a hint of spice, whereas

in Italy it delivers subtle mineral notes and green fruit. ([Go to top](#))

## **Pinot Grigio (Pinot Gris, Ruländer or Grauburgunder)**

Pinot Grigio was historically found across [Alsace](#), [Germany](#) and [northern Italy](#), but has recently expanded to Canada, [Oregon](#) and [New Zealand](#). It is seldom blended, but on those occasions Pinot Blanc is a likely partner. In Alsace, it can be medium to full-bodied, and richer, with slightly higher alcohol and medium acidity, delivering citrus, honey and spice notes on the nose. In Italy, it sees a wide range of quality, but the best examples typically come from [Friuli-Venezia Giulia](#) and [Trentino-Alto Adige](#), where the wines have pronounced aromas and flavours of green fruit, and remain balanced by sufficient acidity. In Oregon, Pinot Gris delivers a truly unique body and texture, a concentration of green pears and spice, and sometimes a hint of honey. ([Go to top](#))

## **Ribolla Gialla (Rebula)**

Ribolla Gialla hails from the [Friuli-Venezia Giulia](#) region in northern Italy and Slovenia. It has seen a resurgence of popularity in recent years. Ribolla Gialla expresses more citrus and nutty flavours on the palate than it does on the nose. Gravner is a notable producer. ([Go to top](#))

## **Riesling**

Riesling stands out for its ability to retain its identity across a range of styles while also reflecting the *terroir* of the place where it is grown. It delivers vibrant flavours balanced by acidic tension to its wines, and maintains a pronounced and complex nose. It is seldom blended, nor is it influenced by oak. While its home is [Germany](#) and [Alsace](#), France, fantastic examples can be found all over the world. In

Germany, it shows delicate precision from dry to sweet wine styles, serving up apples, peaches, apricots and petrol/mineral notes on the nose and palate. In Alsace, the grape leads to full-bodied, steely wines with more honey and additional mineral complexity. In [Australia](#)'s Clare Valley and Eden Valley, Riesling is fuller-bodied and dry, with distinctive lime and mineral accents. Riesling has enormous capacity to age, and its finest examples can last more than 50 years. ([Go to top](#))

## **Roussanne (Bergeron or Altesse)**

Roussanne originates from Northern Rhône, but it is also found in southern France and the Savoie, as well as Italy and California. Roussanne can be difficult to grow and often produces low yields. It is known for producing austere, acidic wines, which makes it less appealing as a standalone variety. However, it blends well, adding floral and lime aromas to wines from Crozes-Hermitage, Hermitage and Saint-Joseph. In addition, this structure and acidity endows these wines with great longevity. In the Southern Rhône, Roussanne is blended into the whites of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. ([Go to top](#))

## **Sauvignon Blanc**

The idea of Sauvignon Blanc has been utterly redefined by [New Zealand](#), where it is prized for its dry, high acid wines with pronounced intensity of gooseberry and lemon flavours, herbaceous notes (bell pepper, asparagus) and flint. Given this, it can be easy to forget that Sauvignon Blanc is traditionally from [Bordeaux](#) and the [Loire](#) valley (including Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé). In Bordeaux it drives the dry white wines of the Graves appellation, and small amounts are blended with [Sémillon](#) to produce the sweet wines of Sauterne. In the rest of the world, great examples have emerged from [Chile](#), [California](#) (Fumé Blanc) and [South Africa](#) (Constantia in particular). ([Go to top](#))

## Sémillon

Sémillon grapes are used to make the sweet Sauternes from [Bordeaux](#) and dry, full-bodied and uniquely textured wines from the Hunter Valley in [Australia](#). In Sauternes, Barsac and Monbazillac, Sémillon provides body, texture and alcohol complemented by small amounts of [Sauvignon Blanc](#) for its acidity and aromas. As a dessert wine, Sauternes can be approached young, but the wine begins to shine in its complexity with more than 10 years of ageing. In Australia's Hunter Valley, Sémillon tells a very different story. Hunter Valley Sémillon is higher in acid and lower in alcohol than in Bordeaux, but still possesses the body and complexity, especially after five years of bottle aging. While Château d'Yquem is likely the most renowned Sauternes producer, other notable French producers include Suduiraut and Rieussec. In Australia, de Bortoli (Noble One) and Yalumba make compelling Sémillon dessert wines. ([Go to top](#))

## Torrontés

Torrontés is almost exclusively found in [Argentina](#), where it is made into a youthful, fresh and often medium to full-bodied wine with pronounced floral notes and a distinctive elderflower aroma. ([Go to top](#))

## Treixadura (Trajadura)

Treixadura is found in Galicia (northwestern [Spain](#)) and northern [Portugal](#). It dominates the white wine blends of Ribeiro, and plays a smaller part of the wines in [Rías Baixas](#), Monterrei and [Ribera Sacra](#). In each case, it adds fresh citrus/lemon flavour and a hint of spice, but usually relies on other grapes like [Albariño](#) to provide the needed structure and acidity. ([Go to top](#))

## Verdejo

Verdejo hails from the [Rueda](#) wine region in Spain, where it must be at least 50% of the white blend with [Viura](#) and [Sauvignon Blanc](#). Verdejo has structure, body and texture, as well as delicate and youthful aromas and flavours of green fruit. It develops complexity with age, which can be enhanced when matured in oak. ([Go to top](#))

## Vermentino (Rolle, Pigato, or Favorita)

Vermentino has historically been found in northwestern Italy, and in [Tuscany](#), [Umbria](#), [Sardinia](#) and Corsica. Many different version of the grape now exist, but the most successful examples display aromas of stone fruit and honey in a medium- to full-bodied structured wine. ([Go to top](#))

## Viognier

Viognier historically comes from the Northern Rhône. Its best expressions can be found in Condrieu and Château-Grillet, but it has expanded beyond this region into the [Côtes du Rhône](#), [Languedoc-Roussillon](#), [Australia](#), [California](#) and [New Zealand](#). Viognier can be difficult to grow, owing to its low yield and susceptibility to a range of diseases, but when it succeeds, it displays wonderful aromas and the flavours of peach, apricot and honey served up with lovely texture and body. Interestingly, it is also blended (usually no more than 5%) with [Syrah](#) in France's Côte Rôtie and parts of Australia, where it adds finesse and aroma to this unusual but enticing blend. Overall this wine does not age, and should be consumed within 3-5 years. ([Go to top](#))

## Xarel-lo (a.k.a. Xarello, Pansa Blanca or Cartuxa)

Xarel-lo is mostly found in Penedès ([Spain](#)), and is an

important component of traditional Cava, where it adds a pronounced and distinct mushroom note to the wine, which historically has been one of Cava's notable characteristics.

Some producers have begun making a standalone version of Xarel-lo, which displays lime and mineral flavours and is gradually gaining traction with consumers. [\(Go to top\)](#)