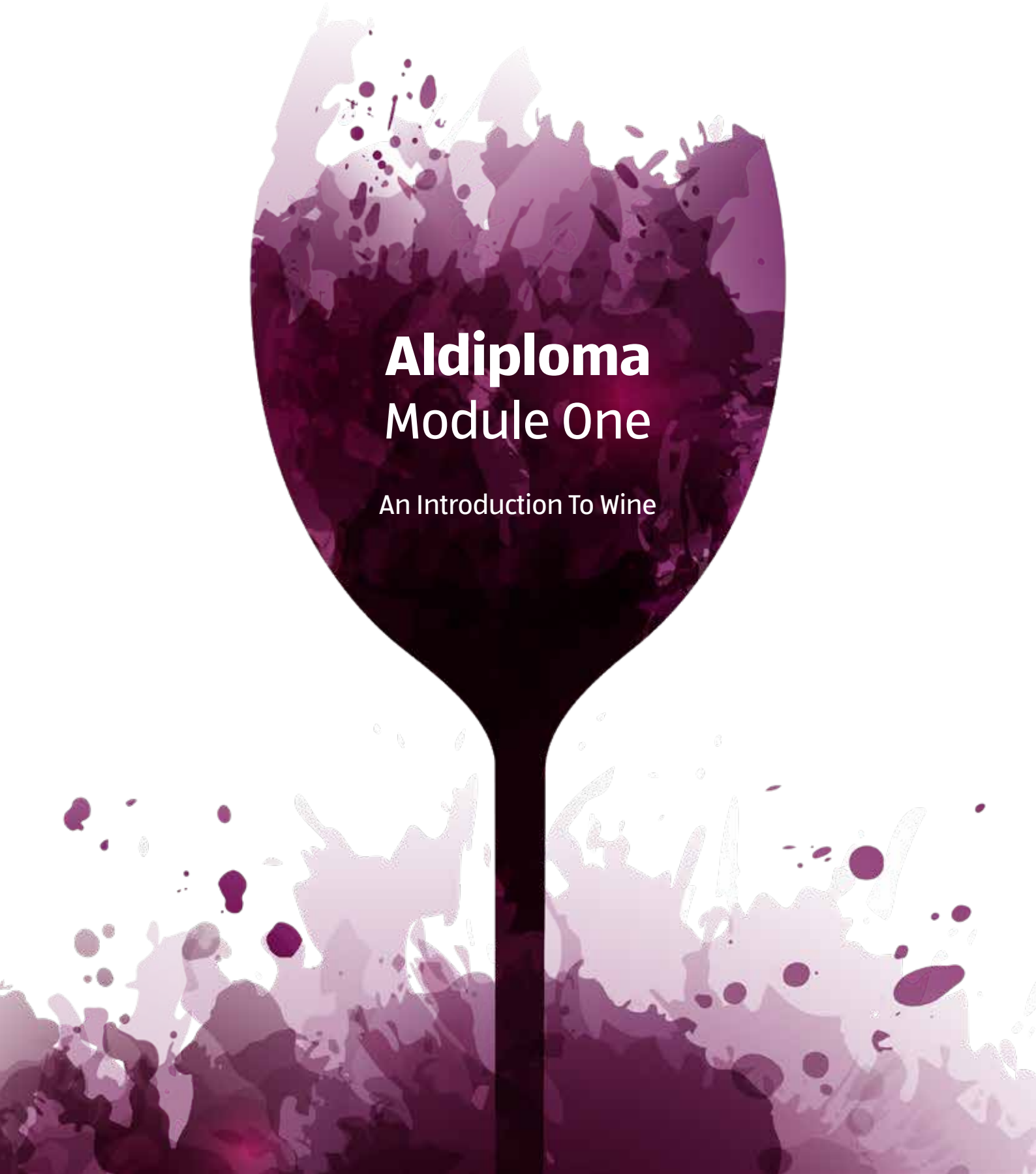


Aldiploma
Module One

An Introduction To Wine

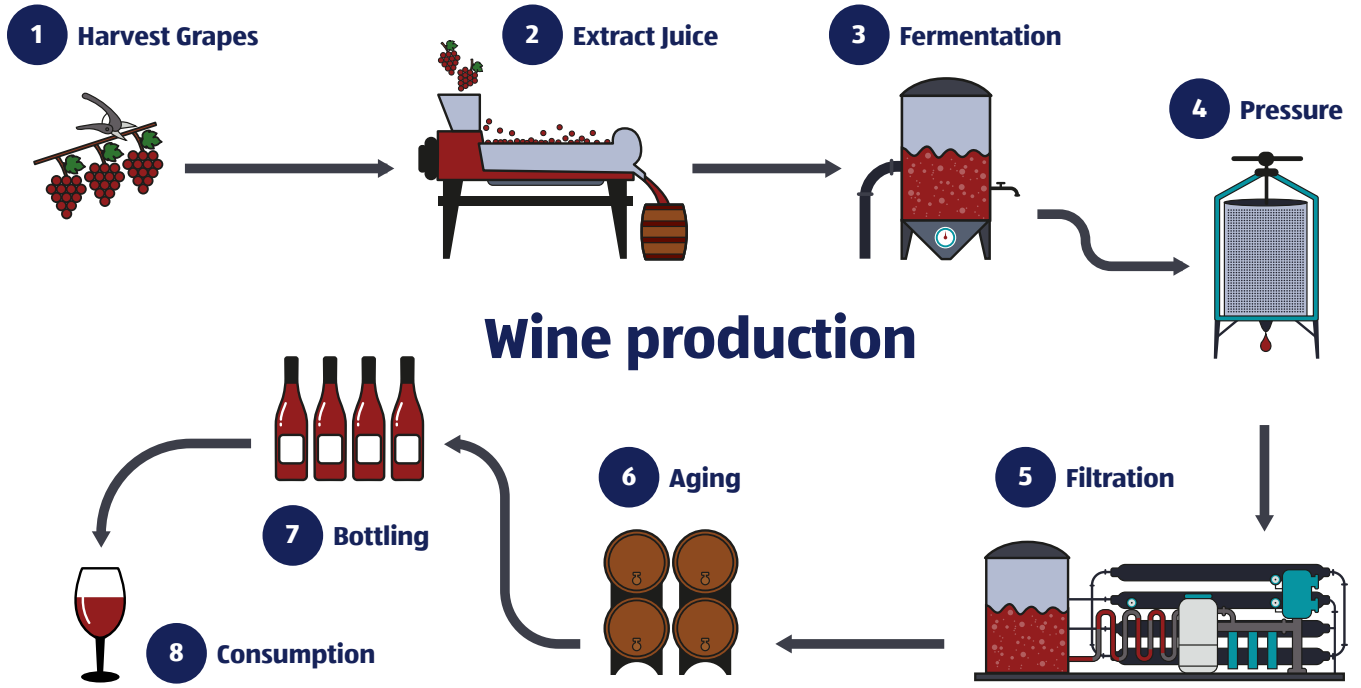
The Different Styles And Types Of Wine

This module will take you through the very basics of wine - including how to identify different types of wine and wine styles, as well as how to understand those pesky wine labels. We'll also provide you with a few key words and phrases to help you make sense of the wine world (and show off at a dinner party too).

1. What Is Wine?

First things first – What actually is wine? A basic description of wine is as follows:

Wine is a liquid that is created via alcoholic fermentation, when yeasts turn the sugars from the grapes or grape juice into wine (alcohol).



Sounds simple right? So why are there so many different bottles of wine out there and how can you tell which ones you will like?

2. Wine Types

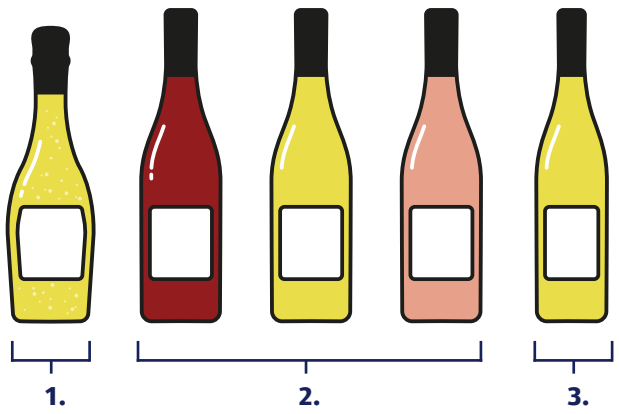
What are the main types of wine?

Every bottle of wine falls into one of three broad categories.

These are:

1. Sparkling
2. Still
3. Sweet & Fortified

Still wines are then divided up further into white, rosé and red wines.



Key Characteristics

Sparkling Wines

Sparkling wines are often referred to as 'a bottle of bubbly' or 'a glass of fizz' for a reason – it's those bubbles which make these wines unique.

During the alcoholic fermentation process used to create wine, carbon dioxide (CO_2) is produced as a by-product. For still wines this CO_2 is allowed to escape, however for the production of sparkling wines the CO_2 is trapped, where it then dissolves into the wine and gives it that distinctive fizz.

Key types of sparkling wines include:

- Champagne (France)
- Cava (Spain)
- Prosecco (Italy)
- English Sparkling Wines (England)
- Crémant (France)

More detail is given on the production of sparkling wines in Module 6.

Still Wines

'Still' is the biggest category of wines and covers any wines that are not sparkling or sweet & fortified. Still wines are also classed as either white, rosé or red.

You can get many types of still wines, with their differences in taste determined by the grape variety used, the countries/regions the grapes are grown in and the specific wine making techniques used.

White Wines

White wines can vary between being almost water white in colour, to quite a golden colour.

A white wine, for example, made in a very cool climate and fermented in a stainless-steel tank, is likely to be very pale in colour. But a wine that is made in a warmer climate and aged in oak might be more golden.

Key white wine grape varieties:

- Chardonnay
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Pinot Grigio
- Riesling

Note: Many of these grape varieties are now grown all around the world, but each variety originates from one specific place.

Rosé Wines

The perfect summer tipple, rosé wines are actually made from black grapes.

In order to give rosé wines their distinctive pink hue and refreshing flavour, a technique called skin contact is used (this is the most common way to make rosé). Don't worry – it's not as scary as it sounds! All it means is that when the black grapes are crushed to release their juice, the skins are left in for a while. It's this 'skin contact' which creates the colour and flavour of rosé wines as the colour and flavour of grapes are found in the skins.

Despite what you may have heard, very rarely is red wine added to white to make the wine pink. Although surprisingly this is how pink Champagne is made!

Red Wines

Like rosé wines, red wines are also made from black grapes – however in order to make a red wine, the grapes spend longer with their skins and are actually fermented with them. This is how they get their colour and flavour.

You'll also find with red wines that there is a drying sensation you get in the mouth and these are from the tannins. Different grape varieties typically produce wines with different amounts of tannin, with some wines being softer and juicier and some grapes producing wines with stronger tannins.

Key red wine grape varieties:

- Pinot Noir
- Merlot
- Syrah/Shiraz
- Cabernet Sauvignon

Sweet & Fortified Wines

Sweet Wines

Sweet or 'pudding wines' as they are often referred to, are those that are intensely sweet and designed to be enjoyed with different desserts – these wines tend to be almost syrupy.

For maximum enjoyment, sweet wines should be sweeter than the food they are being drunk with, so they work well for not only puddings, but also cheese!

Key types of sweet wines:
- Sauternes (France)
- Ice Wine (Canada)
- Tokaji (Hungary)

Sweet wines are made in a variety of different ways and the key methods are covered in more detail in **Module 6**.

Fortified Wines

Fortified wines are wines to which extra alcohol has been added (using a neutral spirit) to increase their ABV (alcohol by volume) to around 15-22% - they are typically quite traditional styles of wines.

Key types of fortified wines:
- Port (Portugal)
- Sherry (Spain)
- Madeira (Portugal)

More information on these styles can be found in **Module 6**.

3: Wine Styles

We have now covered off the three key types of wine – sparkling, still and sweet & fortified, but there is another helpful way of further dividing and describing wines and that is by style.

One of the key ways to describe a wine style is by its 'body'. The body of a wine simply refers to the weight of the wine in the mouth – this might sound slightly strange, but try tasting some different wines side by side and you will be able to feel the difference.

You can describe the body of a wine as either light, medium or full:

Light-bodied wines

Tend to be paler in colour with a subtler fruit flavour. They also tend to taste fresher and have more acidity

Full-bodied wines

Have a deeper colour, with more flavour and usually higher alcohol content

Medium-bodied wines

These are somewhere in between and tend to be soft and smooth

To help you identify what body a wine will have, there will often be a guide found on the back of a wine label. These are rated from 1-9 for white wines ('bone dry' to 'luscious') and A-E for red wines ('light' to 'full-bodied').

Whilst the body of a wine is one of the key ways to describe its style, there are a few other factors you can look out for as well:

Acidity

Is the wine (especially a white wine) very crisp and fresh?

Oak

Does the wine have any oak flavour (this can either be from the use of a barrel or another type of oak influence)

Sweetness

How sweet does the wine taste – is it very dry, medium (often referred to as off-dry) or sweet

4. Understanding Wine Labels

There are many complicated wine laws that change according to not only the country, but also the specific region. These laws say what grape variety can be grown there, how much of that grape variety has to be in the wine, if it can even say the name of the grape variety on the label, whether the wine has to have a cork or screwcap, sometimes when the grapes have to be picked and how much can be picked to fit into a certain quality category – it can be very complicated!

However, when it comes to buying wine, the label provides key information as to the type and style of wine that is in the bottle. Therefore, for the purpose of this module we are going to take you through a few examples to help you identify key information about the wine.

Compare these two wine labels below. They give you the same information on the wine and yet they are provided in slightly different ways:

Label One

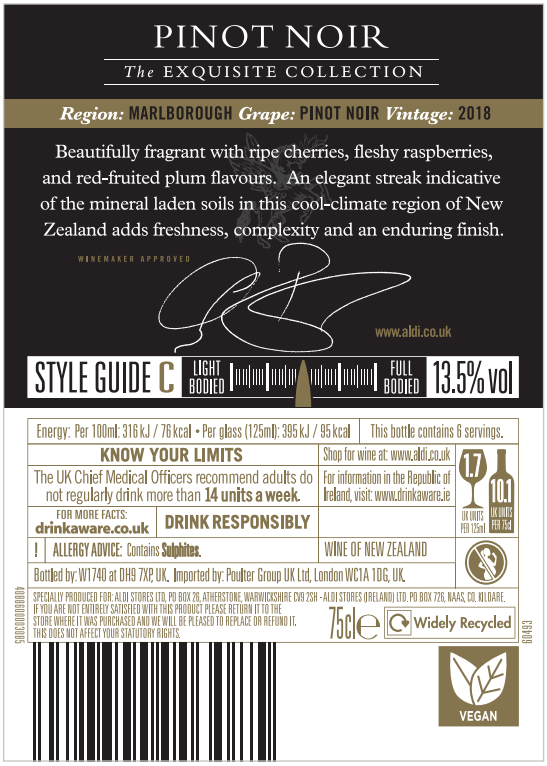
Grape variety
Pinot Noir

Region
Marlborough, New Zealand

Vintage
2018

Alcohol percentage
13.5%

Size
75cl



The back label, if there is one, tends to display tasting notes (but not always), allergens and health information.

Label Two

Grape variety
Sauvignon Blanc

Region
Touraine, Loire Valley, France

Vintage
2018

Alcohol percentage
12.5%

Size
75cl

For both labels you can see that the name of the wine range is presented quite clearly (in this case The Exquisite Collection) and so is the vintage, but either the grape variety OR the region tends to take centre stage.

5. Wine Vocabulary

There are several key wine words that you are likely to come across either on the labels or when talking about wine. See below for 12 of the most helpful ones and their descriptions:

Acidity	The freshness of the wine; think lemons
Appellation	A region/place that is legally defined and protected (in the same way that food products are e.g. Stilton, Brie or Cheddar). To be called Sancerre, for example, wines must be from that designated region and stringent laws are in place to protect the produce and the quality that comes out of the region
Aroma	This is what the wine smells like and is essentially the perfume of the wine
Length	How long can you taste the wine for after you have swallowed it? If you can taste it for a long time, then it is an indication of a good wine
Tannins	The drying sensation you get around the edges of the mouth (in a similar way to a cup of tea). These are more commonly found in red wine
Balance	This is often considered the most important thing to look for at any price point. You want the fruit, acid, tannin and alcohol to all be in balance so not one element sticks out
Flavour	Aroma and taste creates flavour; the most important part of the wine!
Organic	Increasingly popular and it means that no pesticides or fungicides were used in the vineyard
Sulphites	This appears on the back label as an allergen as nearly all wine labels will say that the wine contains sulphites, as small amounts of sulphur are added to the wine as a preservative
Vegan	A wine is vegan when no animal products have gone into the wine. Wines are often 'fined', which basically means they are made clean and bright by removing any unwanted particles, but to do this sometimes eggs or gelatine are used. A vegan wine wouldn't use these to fine a wine
Vielles Vignes	This means old vines. Old vines tend to produce less, but better-quality fruit, so it is a sign of quality when selecting a wine
Vintage	The year that the grapes were picked/harvested

Tasting

Now is the fun part – it's time to taste the wines! Remember this case is designed for both Module 1 and 2, **so remember to leave enough for Module 2!** To ensure you get the wine's true flavour it's recommended to drink the bottle within a week of opening.

Don't worry too much about the technique of tasting for now, we'll be covering that in the next module, just concentrate on noticing the differences in each wine.

Step 1: Taste a **Pinot Grigio** and **Chardonnay**.

Step 2: Taste a **Rosé** and **White Zinfandel**.

Step 3: Taste a **Pinot Noir** and **Malbec**.

For each wine, consider their colour, the body and flavour. Remember to look at the labels and the bottles and mark down your thoughts on each wine below.

Wine name	Pinot Grigio
Colour	
Body	
Flavour	

Wine name	Chardonnay
Colour	
Body	
Flavour	

Wine name	Rosé
Colour	
Body	
Flavour	

Wine name	White Zinfandel
Colour	
Body	
Flavour	

Wine name	Pinot Noir
Colour	
Body	
Flavour	

Wine name	Malbec
Colour	
Body	
Flavour	

End Of Module 1

Once you have finished the tasting, you will now be fully up to speed with identifying wine types and styles, noticing the differences and mastering your terminology.

Now, when you are ready - download Module 2, where we will cover wine tasting in more depth, assessing the quality of a wine and food pairing tips (ready for the perfect hosting evening!).