

Wine Guide



Where Is This Wine From?

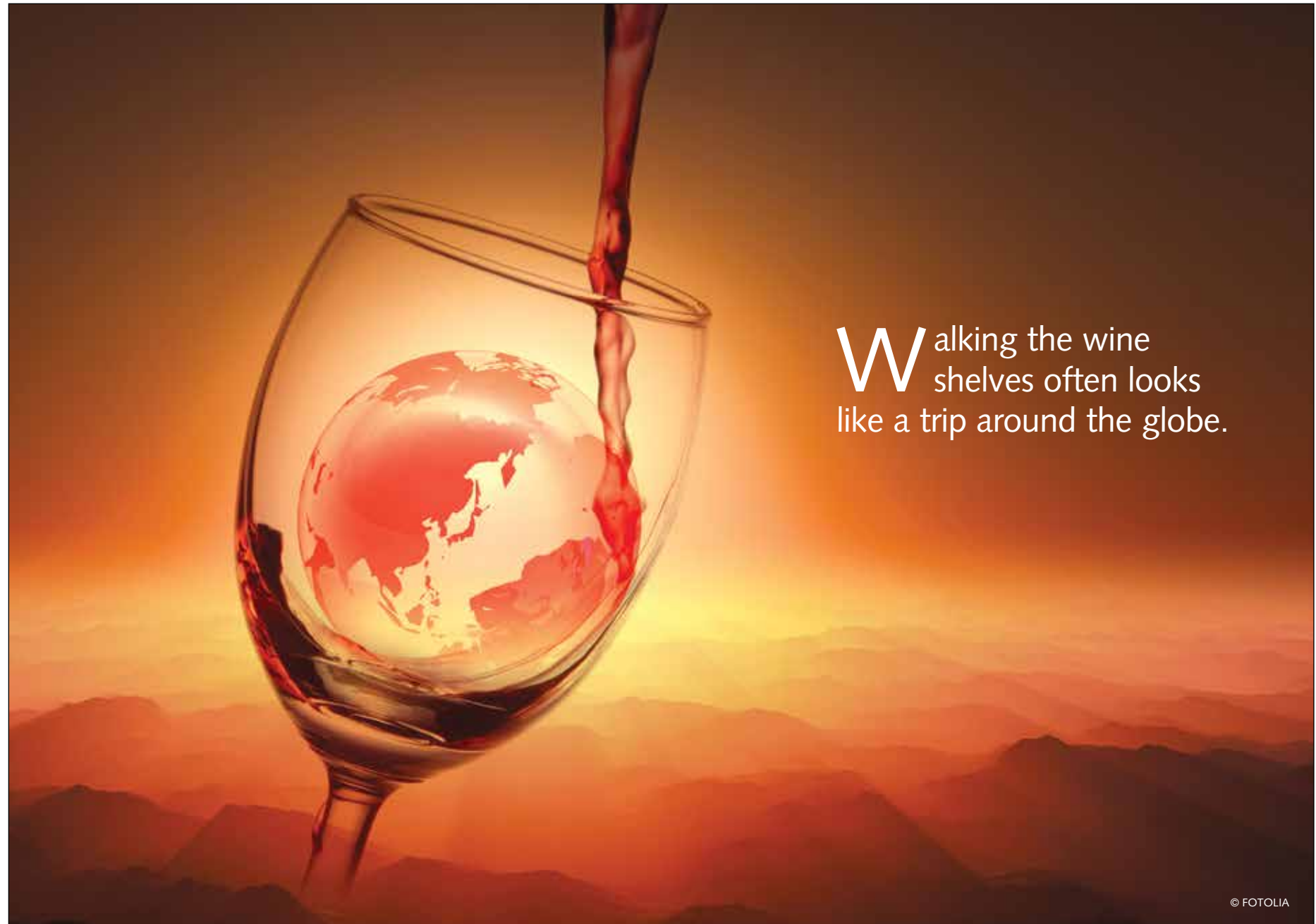
Wine is grown all around the world, but the most well-known regions are in France, Italy and the west coast of the United States. Here's a quick guide to where your wine comes from.

Italy: Italy is the world's largest wine producer with more than one million vineyards under cultivation. Three regions make up the bulk of Italian production: Tuscany, Sicily and the Piedmont. Italian wines include the moscato blanc, mainly used in the sparkling Moscato d'Asti; crisp, clean pinot grigio; and the mighty Sangiovese grape, which produces chianti and other Tuscan wines.

France: France has eight key wine-making regions. They are Alsace, Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne, Languedoc, the Loire Valley, Provence and the Rhône Valley. Popular French wines include Champagne, the sparkling wine which can only be called Champagne when it comes from that region; Beaujolais; Bourdeaux; Burgundy; and many, many others. Higher-end French wines are known for their "terroir," environmental factors that affect a particular grape crop's taste.

Argentina: The fifth largest producer of wine in the world, Argentina is best known for malbecs, a red wine that originally came from southwest France.

Australia: Wine is produced in every state of Australia. The country is the fourth-largest wine producer in the world



Walking the wine shelves often looks like a trip around the globe.

and is best known for bold, spicy shiraz.

Austria: White wines make up the bulk of Austrian production. The country is also home to Riedel, manufacturers of high-end wine glasses.

Chile: Chileans have made wine since the days of the conquistadors, but a rapid modernization and influx of French families has resulted in a fresh new wine market in the

South American country. Chile is known for its reds, particularly Cabernet Sauvignon and merlot.

Germany: Germany produces far fewer bottles than France or Italy, but some of the plantations there trace back to Roman rule. Famous wines from near the Rhine include Riesling and a type of pinot noir.

South Africa: Production in

South Africa centers on Cape Town. The country is known for its fortified wines like Cape port, shiraz and chardonnay.

Spain: The most widely planted wine country, Spain has more than 2 million acres under cultivation. It's known for its sherry, a fortified wine produced in southern Spain, and sparkling cava.

United States: California is the primary winemaking

region of the U.S., but grapes are also grown in Washington and Oregon. The temperate West Coast climate means that almost every kind of grape is grown there.

Don't limit your palate to just these locales. Nearly every state boasts at least a handful of local wineries. Let your local grocery store or liquor store point you in the right direction.

Get Your Fizz On

Bling goes on more than just your wrist with a bright, sparkling glass of wine.

The sparkle in sparkling wine comes from carbon dioxide, introduced through fermentation in the bottle or tank or, in some cheaper wines, by an injection of the gas. The bubbles were originally considered a fault in the wine and endangered winery workers as the pressure tended to blow up the bottles. The British were the first to like the bubbly and engineered stronger bottles and corks to contain it. Hail, Britannia

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Champagne is the most popular of these fizzy wines. Only wine from the Champagne region of France can bear the name, others must be called sparkling wine. Other sparkling wines can also be referred to by region, such as cava from Spain, espumante from Portugal and asti from Italy.

Sparkling wines can be either fully sparkling — five to six atmospheres of pressure per bottle — or semi-sparkling, one to two and a half atmospheres. The amount of pressure in the bottle depends on the sugar added during fermentation. More sugar means more bubbles. The name of the wine can indicate how sweet it is. Brut nature has no added sugar; extra brut has up to six grams of sugar per liter; brut is up to 12; extra dry, extra sec or extra seco has 12-17 grams; dry, sec or seco goes from 17-32; demi-sec or semi-seco has 32-50 grams; and the sweetest, doux or dulce has more than 50 grams per liter.

While most sparkling wines are white or rosé, red wines can sparkle, too. Italy makes brachetto, a light-bodied red with strawberry notes, and lambrusco, a semi-sparkling lambrusco.



Cooking With Wine

Wine isn't just for pouring with a finished dish. The right variety can add depth and flavor to a variety of sweet and savory dishes. Here are three quick tips for cooking with wine.

Choose a wine you'd drink.

While it's tempting to skimp on a wine you're going to put into a pot with other ingredients, a bottle that you have to choke down on its own won't do your dish any favors. Go with one you'd enjoy on its own. That doesn't have to mean expensive, though. Ask the wine expert at your local grocery or liquor store for reasonably priced bottles that will enhance your recipe.

Simmer down. The wine should

cook down with your dish, imparting flavor and moisture as most of the alcohol cooks off. Good examples are bold reds added to a spaghetti sauce or chicken roasted in white wine.

When in doubt, color code. A good rule of thumb is that lighter colored wines should go with more delicate foods like seafood and chicken while more boldly flavored reds can go with darker foods with bigger flavors like red meat and anything spicy.



ROASTED CHICKEN WITH POTATOES

- 4 Yukon gold potatoes
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Rosemary, to taste
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 4-6 chicken thighs
- 1 cup white wine
- 4-6 tablespoons of butter

Wash and cube the potatoes and arrange in the bottom of a casserole dish.

Drizzle with olive oil and toss lightly to coat. Sprinkle with rosemary, salt and pepper. Pour the white wine over the potatoes.

Arrange the chicken thighs on top and put a pat of butter atop each thigh. Season again with salt and pepper.

Cover the dish with foil and bake in a 350-degree oven for 45 minutes. Remove the foil and cook until chicken is brown and crisp and the juices run clear.



Wine Etiquette

For the uninitiated, the world of wine can be a minefield. Here are some tips to make you look like a pro.

Go in order. For every bottle, there's a proper time. Serve in order from lightest to darkest, driest to sweetest. First come bubbles, then lighter whites like Riesling, heavier whites, rosés, light reds like pinot noir, heavier reds like malbec, and, finally dessert wines.

KNOW THE RIGHT TEMPERATURE

Reds can be served at room temperature, right? But whose room? Ideally, in the wine cellar, that bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon would be kept around 55 degrees, not the 72 degrees of our kitchen or, even worse, after a trip in a warm car. So pour your reds with a bit of a chill. For quick results, try popping it in the freezer for about 15 minutes before serving.

White wines should be served between 50-60 degrees, and all the bubbly should be ice cold. There's a reason for the champagne bucket.

SERVING, POURING AND DRINKING

Make sure you serve your wine in the proper glass (red, white or sparkling). Pour hold-



ing the butt of the bottle, not the neck. Hold your glass around the stem or the base. When clinking glasses, clink glass to glass gently and look

your clinking partner in the eye. Lastly and most importantly, keep pace with those around you. Don't imbibe too quickly.

AT THE RESTAURANT

If you're ordering for the table, get a red and a white. Your bold, tannic red may overwhelm someone's seafood

dish. No matter how many times you've seen it on TV, don't sniff the cork. Do, however, taste the wine before it's poured for everyone.

Dessert Wines

We're used to ordering a nice red with our steak and a white with our fish, but wine can also come with dessert.

Dessert wines are, as the name implies, heavy on the sugar either from naturally sweet grapes like muscat or by adding sugar. Adding sugar before fermentation is called chaptalization; if it comes after, süssreserve. Wine can also be fortified before all the sugar is fermented, usually with brandy, or water can be removed from the wine to concentrate the sugar, like in raisin wines or ice wine (eiswine, in Germany).

Fortified wines are perhaps the most famous of the sweet dessert wines. Port, from Portugal, comes in ruby port with chocolate and berry flavors and tawny port with nut and toffee notes. Sherry comes from the Jerez region of Spain and comes in a reason-defying blend of categories. The wine can be dry with almond or citrus notes (Manzanilla), darker brown with hints of caramel (Oloroso), or full-on sweet (Moscatel). Madeira, from the island of the same name off Morocco, repeatedly heated and oxidized. It can range from dry to sweet and can age for centuries.

Late-harvest wines come from grapes left on the vine

until the very end, concentrating the fruit's natural sugar. Rieslings and chenin blancs are good examples of late-harvest wines. Noble rot wines are a type of late-harvest wine where the grape is infected by *Botrytis cinerea*, a fungus that punctures grape skins to dehydrate them and concentrate flavors and, most importantly, sugar. Sauternes is perhaps the most famous wine of this type, and among the most famous dessert wines. Produced in the Bordeaux region of France, it bears notes of honey, apple, dried fruit and saffron.

PAIRINGS

A general rule of thumb is that the wine should be sweeter than the dessert itself. For example, on a hot day, pick a lightly sweet, crisp wine and a vanilla-based or fruit dessert. A Gewürztraminer, with its floral aromas, is a good choice, as is a Riesling or chenin blanc. Chocolate is a tough call with dessert wines, but a fortified red can do the trick. When in doubt, seek out the wine expert at your local grocery or liquor store.



Gifts for Oenophiles

While a new bottle is always a great gift, here are some other things to please the wine lover in your life.

The perfect stemware. So that they always have the right glass to hand, pick up a set of stemware. You can get dishwasher-safe, shatter-resistant stemware that will flatter both the wine and the drinker. The ideal set would have glasses for both red and white. Want bonus points? Have them personalized with a monogram.

An opener. There are almost as many ways to get into the wine bottle as there are types of grapes. Keep in mind where and how your oenophile normally imbibes. Have wine, will travel? Look for a sturdy pocket corkscrew in a lightweight material. Drinking at home? Look for an ornate mounted corkscrew that matches their decor. These heavy-duty devices usually come in antique designs and finishes. There are also electric corkscrews, air pressure corkscrews and a whole host of devices named after animals. Get hands-on with openers at your local liquor or home goods store.

Journals and label savers. Wine creates great memories and you can help preserve them with wine journals and label saver kits.

Wine club subscription. When giving just one bottle



isn't enough, look for a wine club that will deliver bottles on your timeline. Check to make sure you can have wine shipped to your wine lover's address first.

Wine totes and bags. Never

break a bottle en route to dinner again. The market is full of totes, bags and even portable wine racks designed to keep your bottles safe and sound.

Decanter or aerator. Your bottle of wine is chock full of

chemical reactions and one way to help a bottle achieve its full potential is to allow it to breathe in a decanter or by using aerator to introduce oxygen. As a wine breathes, it generally allows the flavor to

develop, but beware, it can also harm a delicate wine. Of course, sparkling wine shouldn't be decanted at all. If your wine lover likes bubbly, maybe choose a swanky chiller bucket instead.

Fruit-based Wines

Most wines come from one or more varieties of grape, but there are a bushel of fruit-based wines, too.

Technically, wine can be made from any plant that can be fermented, but legally, most drinks just labeled wine are made from grapes. Fruit wines are generally labeled with the type of fruit fermented, like cherry wine or plum wine.

Berry wine: Just about any berry can be made into wine, though sometimes the naturally occurring high acid contents mean that water must be added to produce a more pleasant drink.

Plum wine: Popular in Asia, plum wine is made from plums steeped in distilled liquor. It has a higher alcohol content than most wines.

Cherry wine: Cherry kijafa (Denmark) and Maraska (Croatia) are two well-known types of cherry wine. In the United States, Michigan leads the way both in tart cherry production and making cherry wine. Cherry wine can be used to make fortified wines and liqueurs.

Pineapple wine: Made from pineapple juice instead of grape juice, pineapple wine is a dry fruit wine with a strong bouquet of pineapple. It's popular in Asia, but is also made in Hawaii, Africa and in the



Caribbean.

Fruit wines aren't as popular as they once were as a staple of rural homesteads across the

U.S., but with a little searching, there's a good chance someone's making a wine out of your region's staple crop. Ask

around at specialty stores in your area, and you'll soon be sipping from your own bottle of locally grown apple or pear

wine. If you're into that sort of thing, fruit wines can also be a good way to get into winemaking yourself.