

4

Principal Wine Regions of the World

Aims and learning outcomes of this chapter

The chapter will focus on the principle wine growing regions of the world, on completion of this chapter the learner will be expected to be able to

- Describe the major wine growing countries and regions, their individual classifications and their related wine laws
- Outline the grape characteristics, geographical and geological factors, viticultural and vinification techniques used to produce wines around the world.

4.1 Argentina

70% of Argentina's vineyards are located in the state of Mendoza, which lies under the Andes Mountains and is geographically located on the same latitude as Morocco. A unique intricate system of irrigation, which is supplied from the melted snows of the Andes Mountains by a network of canals begun by the native Indians a thousand years ago (which included a legal framework for equitably dividing water rights, that subsequent generations have luckily inherited), coupled with balanced temperatures and little or no disease ensures that crops are huge. The average crop produces an amazing 70 hectolitres.

The vineyards of Argentina lie above 500 metres above sea level with the exception of Salta (in the sub tropical north), which is close to the town of Cafayate those vineyards reach a height to 2,000 metres. The majority of the vineyards are planted in the parral, or pergola system because of the heat, this helps keep the grapes away from the scorching ground heat.

The best vineyards are located near the Andes, due to the unique canal system and high altitudes between 600 to 950 metres.

Phylloxera is controlled in Argentina by flooding the vineyards with water from big dams located in the Andes Mountains.

Major regions

Argentina was the first South American country to introduce a DOC system in 1992. **Mendoza:** only region with a hierarchy of appellations, divided into five regions and a larger number of departments and then subdivisions.

San Juan: warmer climates produces light wines, lots of vermouths and grape concentrate.

Famatina: far north, very hot contains co-operative cellars, the La Rioja province wines although popular are labelled Famatina Valley because of Spain.

Cafayate: the Torrontes (white) grape reigns here in this Salta province. High growing altitudes help develop aromas and flavours. Cabernet Sauvignon also grows well here.

Rio Negro: located in the far south, this cool region produces a lot of Malbec

Grape varieties

Malbec (Mendoza, Rio Negro) produces full-bodied, brambley red wines with the dark purple colour, rich tannins, peppery and spicy flavours. The most widely planted grape variety, once dominant in Bordeaux and flourishing as Auxerrois in Cahors, in Argentina it produces top rich red wine

Torrontes (Cafayate) produces full-bodied, dry white wines with Muscat-like aromas. Argentina's indigenous white variety, popular and very easy to drink, both for old-style brownish wines and fruitier modern ones.

Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot (Cafayate, Mendoza) planted widely for red wines.

Chardonnay and Viognier (Mendoza) for white wines.

Criolla and Cereza used for basic, local market table wine or in some cases grape concentrates.

4.2 Australia

The best vineyards are to the south and close to the sea. Australia's red and white wines display a delicate fruity softness, which is ideal for immediate consumption. The climate is Mediterranean, with cooler areas found at altitude or close to the coast. Drought can be the biggest problem. Weather can also cause vintage variation.

Soils

Very mixed for separate regions, some special soils include the Terra Rossa of Connawarra.

Grape varieties

Although there are about 90 different grape varieties planted commercially in Australia the main grape varieties grown are:

White: Semillion, Riesling, Chardonnay, Muscat Gordo Blanco, Sauvignon Blanc, Colombard, Verdelho.

Black: Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Ruby Cabernet, Grenache, Mataro (Mourvedre), Cabernet Franc.

Geographical Indications (GI)

Created in 1993 'to determine geographical indications for wine in relation to regions and localities in Australia'. The GI is part of Label Integrity Program to ensure the validity of the information on the bottle label. If regions, varieties or vintages are stated on the label, then 85% of the wine in the bottle must come from those regions, varieties or vintages.

Major wines

Hunter Valley Semillon, Barossa Shiraz, Connawarra Cabernet Sauvignon, Clare and Eden Valley Rieslings, Adelaide Hills Chardonnay, Yarra Valley Pinot Noir, Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River Chardonnay, Rutherglen Liqueur Muscat.

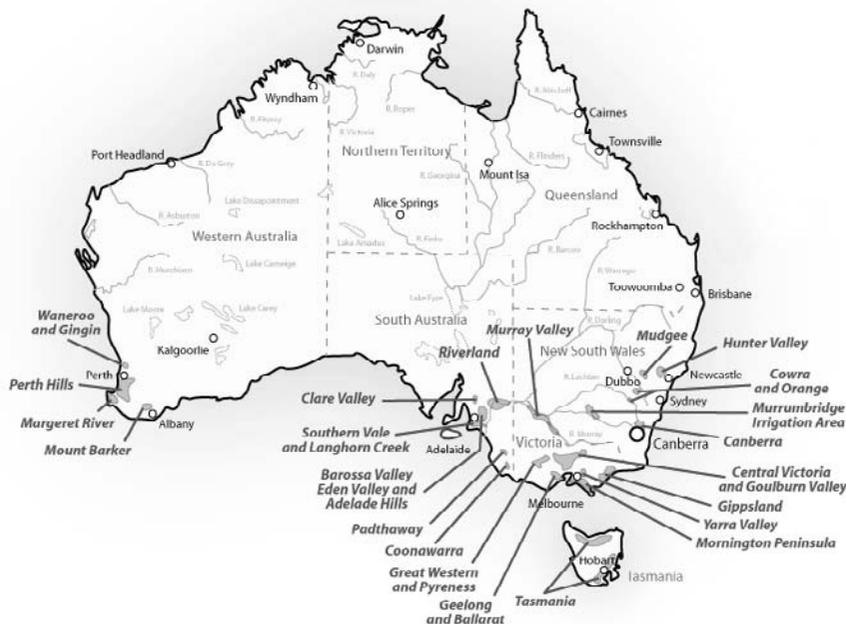


Figure 4.1: Wine regions of Australia (University of Bath Student's Union Wine Society)