

A large, stylized graphic of a wine splash in various shades of red and pink, centered on the page. The splash is composed of many overlapping, semi-transparent shapes, creating a textured, organic appearance. It is centered vertically and horizontally, with the text overlaid on it.

Aldiploma Module Four

Red Wine

The Main Red Grape Varieties

Now you've mastered white grapes, it's time to move onto the reds! In this module we'll cover everything you need to know about the main red grape varieties and how red wine is made.

1. Single Varietal Wines vs Blends

Wines are made from either one single grape variety or a blend (mixture) of different varieties. As little as two varieties can make up a blend, though a wine can also be made of many different varieties (Châteauneuf-du-Pape for example can use 13 for its red wines). Blends are generally used when the varieties complement each other, so one might have a better colour but be quite structured (Cabernet) and the other softer and fleshier (Merlot). The grapes are usually fermented separately and then blended together.

2. Making Red Wine

As learnt in the last module, the colour and flavour of wine comes from the skin of the grapes, so extracting these from the skins is fundamental when making red wine.

For white winemaking, the wine is fermented once the grapes have been crushed and pressed and the juice separated from the skins, but red wines are fermented with their skins.

For red wines, the winemaking process is usually as follows:

Crush the grapes – ferment the wine – press the skins – mature the wine (if applicable) – bottle

1. The black grapes are crushed and pressed to extract the juice from the berries
2. The crushed berries, skins and juice are moved to a fermentation vessel, such as a tank or barrel, where yeast is added (unless the fermentation is left to start naturally) to start the fermentation process
3. The skins need to be kept in contact with the juice to extract colour and tannin, so it has to be 'pumped over' (where the wine is regularly passed over the skins to keep contact) or 'punched down' (where the skins are regularly submerged under the liquid)
4. The wine is then drawn off (from all the skin, pulp and seeds), blended and then matured where required



3. The Main Red Grape Varieties

The four best known red grapes or 'noble' grape varieties are: Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah/Shiraz.

These are ones that have been planted all around the world even though they originate from a specific country.

We're now going to taste some of the key varieties – make sure you pour yourself a small sample of each of the wines listed below and remember to take a sip of water in between each one to cleanse the palate.

Pinot Noir

Flavour Overview:

Pinot Noir is a large berry with thin skins and so the resulting wines tend to be lighter in colour and with soft tannins – which is why it's often referred to as elegant. It can be tricky to grow in the vineyards, liking a cool, but not too cool climate, but it can make the most delicious wines, which is why growers and winemakers persevere with it!

Flavour-wise, Pinot Noir tends to make wines with red fruit favours like raspberry and cherry, with some savoury and spicy notes. If fermented or matured in oak, due to the delicate nature of the fruit, the oak will usually be French which will add further spicy notes. Premium Pinot can be aged in bottle for quite some time.

Key Regions - France

Burgundy

Pinot Noir is a French grape and is most famously at home, like Chardonnay - in Burgundy.

As with the wines in Module 3, Pinot Noir wines are often labelled by region or village rather than by grape variety, so you may not see Pinot Noir written on the label at all! Below are a list of the key ones to help you identify them in store:

- Côte d'Or (some of the most expensive wines in the world can be produced here)
- Côte de Nuits
- Nuits-St-Georges
- Volnay
- Gevrey-Chambertin

Similar to Chardonnay, there are different quality levels that range from generic Bourgogne to Premier and Grand Cru wines.

France – elsewhere

In the Loire, red Sancerre is made from Pinot Noir grapes and it is also one of the three Champagne grapes along with Chardonnay and Meunier.

The Rest Of The World

In Germany, Pinot is known as Spätburgunder.

It also makes fantastic wines further afield where Pinot Noir is found on the label; notably in New Zealand (Marlborough, Martinborough, Nelson and Central Otago for example), cooler areas of Australia (such as the Adelaide Hills) and South Africa (Walker Bay) and Chile.

California is also famous for its world class Pinot.

Food & Wine

Pinot Noir is great with food and can be enjoyed with fish dishes, such as tuna and salmon. It also pairs well with duck, game, venison and pork as well as beetroot or mushroom risotto.



Cabernet Sauvignon

Flavour Overview:

Cabernet Sauvignon is pretty much the opposite of Pinot Noir! Whereas Pinot has thin skins and large berries, Cabernet has thick skins and small, deeply coloured berries. Wines made from this grape tend to be deep in colour and have lots of tannins and flavour, which come from these skins.

Taste wise, the main aromas and flavours are blackcurrant with black cherry and some greener notes along with black pepper and mint. Its colour and structure also helps Cabernet Sauvignon to age well.

Key Regions

Bordeaux is home to Cabernet Sauvignon where it is often blended with a handful of other red grape varieties including: Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot.

Below are a list of key names and regions to look out for on the label of a Cabernet Sauvignon from Bordeaux:

- Médoc and Haut-Médoc (they include famous communes such as Margaux and Pauillac)
- Château Margaux, Lafite Rothschild, Mouton Rothschild, Haut-Brion and Latour (these are the five world famous 'first growths' producing top quality wines)
- Bordeaux, Bordeaux Supérieur or Cru Bourgeois (these are more purse-friendly wines which will be named as one of these three along with the name of the château)

The Rest Of The World

Cabernet Sauvignon likes a warm, moderate climate and is also grown with great success in Italy.

Further afield it is found in the Coonawarra and Margaret River regions in Australia, Hawke's Bay in New Zealand and in California; especially the Napa Valley.

Chile also produces excellent Cabernet Sauvignon, as does South Africa.

Food & Wine

With its rich structure and balance of tannin and acidity, Cabernet Sauvignon is a wonderful match with red meat, especially lamb and beef, as well as hard cheeses.



Merlot

Flavour Overview:

Merlot is a great blending partner with Cabernet Sauvignon because whilst Cabernet is all about colour and structure, Merlot has less tannin and is more rounded.

Its aroma and flavour is not as distinctive as Cabernet and it has the flavours of ripe plum and blueberry notes, though that can change according to where in the world it is grown.

Warmer Regions

These tend to produce wines with riper, dark fruits and chocolate notes.

Cooler Regions

These have more blueberry and cherry flavours.

Key Regions - France

Merlot is widely planted in Bordeaux, France.

The Rest Of The World

Outside of Bordeaux, Merlot is grown all around the world and this hugely popular variety can be found in Italy and in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Chile.

Food & Wine

Merlot is also great with meats such as burgers, sausages and pork. It is also good with roast vegetables, pizza and Shepherd's pie!



Syrah - Shiraz

Flavour Overview:

Syrah and Shiraz are the same grape! However, in France the grape is known as Syrah (same for New Zealand) but in many other New World countries such as Australia it is called Shiraz. Rather confusingly though, in some New World countries (for example South Africa) some wines are labelled Syrah and others Shiraz. Wines labelled as Syrah tend to be more European in style (more elegant and peppery), whereas wines labelled as Shiraz tend to be riper and fruitier.

However, wherever Syrah/Shiraz is grown it tends to have flavours of dark black fruits, such as blackberries. They also have hints of violets, pepper and even bacon! In Australian wines, you can also get richer notes of chocolate, mint and even liquorice.

Key Regions - France

Syrah is grown in the Rhône Valley in France, and most famously in the Northern Rhône where it is responsible for wines grown in places such as:

- Cornas
- Côte Rôtie
- St Joseph
- Hermitage
- Crozes-Hermitage

Elsewhere in France, such as the warm south of France, there are plenty of Syrah and Grenache blends made in places like Minervois, and Syrah is often blended into Fitou and Corbières.

The Rest Of The World

Shiraz is widely grown in Australia, especially in South Australia in the Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale. Shiraz is also very successful in South Africa, the Hawke's Bay region of New Zealand, California and Chile.

Food & Wine

As Syrah/Shiraz has notes of smoke and pepper, it is sensational with steak and barbecued meats. It will work with pretty much any beef dish though, whether it's a burger, roast beef, lasagne or a stew. Alternatively, try with ratatouille or nachos.



5. Other Red Grape Varieties

Aside from the four varieties above, there are a number of other red grapes that are extremely popular and are worth knowing a little bit about:

- **Carménère**
Predominantly found in Chile although it originated in the Bordeaux region of France – has a strong blackcurrant/cassis flavour
- **Gamay (Beaujolais)**
Supple with red fruits/mainly from Beaujolais in France
- **Grenache/Garnacha**
Is juicy with notes of pepper and cherry. Known as Garnacha in Spain and Grenache in France, where it is mainly found in the southern Rhône and warmer regions. There are some great Grenache wines from Australia too
- **Malbec**
Rich with black berry fruits. This grape is increasingly found in Argentina, though its roots are in France; in Bordeaux and Cahors
- **Nebbiolo (Barolo/Barbaresco)**
Notes of roses and cherries. It's famously found in the Piedmont region of northern Italy
- **Nero D'Avola**
Rich with chocolate and cherries. This is one of Sicily's best-known red grapes
- **Pinotage**
Rich with black fruits and spice. A cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsault, this is a South African variety and was created there in 1925
- **Sangiovese (Chianti)**
Structured with cherries and herbs. This Italian grape is found most famously in Chianti wines from Tuscany
- **Tempranillo (Rioja)**
Rich with dill and cherries, the dominant grape in Rioja where it is often aged in American or French oak, which adds notes of spice and vanilla to the fruit flavours. It is known as Tinta Roriz in Portugal

Tasting

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