GRAPE VARIETIES A SMALL GUIDE

AUSTRIAN WINE The Art of Wine. Down to Earth.



In Austria there are 40 grape varieties – 26 white and 14 red – officially approved for the production of Qualitätswein (quality wine). The proportion of red wine has doubled over the last two decades and now represents one third of Austria's vineyards, which total 46,515 hectares. Austria has excellent sites for internationally known varieties such as Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Chardonnay, Muskateller, Traminer, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet and Syrah. But even more important is the precious portfolio of local grape varieties, with Grüner Veltliner at the top of the list. This white variety alone accounts for almost one third of Austria's vineyards. In addition to Grüner Veltliner, other white varieties – Welschriesling, Neuburger, Rotgipfler, Zierfandler and Roter Veltliner – as well as the red varieties Zweigelt, Blaufränkisch, Sankt Laurent und Blauer Wildbacher, are highly respected and, in fact, treasured once again.

Genetically, many grapes have Traminer and Heunisch as parent varieties. Traminer, one of the oldest european varieties, likely descends from wild vines that grew during antiquity. Heunisch is the name for a variety family that may have been brought by the magyars from Hungary to Austria, where it quickly spread. At least 75 of the varieties known today have Heunisch in their family tree – for example, Chardonnay and Riesling.

Knowledge about viticulture and grape breeding have a long tradition in Austria. In fact, it has long been supported by the Federal Institute for Viticulture and pomology at Klosterneuburg, which celebrated its 150th birthday in October 2010. It is the oldest winegrowing school in the world. The department for grape breeding is managed by Dr. Ferdinand Regner, an internationally recognized expert. His research in grape variety identification, with the help of DNA analysis, has earned outstanding recognition worldwide.

With new crossings, the focus today is placed on potential resistance to fungal diseases, which consistently remains a partial resistance. Currently, the PIWI varieties (PI = Pilz = fungus, WI = widerstandsfähig = resistant) Rathay and Roesler (both red) as well as Blütenmuskateller, Muscaris and Souvignier Gris are included among Austrian grape varieties permissible for vinification of Qualitätswein.





The most important white wine variety in Austria is Grüner Veltliner. This grape descends from Traminer and a second grape that, according to recent evidence, could quite likely be a centuries-old variety found in St. Georgen, near Eisenstadt, Austria. The most important growing areas for Grüner Veltliner are in Niederösterreich (Lower Austria), which extends from the Danube region to the Weinviertel. It is grown also in Vienna and Burgenland as well as in Austria's neighbouring countries.

Grüner Veltliner is highly appreciated as a fresh, dry wine. Its powerful, long-ageing versions from premium vineyard sites are amongst the world's great white wines. The common feature of these wines is the piquant mix of fruit and peppery flavours completed by harmonious acidity. This makes Grüner Veltliner one of the most universal food partners.

The 'Riesling Italico' may have originated in the Friuli. Its closest relative is considered to be the Elbling variety. Welschriesling is grown in different countries and known by the names Ryzling Vlašský (CZ, SK), Olaszrizling (HU), Riesling Italico (IT), Graševina (HR) and Laški Rizling (SL). In Austria, the variety has an extensive production range: Its confident acidity makes it an ideal base for sparkling wine from the Weinviertel; In Steiermark (Styria), it makes a robust bestseller in the local Buschenschank taverns, and it metamorphoses into superb nobly sweet Prädikatsweine from the Burgenland, where the variety shows its highest expression and the greatest ripening ability. Dry Welschriesling has a spicy-fresh character, and gives notes of green apple, citrus and hay flowers. Vibrant acidity is its trademark, and in Prädikatsweine, its complex, piquant scent is intoxicating.

WELSCHRIESLING

3,338 HA

The variety – whose real name is **Weisser Riesling (White Riesling)** – is known as **Rheinriesling (Rhine Riesling)**, which differentiates the grape from its non-relation, Welschriesling. The Riesling was selected and developed from wild vines growing along the rhine river. In top-quality vintages, Riesling delivers high ripeness supported by a complex acidity structure. And when grown in primary rock soils, it develops a distinctively mineral flavour. Young Rieslings show elegant stone fruit (peach, apricot) and lemonfresh tones as well as exotic notes (gooseberries). These wines develop steadily and continuously, often expressing in their 'second life' a particular petrol character. This applies especially to reserve-level wines in the Spätlese and Auslese styles (or the Smaragd style in the Wachau winegrowing region).





The variety is widespread internationally, and has many synonyms: Weisser Burgunder, Klevner (AT, GER), Pinot Blanc (CH, FR), Fehér Burgundi (HU) and Pinot Bianco (IT). Genetically, it is the youngest variety of the great Burgundy family. In the classic style (young and fresh), Weissburgunder is calm yet concentrated, yielding delicate flowery aromas and elegant acidity. Sometimes it gives a fine, ripe green apple scent. With longer ageing, it can develop a subtle nutty tone, especially almond. Equipped with plenty of extract and substance, Weissburgunder can reveal great elegance and power. It is matured best in steel tanks or large wooden barrels.

The elegant, discreet grape aromatics bring fine and flowery muskat tones and delicate fruity – mostly grapy scents. The palate delivers mostly mild acidity, and is round and harmonious with an elegant finish.





Besides Riesling, Chardonnay is the world's best known white variety and is grown in many wine regions. In the style of the great whites from Burgundy, it is usually matured in small wooden barrels, where it undergoes malolactic fermentation. But there are fresh, fruity Chardonnays matured in steel tanks as well – such as in northern Italy and Austria. The **Morillon** Klassik from Steiermark is a fine example.

In Chardonnays matured without wood, fruit and elegant flavours dominate. Barrique-matured versions usually yield buttery, roasted tones along with notes of white bread, dried fruits, raisins and coconut. Of course, there are individual variations that unite 'Austrian' fruit with international style.



Sauvignon Blanc is likely a crossing of Traminer and Chenin Blanc. While the classic wines of this variety are Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé from the Loire, Sauvignon Blanc reaches equally world-class heights on the steep weathered shell-limestone sites of Austria's Steiermark region. A young green pod aroma had been the norm, but today's versions are defined by ripeness and elegant body. Multi-layered aromas, from black currants and herbs to pods and stone fruits, are characteristic of Sauvignon Blanc from Steiermark. Fresh, ripe acidity underscores the lively character of the wines. Great Sauvignons are matured partly in barriques, whose wood notes must be perfectly integrated with the wine's fruit.

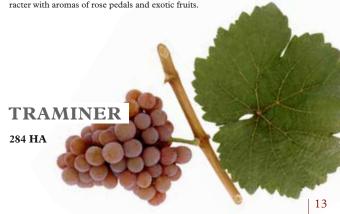
This ancient vine variety descends from mediterranean antiquity, and is now found throughout the world: Muscat Blanc à petits grains (FR), Sárga Muskotály (HU), Moscato Bianco (IT) and Rumeni Muscat (SL). In Austria, the racy, piquant representative of the great Muscat family is very rare and beloved. The intense bouquet comprises floral accents, fresh citrus notes, fine herbal flavours and scents of muscat perfume. The mostly sleek but well-structured and compact flavours are characterized by grapy finesse with nervous fruit acidity. The complex Muskateller is especially pleasurable as an animated aperitif.





This variety is an Austrian speciality – a natural offspring of Roter Veltliner and Sylvaner. In the middle of the 19th century, a bundle of vines washed ashore in Oberarnsdorf in the Wachau. When the variety was planted on the Spitzer Burgberg (today's Tausendeimerberg), it was given the name Neuburger and, from there, planting of the variety was expanded. Neuburger prefers dry climate areas, such as the Spitzer Graben and the Thermenregion. A fully ripe Neuburger gives off very subtle aromas. It is a strong but gentle wine; full-bodied and very harmonious. And as it develops, a green nut tone unfolds – rounding off a very elegant profile.

Traminer was likely selected from wild vines (Vitis aminea) by the romans. Today, this variety is widespread worldwide, though its classic terroir is in Alsace. Its stronghold in Austria is around the town of Klöch in Vulkanland Steiermark, an ancient volcano region rich with basalt soils. All three traminer variations – Roter Traminer, Gelber Traminer and Gewürztraminer – share intense aromas and high ripeness that allows for great development and ageing. Roter Traminer has finer, more discreet varietal aromas that exude scents of roses and Gelber Traminer releases notes of roses, herbs and citrus fruits while Gewürztraminer shows off its powerful and spicy cha-





This variety was brought to Austria and Hungary in the 14th century by Cistercian monks from Burgundy (in Hungary, the grape is known as Szürkebarát, or 'grey monk'). Its spectrum of styles range from light Pinot Grigio from Northern Italy to full-bodied Ruländer from Germany to complex Pinot Gris from the Alsace. In Austria, scatterings of Pinot Gris are found throughout the Danube region and Burgenland. And in the Steiermark, Grauburgunder is usually the strongest wine in an estate's range. Excellent specimens exuding ripe maturity, good body and silky richness reflect a remarkable concentrated style. This is true for the sweet wines as well.

The old Austrian grape variety has a special position in the Veltliner family because of its offspring – Neuburger, Zierfandler and Rotgipfler. Roter Veltliner is found mainly in the Wagram, but also in Kremstal and Kamptal and occasionally in the Weinviertel and Vienna. Through rigorous yield reduction, the vines deliver very unique wines that are rather reserved in the nose, but have massive development potential: strong alcohol content and high extract can be prevalent. Varietal characteristics include light raisin and honey tones, a full body and – with the most harmonious examples – a vital acidity structure.



Zierfandler, it is indigenous to the Thermenregion. Here, cuvée blends with the two varieties (also called Spätrot-Rotgipfler) deliver very impressive versions. Rotgipfler shows very well in the medium-bodied classic, dry style as well as in the higher ripeness versions, Reserve and Spätlese. These concentrated and exciting wines have well-integrated acidity and gain even more expression through longer bottle ageing. The more robust versions of Rotgipfler - like their Zierfandler counterparts, though these are more structured - make excellent accompaniments to spicy Asian dishes as well as to a variety of cheeses.

Rotgipfler is a natural offspring of Roter Veltliner and Traminer and, like





Zierfandler, a natural offspring of RoterVeltliner and a Traminer-like variety, is a speciality of the Thermenregion. Its synonym 'Spätrot' (literally 'late red') refers to the late ripening grapes which become reddish on the sides that are sun-exposed. Around the town of Gumpoldskirchen, Zierfandler is vinified also as a cuvée blend with Rotgipfler.

Zierfandler wines have a subtle bouquet with fine fruit and nut tones. The firm body is supported by racy acidity. Late harvested Zierfandler wines are sturdy and rich in extract, and often exude dried fruit or exotic fruit aromas and flavours. Prädikat level wines, with their sweet fruit character, have impressive ageing potential and stand amongst the great white wines of the world.

OTHER WHITE GRAPE VARIETIES

GEMISCHTER SATZ (671 HA)

Unlike a cuvée (blending of finished wines), the Gemischter Satz is produced from different grape varieties growing together in the same winegrowing area or region. The Wiener Gemischter Satz DAC is strictly regulated (see p. 33).

FRÜHROTER VELTLINER (367 HA) (MALVASIER)

A crossing of Roter Veltliner and Sylvaner. Ideal as a fresh, light summer wine.

MUSKAT OTTONEL (357 HA)

This Muscat family member is a Chasselas cross. Shows best as a light Spätlese or Auslese.

SCHEUREBE / SÄMLING 88 (357 HA)

Botanist Georg Scheu crossed Riesling with Bukettraube in 1916 to create Scheurebe, also known as Sämling 88. It makes exceptional Prädikatsweine in Burgenland.

BOUVIER (220 HA)

Native to the Slovenian Steiermark (Slovenska Štajerska), this variety is declining in importance.

GOLDBURGER (98 HA)

An Orangetraube and Welschriesling crossing. Declining in importance.

SYLVANER (38 HA) (GRÜNER SYLVANER)

This Austrian variety is becoming rare in its homeland, but is thriving in Franconia.

FURMINT (11 HA)

This main Tokaji variety is a rarity in Austria. Makes beautiful wines in Rust.

JUBILÄUMSREBE (6 HA)

A crossing of Grauer Portugieser and Frühroter Veltliner – in danger of extinction.

BLÜTENMUSKATELLER*

Russian crossing Severnyj x Muskat, fungus-resistant (PIWI) variety.

MUSCARIS*

Fungus-resistant (PIWI) crossing Solaris x Muskateller, reminiscent of Muskateller.

SOUVIGNIER GRIS*

Crossing Cabernet Sauvignon x Bronner, fungus-resistant (PIWI) variety, reminiscent of Pinot Gris.

GOLDMUSKATELLER*

Probably a crossing of Gelber Muskateller and an unknown variety. Wines with Muscat note, vinified in dry as well as sweet styles.

^{*}Vineyard area not yet officially recorded



Professor Fritz Zweigelt crossed two grape varieties – Blaufränkisch and Sankt Laurent – at Klosterneuburg in 1922. This grape is also known under its synonym 'Rotburger'. Today, it is the most planted red wine variety in Austria and has a wide spectrum of expression: from fresh, young-drinking and vinified without wood to powerful wines matured in barriques. Zweigelt also makes an excellent cuvée partner. It gets along wonderfully with its 'parents' as well as with Cabernet & Co. The fruity Austrian variation is velvety and round and yields lovely cherry aromas and subtle spiciness. The powerful international style presents a morello cherry aroma, deep fruit tones and good tannins. Even with such complexity, Zweigelt wines are indeed very balanced and harmonious.

This traditional Austrian variety is a cross between Blaue Zimmettraube and Weisser Heunisch. It does bear different names throughout Central Europe – such as Lemberger (GER), Kékfrankos (HU) and Franconia (IT). Austria's Blaufränkisch is dominant in the Burgenland winegrowing region, especially in Mittelburgenland, on the Leithaberg and on the Eisenberg. It also shows very well on the Spitzerberg in the Carnuntum winegrowing region. The typical bouquet of this late ripening variety is characterized by deep forest berry fruit and a delicate spiciness. On the palate, Blaufränkisch can be vibrant and fiery with distinct acidity and it can deliver great wines with firm structure and distinctive tannins that develop velvety and supple facets with increasing ripeness.





Blauer Portugieser is a cross between Blaue Zimmettraube and Sylvaner. Today, the Portugieser is the most abundant red wine variety in the Thermenregion, far ahead of Zweigelt and the Burgundy varieties. From higher yields, more easy-going wines are the norm, and these have rather neutral aromas and discreet fruit expression. Pleasantly round with mild acidity and low tannins, they are uncomplicated and adaptable food partners. While their quick development allows for rather short-term ageing, it is the exception that proves the rule: from a good vintage and highly limited yields, powerful, extract-rich representatives of this variety are possible.

This variety likely evolved from a Burgundy seedling. With its sparse yields, Sankt Laurent is regarded as a complicated grape in the vineyard. Fortunately, the quality focus that has become the cornerstone of winemaking in Austria has lead to Sankt Laurent's well-deserved renaissance. Particularly in the Thermenregion, top winemakers are passionately devoting themselves to Sankt Laurent, which imparts a special flavour and character to cuvée blends. Its name refers to the Feast of St. Lawrence, August 10th, the date when the grapes begin to colour. The bouquet is accented with aromas of fruits – berries, morello cherries and plums. With longer ageing, classic Pinot notes begin to unfold. The soft dryness together with velvety tannins make Sankt Laurent an ideal accompaniment to braised beef and game dishes.





Merlot, the most abundant grape variety in Bordeaux, is an offspring of Cabernet Franc and an unknown second variety. Merlot wines are very round and velvety. The small, dark grapes lend a deep garnet colour to the wine in Bordeaux, this variety thrives in the loam soils of the right bank (St. Émilion, Pomerol etc.). Merlot ripens a bit earlier than Cabernet. In Austria, it yields very elegant wines with silky tannins and deep, piquant fruit. Therefore, it is excellently suited as an assemblage partner for the sterner Cabernet as well as for the domestic varieties Blaufränkisch and Zweigelt.

The Burgundy varieties come from a crossing of Pinot Meunier and Traminer. The colour breakdown of the grapes – blue, gray, white – has a genetic background. **Blauburgunder** – the French Pinot Noir – is a very sensitive variety, but brings fabulous wines when harvested with high ripeness from an ideal location and vinified with utmost care and skill. A somewhat lighter colour is a characteristic of the wine. And the bouquet – depending on the wine's origin and vintage – typically exudes notes of berries, dried plums and a subtle almond-marzipan scent. The palate can be lively and fiery with some spiciness and fine acidity. The tannins, however, are not plentiful. Sometimes challenging and capricious, the Blauburgunder leans toward the slender side, but it certainly can have good ageing ability.





This old Bordeaux variety – a natural crossing of Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc – was brought to Austria at around 1860 by Robert Schlumberger, bud it didn't take hold here. In the 1980s, however, the variety became extremely successful here as international grape vines became the craze, and especially because of its characterful aromas and flavours when fully mature. Today, the proportion in Austria is relatively stable. Cabernet Sauvignon is utilised especially for its distinctive spiciness in cuvée blends with Merlot, Zweigelt and/or Blaufränkisch. Maturation in barriques is practically obligatory, because this brings out the variety's full character. From highly ripe grapes, fine, complex Cabernets are indeed possible in Austria.

Blauer Wildbacher is a Heunisch offspring and closely related to the Blaufränkisch variety. Today, it is cultivated mainly in the Weststeiermark where, long ago, it became a regional classic as the rosé-coloured 'Schilcher' wine. As Weststeiermark DAC it displays its strongest regional typicity. With its distinctive aromatics and distinctively gripping acidity, the Schilcher makes an excellent partner for hearty local delicacies and snacks. Grown in gneiss and slate soils, the Schilcher is still beloved – perhaps now, more than ever before – for its seductively spicy cassis aroma and significant maturing potential. The colour spectrum extends from onion skin to strawberry, and the styles range from frizzante to red wines with dry tannins to Prädikatsweine and even distillates.



BLAUBURGER (742 HA)

This crossing of Blauer Portugieser and Blaufränkisch yields deep, dark wines.

ROESLER (238 HA)

This fungus-resistant crossing is ideal for organic winegrowing. Makes opulent wines with beautiful berry aromas and flavours and generous tannins.

RATHAY (35 HA)

Resistant to mildew and frost, this crossing yields full-bodied wines with plenty of extract.

SYRAH (SHIRAZ) (152 HA)

This Rhône icon produces lovely wines in Austria's Burgenland.

CABERNET FRANC (74 HA)

A fine cuvée blend variety in Austria.

ROSENMUSKATELLER*

Extremely ripe and shrivelled berries will yield high-grade sweet wines.



NIEDERÖSTERREICH (LOWER AUSTRIA – 28,145 HA)

A vast array of grape varieties are vinified to a wide range of wines – from effervescent to monumental white wines, and from elegant red wines and Sekt (sparkling wine) to exquisite sweet wines. The focal grape variety/varieties of the specified winegrowing regions are:

WACHAU DAC (1,344 HA)

Gebietswein*: 17 varieties | Ortswein**: 9 varieties | Riedenwein***: Grüner Veltliner, Riesling.

KREMSTAL DAC (2,368 HA)

Gebietswein*, Ortswein**, Riedenwein***, Kremstal DAC Reserve: Grüner Veltliner, Riesling.

^{*} Regional wine

KAMPTAL DAC (3,907 HA)

Gebietswein*, Ortswein**, Riedenwein***, Kamptal DAC Reserve: Grüner Veltliner, Riesling.

TRAISENTAL DAC (815 HA)

Gebietswein*, Ortswein**, Riedenwein***, Traisental DAC Reserve: Grüner Veltliner, Riesling.

WAGRAM (2,720 HA)

Grüner Veltliner Klassik or Reserve, Roter Veltliner Klassik or Reserve.

WEINVIERTEL DAC (13,858 HA)

Grüner Veltliner: Weinviertel DAC and Weinviertel DAC Reserve.

CARNUNTUM DAC (906 HA)

Gebietswein*, Ortswein*, Riedenwein**: white: Chardonnay, Weissburgunder, Grüner Veltliner (blends have to consist of min. 2/3 of those varieties, rest: other Qualitätswein varieties); red: Zweigelt, Blaufränkisch (blends have to consist of min. 2/3 of those varieties, rest: other Qualitätswein varieties).

THERMENREGION (2,181 HA)

White (in the north): Zierfandler, Rotgipfler; red (in the south): Sankt Laurent, Pinot Noir.

* Regional wine

BURGENLAND (13,100 HA)

Under the "Burgenland" designation is a diverse spectrum of white, red and nobly sweet wines. The focal grape variety/varieties of the specified winegrowing regions are:

NEUSIEDLERSEE DAC (6,675 HA)

Neusiedlersee DAC: Zweigelt (monovarietal, although a touch of an additional variety is acceptable); Neusiedlersee DAC Reserve: Zweigelt or Zweigelt-dominated cuvée blend (minimum of 60% Zweigelt; rest must comprise of indigenous grape varieties).

LEITHABERG DAC (3,097 HA)

White: Weissburgunder, Chardonnay, Neuburger, Grüner Veltliner; red: Blaufränkisch.

ROSALIA DAC (297 HA)

Rosalia DAC: Blaufränkisch, Zweigelt; Rosalia DAC Rosé: one or more red Qualitätswein grape varieties.

MITTELBURGENLAND DAC (2,104 HA)

Mittelburgenland DAC or Mittelburgenland DAC with vineyard designation or Mittelburgenland DAC Reserve: Blaufränkisch

EISENBERG DAC (515 HA)

Eisenberg DAC or Eisenberg DAC Reserve: Blaufränkisch

STEIERMARK (STYRIA – 4,633 HA)

Styrian wines exhibit a crystal-clear character. Amongst the wines growing here are Welschriesling and some of the best Sauvignon Blanc in the world. A broad spectrum of grape varieties is permitted for the production of Styrian DAC wines: Welschriesling, Weissburgunder, Morillon, Grauburgunder, Riesling, Gelber Muskateller, Sauvignon Blanc, Traminer (monovarietal or as cuvées), Blauer Wildbacher (as Schilcher, only in the Weststeiermark). Still, every region has its own focal varieties on the Ortswein ('villages' wine) level:

VULKANLAND STEIERMARK DAC (1,524 HA)

Sauvignon Blanc, Weissburgunder, Grauburgunder, Klöch: Traminer

SÜDSTEIERMARK DAC (2,563 HA)

Sauvignon Blanc, Gelber Muskateller, Morillon, Riesling

WESTSTEIERMARK DAC (546 HA)

Blauer Wildbacher (as Schilcher), Sauvignon Blanc



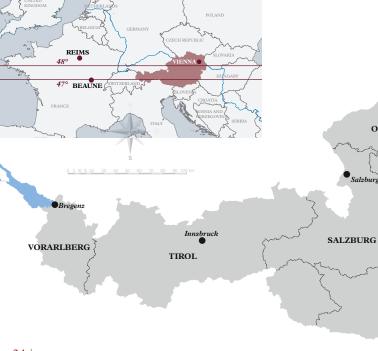


WIEN (VIENNA - 637 HA)

With 637 hectares of vineyards within the city limits, wine plays an important economic role in the Austrian capital. The range of wines here include Grüner Veltliner, Riesling, Weissburgunder, Chardonnay and delicious red wines as well.

WIENER GEMISCHTER SATZ DAC

The grapes must grow in a Viennese vineyard planted with at least three white Qualitätswein varieties, and must be harvested and pressed together; the biggest portion of one grape variety must be no more than 50%; the third highest portion must be at least 10%.







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