Characteristics to Identify White Vinifera Grape Varieties and Varietal Wines

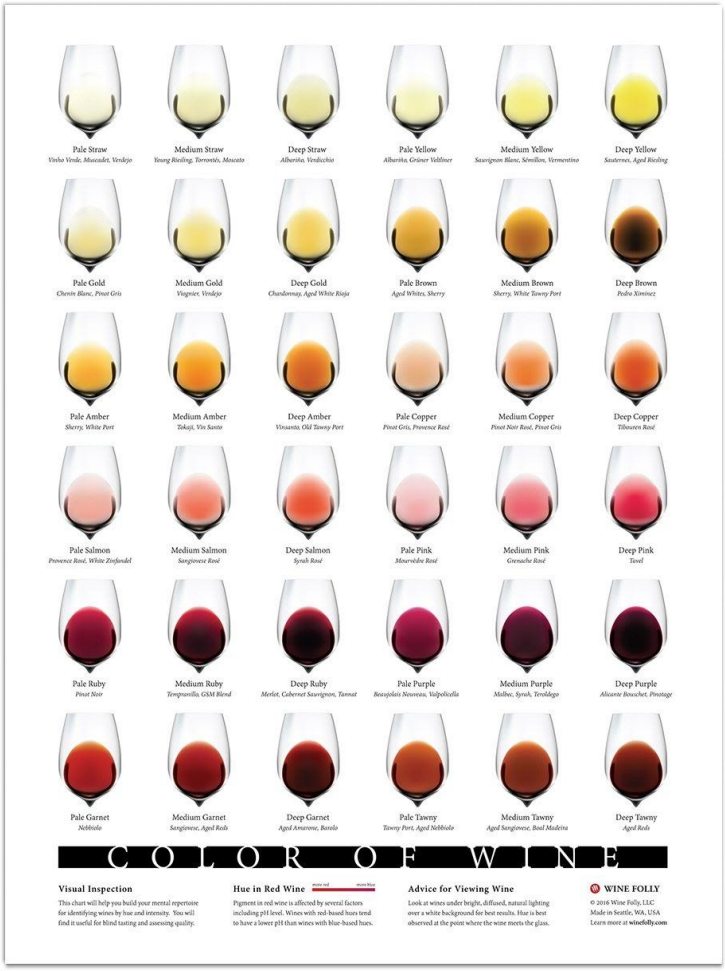
Color

Very pale or lightly yellow

Albariño
Assyrtiko
Grüner Veltliner
Rkatsiteli
Riesling (cool climate)
Sauvignon Blanc
Verdicchio
Vinho Verde

More deeply yellow or gold

Gewürztraminer
Godello
Petit Manseng
Vermentino
Vernaccia
Verdicchio
Sherry
Any white aged for 5 years or more or oak treated



Nose

Strong Aromatic, Floral Whites

Muscat / **Moscato** floral aroma include rose petal, orange blossom, and “grapey”
Gewürztraminer smells like face cream, cinnamon, lilac, orange blossom, bergamot, and honeysuckle
Torrontes a strong floral nose of flowers, and orange citrus fruit
Delaware
Diamond
Niagara
Scuppernong/White Muscadine
Traminette
Valvin Muscat
Vignoles

Prominent Aromatic

Albariño grapefruit, lemon, apricot, peach and citrus aromas
Chenin Blanc notes of honey, nuts, ginger, fig, apples, and white flowers.
Riesling when young has flowery, apple, pineapple, and honey aromas
Sauvignon Blanc tangy, citrus aromas

Sémillon white flowers, rich lemon, apricot and mango in warm climate
Viognier usually from warmer climate has floral, apple, pear, peach, apricot, tangerine, and orange aromas

Oak and white wines

Heavily new-oaked
Chardonnay

Sometimes lightly oaked but subtler
Chardonnay as white Burgundy, Chablis (old oak)
White Bordeaux blend (Sémillon, Sauvignon blanc, Muscadelle)
White Rioja blend 51-100% Viura, also Garnacha Blanca, Verdejo, Tempranillo Blanco, Malvasia,
Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay

Rarely oaked but some modern experiments with
Viognier
Chenin Blanc
Grüner Veltliner
Pinot Gris
Sauvignon Blanc marketed as Fumé Blanc
Southern Rhône white blends

Buttery malolactic treatment
Chardonnay

Cat's Pee/Gooseberry aromas
Sauvignon Blanc

Palate

Crispy Citrusy(Lemon, Lime, Grapefruit) Whites
Albariño lemon, grapefruit is prominent on the taste
Assyrtiko citrusy taste with mild flowery, honeysuckle overtones, minerally
Friulano a variant of Sauvignon Blanc. notes of herbs and citrus, wildflowers and pear aromas
Grüner Veltliner prominent citrus, white pepper, dill, gehrkin and herbal at the same time
Rkatsiteli quite dry, citrusy acidic and quince tastes,
Sauvignon Blanc grapefruit, lime, and gooseberry/"cats pee" aromas and tastes
Verdicchio citrus, peach, and almonds

Tart (Sour Apple, Pear) Acidic Whites

Chardonnay especially from a cool climate**,** apple, pear, green plum aromas. sometimes a steely, mineral taste
Chenin Blanc / Vouvray quite acidic unless sweetened, honey, nuts, fig, apples, and white flowers
Cortese/Gavi crisp with pleasant aromas of apples, almonds, lemony citrus fruits
Muscadet very crisp but left on lees to counteract with creaminess/toastiness.
Moschofilero spice and perfume, characterized by a "rose garden' bouquet, citrus and orange peel
Pinot Gris/Pinot Grigio but acid sometimes blunted with residual sugar
Riesling minerally, steely, tarry, earthy, peaches, green apples, quince

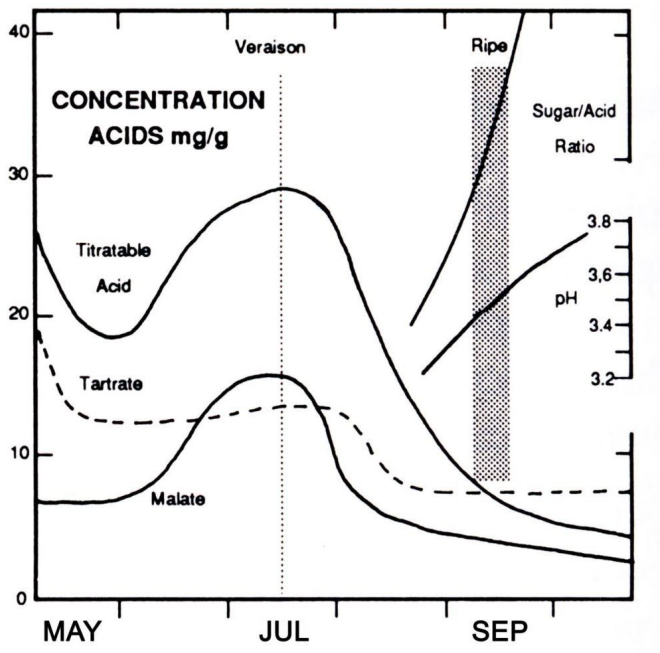
Low acid/savory Whites

Soave
Riesling (off dry)
Gewürztraminer
Grenache Blanc
Marsanne
Semillon
Viognier
Spanish White wines (Viura/Macabeo based)
Godello
Southern Rhone whites (with predominent Marsanne)
Malvasia
Moscato
Non Vintage Sparkling wines(extra dry or sec)

General Acidic Levels and Body in Different Grapes[1]
White and Rosé Wines

Body[2]	High Acid	Medium Acid[3]	Low Acid[3]
Light	Albariño	Assyrtiko	Arneis
	Muscadet	Cortese	Macabeo (Viura)
	NV Sparkling Brut	Friulano	Muller-Thurgau
	Riesling (dry)	Inzolia	Riesling (off-dry)
	Rosé of Zweigelt	Moschofilero	Soave/Garganega
	Sauvignon Blanc	Vernaccia	Sparkling Brut
	Vinho Verde	Vidal Blanc	White Zinfandel
Light-Medium	Chenin Blanc	Falanghina	Grenache Blanc
	Grüner Veltliner	Fiano	Malvasia
	Orvieto/Grechetto	Sparkling Ex Dry	Moscato/Muscat
	Pinot Blanc	Rosé d Anjou	Sherry dry/off-dry
	Seyval Blanc	Rosé of Syrah	Vintage Sparkling
	Tavel Rosé	Verdejo	
	Torrontes		
	Vermentino		
Medium	Chardonnay no oak	Petit Manseng	Chardonnay oaked
	Roussanne	Pinot Gris/ Grigio	Gewürztraminer
	White Bordeaux	White Rhone	Marsanne
			NV Sparkling SEC
			Semillon

1 - From Delong's Grape Varietal Table http://www.delongwine.com/wgvt.php - accessed 2/22/2019
2 - Caveats in this categorization are that if a white wine is left with residual sugar (off-dry, semi-sweet or sweet), that raises the perceived body of the wine and lowers the perceived acidity of the wine.
3 - To pair white wine and food, treat medium acid and low-medium acid to match with savory,/low acid foods.



Acidity: *Selected Classic White Wine Styles*

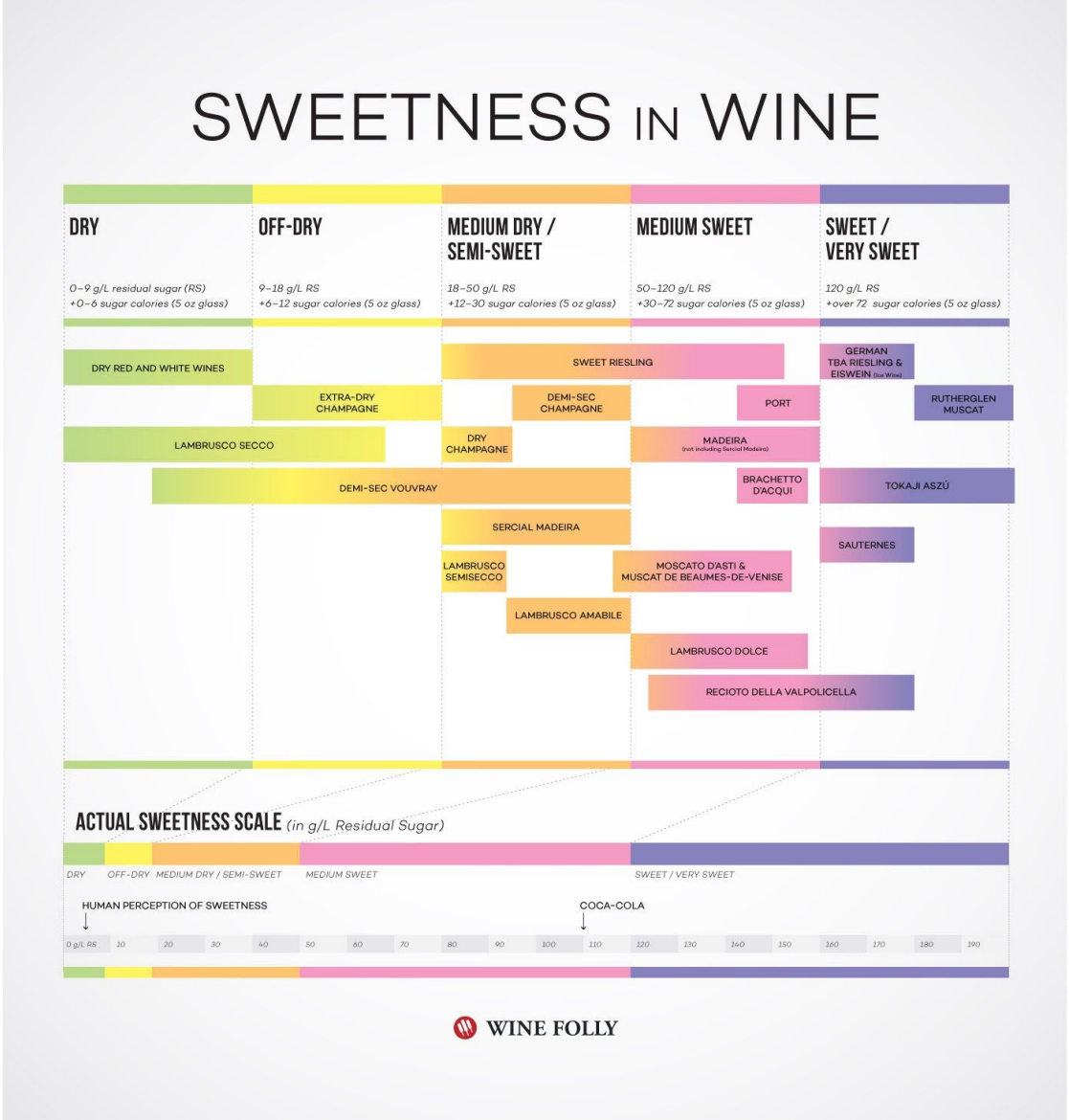
	Diminished	Moderate	Elevated	High
Côte d'Or Chardonnay			■	
Hermitage Blanc	■			
Condrieu	■	■		
Chablis			■	■
Sancerre			■	■
Muscadet				■
Vouvray				■
Alsace Riesling				■
Alsace Pinot Gris			■	
Alsace Gewurztraminer	■	■		
Italian Pinot Grigio			■	
Rías Baixas Albariño			■	
Austrian Grüner Veltliner			■	
German Kabinett / Spätlese Riesling				■
German Grosses Gewächs Riesling				■
Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc			■	■
Hunter Semillon				■
Clare / Eden Valley Riesling				■
Russian River Valley Chardonnay		■		
California Viognier	■			
Salta Torrontés		■	■	

White Wines Often (but not always) Made with Residual Sugar

Chenin Blanc / Vouvray
Gewürztraminer
Muscat / Moscato
Pinot Grigio / Pinot Gris
Riesling

Almost always Sweet White Wines

Late Harvest White Wines
Sauterne
Tokay
Sherry
Muscat Dessert Wines
White Ice Wine



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 (apple, citrus, floral, acidity type (malic, citric), 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 ETOH 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 deeper yellow; oxidative, nutty, and honeyed aroma and taste changes

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 knowlege of different AVA's, AOPs, DOCs, etc

White Wine Grapes

Vinifera

Sauvignon Blanc (SOH-vihn-yohn BLAHN)
Sauvignon Blanc can have many different tastes depending upon both climate and the ripeness at which the grapes are picked. Marlborough New Zealand is now considered to produce the classic Sauvignon Blanc. But even there where the climate is cool, dry, and sunny, growers can produce wines that range the gamut from herbal flavors to tropical flavors depending upon when they pick the fruit.

In cool climates generally, the Sauvignon Blanc grape takes on classic green, herbaceous flavors such as grass, green pepper, gooseberries, passion fruit, or elderflower. It has a dry, crisp, pungent taste and medium body. The French Loire Valley regions of Sancerre and Pouilly Fume, as well as the South Island of New Zealand, might yield examples of this type.

In temperate or warm climates the Sauvignon Blanc grape takes on melon, kiwi, fig, lime, and grapefruit aromas. Its wines still taste dry and are medium to full body but still acidic. California Sauvignon Blanc would be like this. Oak is used with Sauvignon Blanc only occasionally. That combination was popularized by Robert Mondavi when he produced his Fume Blanc, strictly a marketing name but usually indicating that the wine has been lightly oaked.

Pinot Grigio, Pinot Gris, (PEE-noh GREE-z-oh, PEE-noh GREE)
Pinot Gris (French name) and Pinot Grigio (Italian name) are the same grape. Pinot Blanc is a mutation of Pinot Gris and is just a lighter version of that grape. In general Pinot Gris produces a medium-bodied wine although it can sometimes be light-bodied when harvested early like in Italy or even full-bodied wine when it is late harvested and made into a sweet wine.

In most cool climates (Alsace France being an exception), Pinot Gris produces more acidic wines with apple, pear, and a mild flowery aroma with honeyed or honeysuckle overtones. Italian Pinot Grigio would be an example. Alsace in northeastern France has a cool climate but in the fall, the climate is dry and the grapes can have a long hang time in which they get continued sunshine for ripening. The results in Alsace are more flavors usually associated with grapes grown in a warm climate: melon, ripe bananas, and mango, and dry wine with low acidity.

In temperate (non-cool) climates such as Oregon and New Zealand, the Pinot Gris grape takes on aromas of flowers, almonds, nuts, apricots, and the wine is fruity, "fruit-forward", with low acidity.

Chardonnay (shar-dohn-AY)
In a cool climate, the Chardonnay grape takes on apple and green plum aromas. It may have a steely, mineral taste, with a light to medium body and medium to high acidity. The Chablis and Champagne districts of France would be examples of this. In aged bottles of older vintages, there might be a clover honey taste. Other white French burgundies (all Chardonnay grape) might be the same except less minerally and flinty due to a different soil.

In a more temperate (but not hot) region, Chardonnay will have pear, melon, peach, and occasionally banana, mango and fig aromas. It will be a medium acid, medium to full-bodied wine such as found in a South Australian Chardonnay.

Warm or hot climates may produce melon, peach, banana, mango and fig aromas but which are not pronounced. It would be a full-bodied, low acidity, high alcohol wine. An unoaked California Chardonnay would be an example of this. If the Chardonnay has undergone malolactic fermentation (an additional fermentation with oenococcus bacteria) and been fermented in small oak barrels, it might have rich, creamy

pear, fig, hazelnut, and vanilla (from the oak) flavors, with a long, luxurious finish and not acidic tasting at all.

Riesling (REEZ-ling)
The Riesling grape is one that really changes in taste according to the terroir from which it comes. It can be smoky, minerally, steely, tarry, earthy, flowery, or slightly spicy. Peaches, green apples, quince, and citrusy are common descriptors while riper versions from more temperate climates can taste apricot, pineapple, and honey. If grown in too warm areas it becomes a dull, indistinctive wine. Wine drinkers who prefer unoaked Chardonnays (or do not like most Chardonnays) will often delight in the fresh acidy taste of Rieslings. Some Rieslings may age in old oak vats or barrels but almost never see new oak since it clashes with the fresh taste.

Rieslings can be from dry to sweet and there even is a German classification of ripeness or grape quality scale: Tafelwein (table wine), Kabinett (dry), Spätlese (picked late), Auslese (selected grape clusters), Beerenauslese (selected individual grapes), and Trockenbeerenauslese (selected individual botrytized grapes). Eiswein is not part of the classification but is a sweet dessert wine designation. In general, the wines have more sugar from Kabinett to Trockenbeerenauslese but they do not necessarily taste sweeter in that continuum if the acid content rises to offset the residual sugar.

Albariño (Ahl-ba-REE-n'yo)
Albariño is currently one of Spain's most fashionable white grape varietals. It produces a lightly aromatic wine with grapefruit, lemon, like a Sauvignon Blanc, but from riper years and warmer climates, apricot and white peach scents, similar to a lighter version of a Viognier. The Rias Baixas region of northwestern Spain is the best-known producer. In Portugal, Alvarinho, the same grape with a different name, produces a light, low alcohol, unripe and acidic wine called Vinho Verde (literally "green wine"). It does not have the aromatics of a Rias Baixas Albariño wine, but it is often made with a little "frizzante", small bubbles that give a refreshing tingle to the palate. It can be a delightful summertime wine.

White Rioja (Spanish white wine)(ree-OH-hah)
White Rioja is usually made from the Viura grape although sometimes it is a blend of different white grapes. Generally, it is a lower acid grape and rather than very crisp, acidic, and refreshing, it is smooth, round, and goes well with savory food dishes. Usually, it does not have oak treatment.

Muscat (MUHS-kat)/***Moscato*** (muhs-COT-oh)
Muscat is more an extended family name for a group of closely related grapes than it is a single varietal. The three most prominent varietals are Muscat Ottonel, Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains, and Muscat of Alexandria. They all make dry wines, sparkling wines, sweet wines, dessert wines, and fortified wines. Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains is even considered by many to be the “original” grape from which all other varieties are descended. It is not the same as Muscadelle, Muscadet nor the American variety called Muscadine, but it does have a mild hint of that same spicy, flowery aroma and might include rose petal, orange blossom, and just plain “grapiness”. None of the wines are as perfumey as Gewürztraminer but they bring a pleasant aroma and lightness to the appetizer or food table.

Wines you might see from these grapes include Alsace Muscat, French Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise, German Muskateller, Austrian Muskat Ottonel, Italian Moscato d’Asti or Asti Spumante, and California Moscato or Muscat Canelli among others. It tends to be lower in acid than many white wines so it does not usually age well. It is often made on the sweet side.

Vouvray (Voo-VRAE) / ***Chenin Blanc***

Vouvray is a French region of the Loire Valley located in the Touraine district just east of the city of Tours in the commune of Vouvray dedicated almost exclusively to Chenin blanc.

The Chenin blanc wines of Vouvray are characterized by the grape's naturally high acidity. The perception of that acidity and style of wine will be determined based on the balance of sugar in the wine. Dry or "sec" styles will have more noticeable acidity than the sweeter "demi-sec" and "moelleux". The acidity is also a key component to the wine's aging ability. Depending on the style, Vouvrays can exhibit notes of honey, nuts, ginger, fig, apples, and white flowers. Vouvrays are often paired with rich, hearty dishes and flavorful sauces.

Gewürztraminer (guh-VURRS-trah-mee-ner)
Most people either love or hate wine made from the Gewürztraminer grape. It is a flowery, perfume laden wine with spice. Some describe a good Gewürztraminer as smelling like face cream, cinnamon, lilac, orange blossom, and citrus peel, bergamot and honeysuckle. If you like those scents, you will like Gewürztraminer. The grape is grown mostly in the Alsace region of eastern France and in Germany. Sometimes it is called Traminer especially in Austria and northern Italy but it is the same grape as Gewürztraminer. French or German vintners may even call their less aromatic grapes Traminer but it is still the same grape.

While most white wine grapes are generally high in acidity, Gewürztraminer tends to be low in acidity and thus has a shorter shelf life. It can be made quite dry, semi-sweet or dessert sweet and each style can have its own cheering section.

Because of its spiciness, Gewürztraminer pairs well with spicy foods such as those from India or the Pacific rim or with jerk spice from the Caribbean. It stands up to pungent cheeses such as Muenster and meats such as liver. You should taste a good example of this wine and you will not forget it nor have difficulty knowing which foods to pair it with.

Sémillon (seh-mee-YOWN)
Sémillon is a French grape that is often used for blending with Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle especially in the Bordeaux area of France to reduce their acidity and make a more complex wine. However, Sémillon is also the dominant grape of the sweet French Sauterne wines which are quite famous. They are long-lasting dessert wines which are produced from grapes which are affected by “noble rot” (botrytis fungus) that shrivels the grapes causing their sugars to be more concentrated.

As a varietal wine, Sémillon’s aromas include hay, white flowers and lemon in youth. Those notes turn honeyed and toasty with age.

Outside of France, Australia also produces dry Sémillon white wines as a varietal, blended, or as a sweet dessert wine. As a young varietal, Australian Sémillon, usually from Hunter Valley, is fuller-bodied than a white Bordeaux and has more of the warm climate flavors of apricots and mangoes. Although it does go with fish, its fuller body makes it equal to rich sauces, spicy foods, and even meats such as chicken and pork. Aged Sémillon tends to develop flavors of toast and honey.

Viognier (vee-ohn-YAY) (vee-oh- NYAY) (VEE-ohn-yay)

In cool climates such as Condrieu in the northern Rhône Valley region of southern France or in Virginia, Viognier wines may have peach, pear, and even violet aromas. They may have a fruity taste and medium-bodied mouthfeel which is still silky in nature.

Warm climate Viognier grapes produce wines with floral, peach, apricot, tangerine, and orange aromas. They are full-bodied and taste relatively less acidic than many other white wines. Sometimes Viognier will

have anise, fennel, melon, and fig fruit aromas and flavors that produce a creamy, lush finish but relatively non-acidic. California, the Languedoc in France, and the more northern areas of Chile (Limari Valley) might typically produce this type.

White Blends

The most commonly blended white wines are the white Bordeaux wines, Soave from Italy, and occasionally some pairings such as Chardonnay with Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio. There is a current trend in winemaking to blend multiple white varietals together to get unique blends that are even more complex and flavorsome.

Other whites

Assyrtiko (A SEER-tee-ko) - high acidity, a medium-bodied, minerally grape from Greece especially Santorini Island. Mostly citrusy taste with mild flowery, honeysuckle overtones.

Cortese/Gavi (core-TAY-see/ GAH-vee) - these dry, light-bodied wines are crisp and have pleasant aromas of apples, almonds, lemony citrus fruits and freshly mown grass with minerality.

Friulano (Fr'yoo-LAH- noe) - This grape is from the northeastern region of Italy (Friuli) between Venice and the Austrian border where it is known as Tocai Friulano and is believed to be a variant of Sauvignon Blanc. Its wines can have wildflowers and pear aromas but it also can offer notes of herbs and citrus. It is light to medium body and has balanced acidity, being less acid than Sauvignon Blanc.

Garganega (gahr-GAH-neh-gah) - This grape is usually blended with Trebbiano and sometimes a bit of Chardonnay to make Italian Soave (SWAH-vay), a medium-bodied wine in the Veneto region around Verona, Italy. On its own it tastes of almonds, plums and citrus fruit and occasionally a little herbal on the finish.

Grechetto (gra-KETT-oh) - A crisp clean moderate acidity wine with apple and peach tastes. It is often combined with Trebbiano grapes in Umbria Italy to make a wine called Orvieto.

Grüner Veltliner (GROO-ner FELT-lih-ner) - Commonly grown in Austria as their mass-market or jug wine, it is light to medium-bodied, citrus, and herbal at the same time with lentil, celery, and white pepper aromas. It is one of the few wines that pairs well with asparagus, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, and many slightly bitter greens.

Malvasia (mal-VEH-zgee-ah) Many different varieties of Malvasia make it difficult to characterize the wines made from them, Both white and red varieties exist and wines can be dry, sweet, fortified, sparkling, light to deep straw yellow color with rich fruit. Common aroma notes associated with Malvasia include peaches, apricots, and white currants., sometimes nutty, almond, and floral aromatics.

Marsanne (mahr-SAN) - This grape is predominantly grown in southern France and used for blending in white Rhône wines. It is generally a low acid wine. Recently Marsanne has gained some popularity on its own as a varietal in both Australia and France where it tastes citrusy and peachy when young and more honeyed with age.

Muller-Thurgau (miller TUR gaow) Often produced as a semi-sweet wine that is straw yellow with green hues and light to medium body. It has aromas of peach, green apple, and can be flowery, sometimes with a hint of Muscat character. On taste, it is low acid and minerally. Most commonly it is grown in the Mosel region of Germany, Austria, and northern Italy.

Melon de Bourgogne (mel LAWN dey bor GON ya) This grape from western France near the Atlantic port of Nantes is made into Muscadet (mus ka DEY) wine and often left on the yeast lees for many months adding a creamy aspect to an otherwise crisp, acidic wine. It is sometimes described as having tasted of apricot, burnt caramel, white raisins, honey, orange blossom, and honeysuckle.

Petit Manseng (peh TEE MAN seng) This white grape is mostly used for blending in southwestern France. As a varietal wine on its own in Virginia and North Carolina, it produces a distinctive yellow wine of high acidity with rich aromas of candied fruit and spice which are often complemented with flavors of honey, nuts, and pineapple. It is frequently bottled with some residual sugar or even as a sweet wine.

Pinot Blanc (PEE no blahnk) This white mutant of Pinot Gris produces a light to medium, acidic white wine with notes of pear, citrus, honey, green apple, lemon, and sometimes kiwi.

Rkatsiteli (rah KAT si TELLI) This is an eastern European grape also used to make wine in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York. It is usually made quite dry and acidic with crisp green apple, white peach, and quince tastes, although sometimes lacking in aromatic complexity. It is also used to make sparkling wines.

Rousanne (roux SAHN) This is a french southern Rhone grape that on its own makes high acid white wines with tastes of spiced apricot marmalade, honey, and pear with a flavorful, rich, oily texture. Most often, however, it is blended with the low acid Marsanne and Grenache Blanc grapes to make a savory, southern Rhone white wine.

Trebbiano (treb ee AHN no) This central Italian grape produces a light to medium yellow, low alcohol wine, tasting of golden apples but not very complex. It is often used as a blending grape although it is predominant in Italian Orvieto wine. In France, Trebbiano is known as Ugni Blanc where it is used as a base for Cognac brandy.

Torrontes (Tor-RON-taze) - This grape is uniquely Argentinean and produces a full-bodied strong floral wine, different from, but as strong as, a Gewürztraminer wine. Its nose is that of flowers, and orange citrus fruit and lemony on the taste.

Verdejo (vehr-DEH-yoh) Verdejo is a variety of wine grape grown in the Rueda region of Spain. It produces a full-bodied white wine that can be crisp with nutty overtones and sometimes accompanied by hints of honey.

Verdicchio (ver DEEK ee oh) wines that are sometimes colorless with noticeably high acidity that can come across on the palate with citrus and herbal notes. Grown mostly in the Verona (known as Trebbino de Lugana) and Marche regions of Italy and similar in nose and taste to Vermentin and Vernaccia.

Vermentino (ver men TEE no) Grown mostly in central Italy in Tuscany on the Maremma coast and island of Sardinia. It is made into a crisp but medium acidic wine with medium-plus body tasting of citrus, gooseberry and a light herbal or vegetal character. It pairs very well with vegetarian food dishes.

Vernaccia **(**ver-NAHTCH-cha) - This white wine grape is usually associated with San Gimignano in Tuscany, Italy. It produces a crisp wine with good acidity, citrus fruit, and herbs but sometimes butterscotch overtones and tannins on the finish. It also pairs well with vegetarian dishes.