

Characteristics to Identify Red Vinifera Grape Varieties and Varietal Wines

Color

Light red/cherry, translucent

Pinot Noir
Gamay Noir (Village Beaujolais)
Dornfelder
Nebbiolo (outside of Barolo and Barberesco districts)
Rosso di Montalcino
Lemberger/ Blaufränkisch/ Blue Franc
Zweigelt
Cinsault

More deeply purple especially when <3 yrs old

Petite Sirah
Petite Verdot
Malbec
Nero d'Avola

Deep red with hints of garnet or browning (even when <5 yrs old)

Barolo/Nebbiolo
Sangiovese/Chianti/Brunello
Aglianico
Tawny Port
Any red aged in heavily toasted wood barrels for long periods



COLOUR OF WINE

Visual Inspection

This chart will help you build your mental repertoire for identifying wines by hue and intensity. You will find it useful for blind tasting and assessing quality.

Hue in Red Wine

Pigment in red wine is affected by several factors including pH level. Wines with red-based hues tend to have a lower pH than wines with blue-based hues.



Advice for Viewing Wine

Look at wines under bright, diffused, natural lighting over a white background for best results. Hue is best observed at the point where the wine meets the glass.

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Nose

Predominantly Red Fruit Aromas

Pinot Noir
Gamay Noir
Grenache
Dornfelder
Cinsault
Lemberger/ Blaufränkisch/ Blue Franc

Predominantly Black Fruit Aromas

Cabernet Sauvignon
Left Bank Bordeaux
Agiorgitiko
Aglianico
Montepulciano
Mourvèdre /Monastrell
Nero d'Avola
Petite Sirah
GSM / Southern Rhone/ Côtes du Rhône

Mixed Red and Black Fruit Aromas

Merlot
Barbera
Valpolicella
Sangiovese
Syrah
Nebbiolo
Tempranillo/Red Rioja
Zinfandel

Blue Fruit

Cabernet Franc
Petite Sirah

Green Pepper (usually when fruit is not fully ripened)

Cabernet Franc
Caberbet Sauvignon
Merlot

Palate



Acidity:
Selected
Classic
Red Wine
Styles

	Diminished	Moderate	Elevated	High
Bordeaux		—————		
Northern Rhône Syrah			—————	
Châteauneuf-du-Pape	—————			
Côte d'Or Pinot Noir			—————	
Chinon			—————	
Barolo / Barbaresco			—————	
Brunello di Montalcino			—————	
Barbera d'Asti				—————
Chianti Classico			—————	
Amarone della Valpolicella			—————	
Rioja / Ribera del Duero		—————		
Barossa Shiraz		—————		
South Australian Grenache		—————		
Napa Cabernet Sauvignon		—————		
Oregon Pinot Noir		—————		
California Zinfandel		—————		
California Merlot	—————			
Mendoza Malbec	—————			

Prominent Acids

Barbera

Pinot Noir

Sangiovese

Valpolicella

Aglianico

Barolo/Nebbiolo

Brunello/ Ross di Montalcino

Côtes du Rhône

Mourvèdre

Nero d'Avola

Lemberger/ Blaufränkisch/ Blue Franc

Low Acid

Agiorgitiko

Dolcetto

Cru Beaujolais

Tempranillo

Carménère

Grenache

Merlot

Red Wines

Body ²	Medium + Acid ³	Medium Acid ⁴	Low Acid
Low-medium	Blaufränkisch	Beaujolais/Gamay	Mavrodaphne
	Catawba		Brachetto d'Acqui
	Pinot Noir	Frappato	
	Red Burgundy	Lambrusco	
	Sparkling Shiraz	Zweigelt	
Medium	Barbera	Cabernet Franc	Agiorgitiko
	Chambourcin	Concord	Dolcetto
	Refosco		Cru Beaujolais
	Sangiovese	Lagrein	Tempranillo
	Valpolicella	Malbec	Valdigue
Full	Aglianico	Cab Sauvignon	Carménère
	Barolo/Nebbiolo	Meritage/Bordeaux	Grenache
	Brunello	Petite Sirah	Merlot
	Carignan	Pinotage	
	Côtes du Rhône	Syrah/Shiraz	
	Mourvèdre	Zinfandel	
	Nero d'Avola		
	Norton		
	Refosco		
	Tannat		

1 - From DeLong's Grape Varietal Table <http://www.delongwine.com/wgvt.php> - accessed 2/22/2019

2 - Caveats in this categorization are that the grape-growing climate and vintner's techniques will change acidity levels and sometimes the body of the wine. Warm climates produce lower acid wines and the use of oak can increase the perceived body of the wine as well as lower the acidity.

3 - For red wine and food pairings, treat medium+ acid as high acid to match with more acidic foods.

4 - For red wine and food pairings, treat medium acid as low acid to match with more savory/low acid foods.

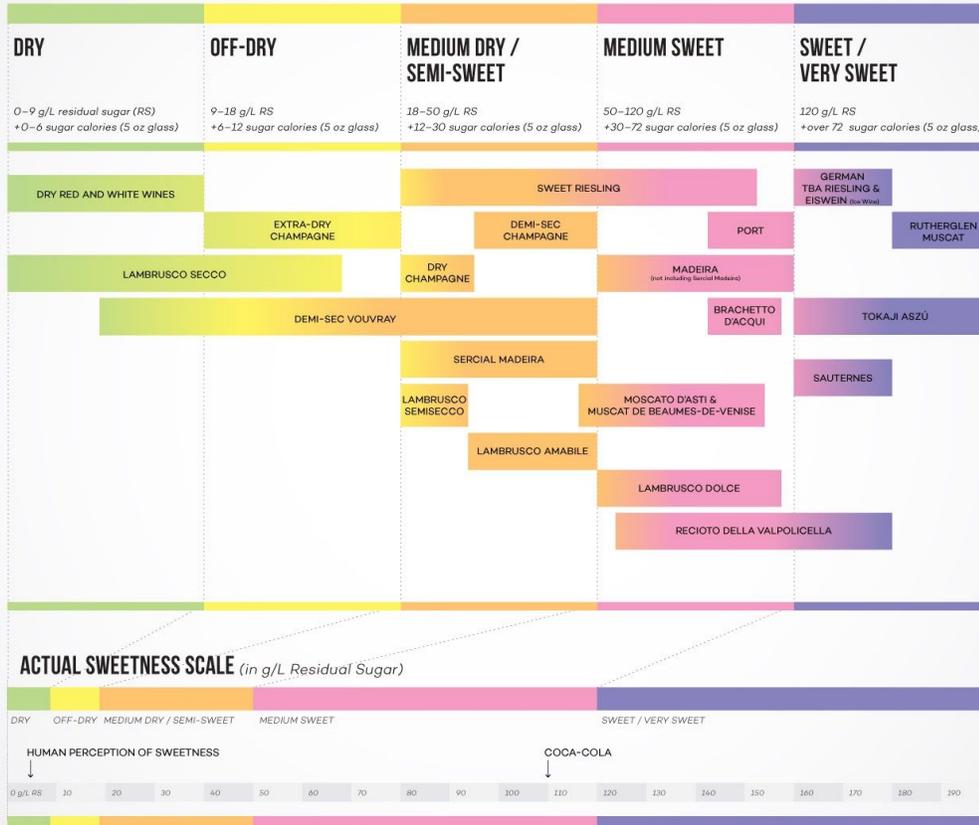
Red Wines sometimes or often made with residual sugar

Zinfandel
 Lambrusco
 Brachetto
 Cabernet Franc

Almost always Sweet Red Wines

Port

SWEETNESS IN WINE



Tannins in Wine

High/Full Tannins

Syrah from Northern Rhone region

Cabernet Sauvignon

Sangiovese

Petite Sirah

Barolo/Nebbiolo

Monastrell

Low Tannins

Merlot

Carménère

Tempranillo

Pinot Noir

Carignan

Frappato

Lambrusco

Grenache/Garnacha

Alcohol Levels in Wine

(any red wine in warm climates can have high levels of alcohol but characteristic grapes that produce high or low alcohol levels are listed below)

High alcohol levels

Zinfandel (California)

Grenache/Garnacha

Low alcohol levels

Bardolino

Brachetto

Zweigelt

Pinot Noir (some especially cool climate)

Lambrusco

Mencia (some)

Beaujolais (some)

Summary of blind tasting clues

Old World/New World

Old - minerality, fruit less identifiable, occasionally some earthiness

New - Fruit prominent, tropical ripe fruits, more intense fruit aromas

Grape Variety/Blend

Intensity of fruit aromas, floweriness, specific fruits (raspberry, cherry, cranberry, red plum, black cherry, cassis (black currant), blackberry, black raspberry, black plum, oak treatment, and use of residual sugar

Climate

Depending upon specific grape variety suspected:

Cool- color lighter, acid level more prominent, intensity of aroma less, body and ETOH lower

Warm/hot- color deeper, acid level less, aromas prominent and more tropical, body and alcohol higher

Possible Countries

Knowledge of where specific grapes are geographically commonly grown, type of oak if used, and residual sugar styles used

Age Range (generalities, but aroma intensity altered by cold climate/warm climate growing conditions)

1-2 years - intensity of fruit aromas for suspected grape varieties and suspected country and region

3-5 years - less prominent fruit aromas

5+ years - color changes to more browning/garnet; oxidative, and nutty aroma and taste

Vintage

Based on age range suspected

Region/Appellation

Based on suspected country, and different climates and knowledge of usual styles in different regions of that country

Quality and regional hierarchy

Balance, complexity, and finish of tastes and aromas, and knowledge of different AVA's, AOPs, DOCs, etc

Red Grapes and Wine

Vinifera

Cabernet Franc (KA-behr-nay FRANHN)

This parent of Cabernet Sauvignon is often used as a blending grape in Bordeaux-type blends. However on its own it tastes of raspberries and minerals and is soft with less tannins, less body, lighter color but more perfumey than its offspring. Sometimes in cool climates it has green pepper nuances along with its red fruit and occasional blueberry fruit overtones.

It is produced as an excellent varietal in Chinon and Bourgueil in the Loire Valley in France. There are also good examples from Canada, the northeast and the west coast of the United States, and from Australia, New Zealand, and Chile.

Cabernet Sauvignon (KA-behr-nay saw-vin-YAWN)

Cabernet Sauvignon is a popular grape grown in many countries. It makes full-bodied red wines. It is used as a varietal grape (at least 75-85% of a wine) and in blended wines such as Bordeaux or Meritage wines. In cool climates a Cabernet dominant wine may taste of black currants, cedar wood, with green pepper aromas and be medium to high in acid and moderately tannic. A Bordeaux wine from the French region of Médoc would be typical of this cooler climate style.

When the Cabernet Sauvignon grape is grown in a temperate or warm climate it will tend to have deeper fruit flavors of black currants, black cherry, black olive and occasionally mint, eucalyptus or menthol aromas and be somewhat less acidic. A full-bodied California Cabernet Sauvignon would typify this style.

Grenache (French gra-NOSH), ***Garnacha*** (Spanish Gar-NAH-cha)

Grenache and Garnacha are the same grape. As a young wine it produces red fruit aromas and flavors such as raspberry, cherry, strawberry like a pinot noir but with hints of white pepper. It can be a charming light to medium bodied wine with soft tannins on its own and low acidity, but it is often blended with other grapes. French Grenache is used in Southern Rhône wines and as a rosé wine.

Spain seems to have more old vine Garnacha which will have less berry flavors and more flavors of leather, tar and toffee, especially if it is aged, full-bodied, high in alcohol, and with soft tannins.

Australia has also had success with Grenache as a fine wine varietal while United States wineries tend to blend it or use it for rosé wine.

Malbec (MAHL-bek)

Malbec is a native grape to southwest France commonly used to blend in French Rhône and Bordeaux blends. In Cahors France, near Toulouse, it is still used as a varietal where it is likely to taste of plum, raisins and tobacco and be somewhat acidic.

However as a varietal in its own right, it has come to prominence in Argentina where there often are violet aromas along with the plum and a soft ripe lush texture and a purple hue to a young Malbec. It has ample tannins somewhat between a Cabernet and a Merlot. Chile, Australia and New Zealand also are producing good Malbec wines.

Merlot (mare-LOW)

Merlot was traditionally a blending grape for Bordeaux wines in France and other places. It is softer and fruitier than Cabernet Sauvignon and came to prominence after the 1991 '60 Minutes' television show titled "The French Paradox." Less experienced wine drinkers rushed to this softer, milder red wine as its own varietal for health reasons. The 2006 movie "Sideways" tried to tarnish Merlot's reputation as the number one red wine varietal consumed in the United States but it still reigns strong. One of the most expensive wines in the world, Château Petrus, produced in Bordeaux France is almost all Merlot grape so it can be a great wine.

In cool climates such as the northeastern United States, Merlot can have some leafy, green pepper aromas but when produced in temperate or warm climates it usually tastes of blackberry and plum fruit with soft, velvety tannins and not acidic.

Nebbiolo (neh-b'YOH-loh)

Nebbiolo is grown predominantly in northern Italy where it produces full-bodied dry, tannic red wines with a long finish called Barolo and Barbaresco or just Nebbiolo. The wines show subtle fruit, mostly blackberry, cherry, truffle, spice, rose and tar character. Old style Barolo wines were strongly tannic and could not be drunk much before 10 years of age. With modern techniques using smaller French barrels for aging they are now drinkable at 5-6 years.

Pinot Noir (PEE noh NWAHR)

The Pinot Noir grape can be finicky, and may be difficult for vintners to grow and produce good wines. In Burgundy, France the Pinot Noir grape has been used to make fine aged wines that are highly sought after. There, red Burgundies wines are ripe with floral, cherry and spice aromas and medium-bodied. They are rich and yet delicate and a mineral element comes through with a long finish.

Other areas of the world such as New Zealand, Central California, and Oregon produce younger, light to medium-bodied, fruitier Pinots with perfume of raspberries, strawberries, cherries and soft, light tannins. Pinot Noir tends to be more acidic than other red wines and can be similar to a Grenache in its aromas and flavors except it is a little more flowery while Grenache has often has a leathery aroma.

Because of its higher acidity and light to medium body, Pinot Noir pairs well with lighter dishes such as pork or chicken and even fish with acidic sauces.

Sangiovese (san-joh-VAY-zeh)

The Sangiovese grape is the mainstay grape of central Italy. It is used to produce Chianti, Brunello and Vino Nobile as well as just plain or blended Sangiovese varietals called Super Tuscans. It is not aromatic but has dark fruit tastes, blueberry, plum, violets, licorice, earthy and dusty. It is acidic with sometimes astringent tannins and medium to full-bodied. It can be similar to a Cabernet Sauvignon but it is usually more acidic which pairs well with tomato and vinegar-based Italian cooking.

Syrah (see-RAH) / **Shiraz** (cher-RAHZ)

Syrah and Shiraz are the same grape. Its home has been in southern France where it is made into a varietal wine in the northern Rhône area. There, the wines are 100% Syrah and will have a blackberry fruity flavor with notes of black pepper and sometimes mint. It will be medium to full bodied with strong tannins. In the

southern Rhône area it is blended with other Mediterranean grapes into Cote d' Rhône and Châteauneuf Du Pape wines.

Australia, however, now produces the most Syrah grapes which they call Shiraz. In the Barossa Valley of Australia, Shiraz wines will be black currant and black cherry fruit flavored, full-bodied and creamy with smooth tannins and a dark chocolate finish. From the Clare Valley in Australia there may be a milk chocolate finish. Tar, smoke and spice are often noticeable elements.

Good California Syrahs may have a little more red fruit flavors such as raspberry and cherry along with black plum, currants, and white pepper and spice flavors.

Tempranillo (te-prah-NEE-yoh)

Tempranillo is to Spain what Cabernet Sauvignon is to California. Tempranillo grapes are used to produce the great red Spanish Rioja and Ribera del Duero wines and dry red wines of Portugal. Sometimes the wines are pure Tempranillo and sometimes they are blended with other grapes. The grapes can make wines of different styles from light and fruity to full-bodied, fine wines with great tannins. Tempranillo usually tastes of spicy plum, blackberry, raspberry, and black cherry when young, and coffee, tobacco and mineral as they age. In cooler climates, Tempranillo usually makes a low acid wine that takes well to oak aging. Acidity can range from low to sometimes high and tannins can range from soft to harsh. There are many different grape names in Spain that are synonyms for Tempranillo.

Zinfandel (ZIHN-fuhn-dehl)

Zinfandel grapes originally came from Croatia by way of Italy and brought by immigrants to California where they have come to prominence for decades. Italian grapes are called Primitivo (pri-meh-TEE-voh) and the Croatian parent grape, Crljenak (tsoorl-YEN-ak).

In warm climates such as California, Zinfandel tends to produce fruity raspberry, blackberry, boysenberry, cranberry, and black cherry aromas with those same tastes. It may have subtle spices such as cinnamon, black pepper and licorice. Usually the wines are medium-bodied, with light to medium tannins, but they can be high in alcohol.

Zinfandel is a versatile grape although its youngest wines tend to be the best. It can be made into a blush or rosé wine (White Zinfandel) that is a fruity, easy drinking jug wine, a great dessert wine from raisined grapes and a full-bodied, oaked wine with soft tannins.

Red Blends

Almost all red grape varieties are blended with other grapes both red and sometimes white. If they are predominantly (75% or more) one variety they have been listed above under varietals. There are blends, however, that do not have one predominant grape. Just as with the white wines, there is a current trend to "discover" new and unusual combinations of grapes by blending varietals.

Historically, the most common blends have been some Bordeaux wines and California Meritage that do not have a predominant Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot component, and Southern Rhône combinations. The Bordeaux/Meritage blends will often have Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Malbec, and Carménère in them while the Rhône combinations may include Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Cinsault, Roussanne and other grapes.

Bordeaux (bore-DOE)

Bordeaux wines come from France and are always blends of several different red grapes including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Malbec and sometimes Carménère. The Cabernet and Merlot predominate and generally speaking, blends range from about 70% Cab and 30% Merlot in one region (left bank) to 70% Merlot and 30% Cab in the other main region. Thus sometimes there are significant tannins while other times the red blend is softer on mouthfeel.

GSM / Southern Rhone

Predominantly blends of the red grapes **Grenache, Syrah and Mouvedre** but often with other Southern Rhone grapes in the blend. These are medium acid, medium to medium plus bodied wines with mostly muted black fruit tastes and medium tannins. The most well known are the Chateauneuf du Pape wines from near Avignon, France but Australia as well as other new world area produce this type of blend.

Valpolicella (val pohl ah CHELLA)

Commonly, this is an Italian Veneto red blend made of Corvina, Molinara and Rondinella grapes. Most often it is made as a medium dry, acidic, red table wine with cherry and licorice flavors, although it can have a slightly bitter but not unpleasant finish.

Variations on regular Valpolicella include an Amarone version in which selected grapes are dried in barn lofts for 5-6 months concentrating sugars and phenolic flavors and undergo a separate fermentation before being added to a standard Valpolicella wine. Then the fermented Amarone grapes are added (repassed) to another batch of regular Valpolicella wine and refermented to make a Ripasso version that is sort of between a classic Valpolicella and an Amarone version in richness and alcohol level.

Other Reds

Agiorgitiko (ah gee OR ee co) A Peloponnese, Greek grape produced in a dry, off dry, rosé, or sweet red wine style with medium body. It is fruity, spicy, with dark fruit flavors, low acidity, and robust tannins,

Aglianico (AHL lee ON eh koh) A southern Italian grape that produces a full-bodied, high acid and tannin wine. Has flavors of leather, white pepper, black fruits and cured meat that when aged, and develops soft dusty aromas of dried figs and sun-tanned leather.

Barbera (bar-BAY-rah) This grape is common in northern Italy and historically has been used to make everyday wines for the working man. Recent vinification methods using small oak barrels have resulted in complex wines. The wine has red fruit, currants or blackberry aromas but often are not distinct. Sometimes it is raisin or prune-like if overripe. It is high in acid, low in tannins and medium to full bodied. There are also examples from California, Argentina, and Australia.

Carménère (kahr-mhen-NEH-re) Originally from France, this Merlot-like grape was mostly used in blending wines for Bordeaux-type blends. Chile is now the main producer of this grape and produces it as a pure varietal as well as using it in red wine blends. When grown in warm climates where it can fully ripen, it tastes of blackberry, plum, tobacco and has soft tannins. Cool climate or unripe Carménère may exhibit green pepper and vegetal tastes and aromas.

Cinsault (SIN sow) This Southern Rhone grape produces a medium to full-bodied wine which is aromatic with perfume, strawberry, cherry, musk, and vanilla aromas. It is low in tannin and typically used as a blending grape with Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre as a classic Southern Rhone Blend. It is also widely planted in South Africa.

Dornfelder (DORN felter) Behind Pinot Noir, it is the second most grown red wine grape variety in Germany where it produces a medium-minus-bodied wine tasting of red fruit with high acid and low tannins. In new world areas it is more medium to medium plus bodied with dark cherry, blackberry, elderberry, plums, and soy sauce tastes.

Dolcetto (dohl-CHETT-oh) A northern Italian grape with a soft black cherry fruity flavor along with licorice and almonds. It is a low acid wine but otherwise similar to Barbera although somewhat smoother. Usually it is meant to be drunk young and does not age that well. There are some Australian and California plantings but the best examples are from the Dogliani and Alba regions of northern Italy.

Gamay Noir (ga-MAY NWAHR) This is the French grape used for producing Beaujolais (BOE-zjoh-lay) wines. Its main home is in the southern Burgundy region of France where it produces a light alcohol, low tannin, raspberry and cherry flavored wine that often has tutti-fruity flavors of banana, pears, and even bubble gum due to the way the whole grapes are fermented. It is usually produced as a table wine but there are good aged examples from the recognized growth (Cru) areas of Beaujolais.

Lambrusco (lam BRU scoh) In the Emilia-Romagna area of Italy, several Lambrusco grape varieties are used to make light, low alcohol sparkling wines with varying levels of sweetness meant to be drunk young. Dry Lambrusco wines are also made from the Lambrusco di Sorbara varietal which is considered the best varietal. The best dry Lambruscoscsmell and taste with strawberry notes and a slight bitter finish.

Lemberger/ Blaufränkisch/ Blue Franc (LEM ber ger / blau FRAN kish) This is Austria's leading quality red variety where it is known as the *Pinot Noir of the East* because of its spread and reputation in Eastern Europe. It is also grown in Washington State and New York and is sometimes sold under the name Blue Franc. The wine is fruit forward with medium body and cherry and raspberry flavors.

Montepulciano (mon teh pull chee AHN noe) Predominately grown in central Italy, this grape has fruit aromas and tastes of blackberries, plum and spices but is much lower in acidity and has softer tannins than the Sangiovese based wines in Tuscany. It is one of the few red Italian wines With low acidity and thus pairs better with the more savory cheese-based pastas. Because of its softer flavor and more gentle tannins it is best consumed young and with food.

Mourvèdre (moor-VEH-druh) /**Monastrell** (maw-nehs-TRELL) - Known in France as Mourvèdre, in Spain as Monastrell and in California as Mataro, this grape is commonly used in southern Rhone style red wines often blended with Grenache and Syrah. As a varietal it will have slight blackberry, violet and herbal flavors, often with an earthy or farmyard aroma. It can make a full-bodied wine with good tannins on its own with sometimes a "gamey" and spicy taste. It is found mostly in the Bandol region of southern France. southern Spain, California and Australia.

Nero d'Avola (NEH-roe DAH-voe-lah) - This Sicilian grape produces dark purple wines that taste of plum and chocolate with good tannins and a moderate level of acidity. Most Nero d'Avola is from Sicily, although Australia is starting to produce small amounts.

Petite Sirah (pah TEET ser RAH) This is a southern France grape that has also found a home in California. It produces wine that is deep inky purple in color and it is often used in California to provide body and color to Zinfandel wines. As a varietal wine it tastes of earth, chocolate, plum, black pepper and blackberry but sometimes has a meaty taste. It usually has very prominent tannins.

Petit Verdot (pah TEET ver DOH) This dark, violet-black, inky grape from France has traditionally been used in small percentages for blending in Bordeaux wines to add color and tannins to the blends. It has found a home also in Virginia where it is often vinified as its own varietal wine. As a varietal wine, it is very full-bodied, fruit forward, with blueberry, plum, violet and spicy notes and high in acid and tannins.

Pinotage (pee noh-TAHJ) - Pinotage was bred in, and is still somewhat confined to, South Africa as a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsault. It has a distinct taste. Its wines are a mixture of mulberry, plums, and blackberry fruit with overtones of roasted marshmallows. Sometimes it will have harsh tannins and a volatile acidity like a raspberry vinegar.

St Laurent This is a highly aromatic, dark-skinned wine grape variety, indigenous to Austria and the Czech Republic. It yields flavors of cranberry, cherry, raspberry, dark cherry, blackberry, smoke, and spice.

Tannat (ta NAT) This grape is from southwestern France in the Madrian area, but also it has found a recent home as a common red grape in Uruguay. Its wines have a high natural acidity, full body and very firm tannins. Aromas and tastes tend toward stewed red berries or red raspberries.

Touriga Nacional (tor-EE gah NAH seeunh NALL) This is the most prized grape used in Porto Wines from the Douro region of Portugal. Recently it has also been the mainstay of still, dry red wine blends from the Douro and Dão regions in Portugal. The wine produced is dense with dark black fruit aromas and tastes and strong tannins. It has been likened to the Cabernet Sauvignon varietal due to the small berries and intense dark fruit tastes.

Xynomavro (ZEE noe MAV roe) The name translates as "black sour" and is the most widely planted grape in Greece. The grape produces a full bodied red wine with firm tannins and high acidity. It has been likened to Barolo wines made from the Nebbiolo grape.

Zweigelt (Z'VIE gelt) This is the most common red wine grape in Austria. It produces a cherry-like wine with pepper spice that peaks when young. It is light to medium-bodied and has similar characteristics to Pinot Noir.