

The Wine Districts of France



There are thirteen primary wine-producing regions in France: *Alsace, Armagnac, Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne, Corsica, Jura, Languedoc-Roussillon, Loire Valley, Lorraine, Provence, Rhone Valley, Savoie, and South-West France*. These regions are known for particular grape varieties as dictated by the district's indigenous terroir.

There are differing opinions as to which are the most important, however below are my list of regions that provide the most approachable wines.

Alsace - Unlike the rest of France, *Alsace* names its wines by grape varietal instead of just place names of origin. White wines comprise the vast majority of *Alsace* wines. *Gewurztraminer, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris* and *Riesling* are the most noteworthy of the *Alsace* varieties.

Bordeaux - Over 80% of the wine produced in Bordeaux is red, primarily from Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot grapes. The two prevailing red wine-producing sub-regions of *Bordeaux* are aptly referred to as "Left Bank" and "Right Bank." The Left Bank has soils with higher gravel content that favor Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. Right Bank wines are typically better suited for beginning Bordeaux wine drinkers, as they have lower tannin content, more fruit-forward flavor and are generally more inviting initially.

Burgundy - This region yields about 25% of the wine of *Bordeaux*; however, it remains legendary in its legacy for both red and white wines. Burgundy lies on the eastern side of France and covers just over 100 miles. The dominant grape varieties grown in this region are *Pinot Noir* (for Red *Burgundy* wines), *Chardonnay* (for White *Burgundy* wines) and *Gamay* (for *Beaujolais*).

Languedoc - Languedoc-Roussillon is the common name given to the wide area of varied vineyards from Marseilles, around the Mediterranean coast of the south of France, to the Spanish border - including both *Languedoc* and the contiguous Roussillon region. It is the largest region in terms of vineyards, however has a reputation as producing cheap bulk wines. It is rapidly becoming known however for producing more innovative wines as it marries both New World and Old World wine making techniques. Wines from this region are also sold as *Vin de Pays d'Oc*.

Loire - The *Loire Valley* rests on the northwest side of France, and is known for its white wines mainly *Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc* and *Muscadet*. The wines from the Loire Valley come in a vast array of styles, from dry to sweet and from white to sparkling, and are typically lighter-bodied due to the cooler climate. Styles to include *Pouilly-Fume* (made from *Sauvignon Blanc* grapes, Sancerre (also made from *Sauvignon Blanc*), *Muscadet* (made from the *Muscadet* grape), and *Vouvray* (from the *Chenin Blanc* grape).

Provence - This beautiful French wine-growing region is known predominantly for its *Rosé* wines. A few producers to try include: *Chateau Pradeaux* and *Chateau de Roquefort*.

Rhone Valley - This region lies in southeastern France, providing distinct growing conditions to produce some of France's best bargain red wines - *Grenache, Syrah* and *Viognier*. The laid-back Grenache grapes flourish in the sizzling southern Rhone, producing red wines that are good deals, with good flavor and plenty of food pairing options. The northern *Rhone* specializes in *Syrah* grapes, manifesting themselves into the two most popular red wines the *Hermitage* and the *Cote Rotie*.