



GERMANY

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, the candidate should be able to:

- Discuss the general role and position of Germany in the global wine industry.
- Recall the physical location and general climate of Germany's major wine regions.
- Recognize the importance of Riesling to the German wine industry.
- Understand the hierarchy of wine designations from Wein to Prädikatswein, along with the progression of Prädikat levels from Kabinett to Trockenbeerenauslese.
- Discuss the differences among Anbaugebiete, Bereiche, Grosslagen, and Einzellagen.
- Identify the grape varieties and wine styles of the key wine regions of Germany.

Germany is home to some of the world's coldest-climate vineyards. The northernmost winegrowing regions of Germany are well above the 50th parallel of latitude and are far from the moderating influence of a large body of water. Yet through determination, centuries of experience, and carefully chosen vineyard sites, Germans have found ways of producing world-class wines.

Germany's wine reputation is built upon its world-class Rieslings. Riesling is one of the most cold-hardy grape varieties, and German Rieslings have a worldwide reputation for quality, complexity, and, in many cases, the ability to age for a long time. However, German wine is about more than just Riesling, as still white wines of many

varieties, sparkling wines, and even some cold-hardy reds are produced here.

Beyond being a wine-producing country, Germany is also a major wine-consuming country. It makes the styles of wine it can and imports those styles it cannot. As a result, Germany is consistently among the world's largest importers of wine. Despite the domestic demand, Germany is also among the top ten nations in exporting wine.

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Germany is located in north-central Europe, reaching as far north as Denmark and the Baltic Sea. However, with the exception of a few small districts in eastern Germany, all of the winegrowing areas are in the southwest quadrant of the country. The majority are found near a river or on the shores of Lake Constance (*Bodensee* in German).

The lifeblood of the German wine industry is the Rhine River and its tributaries. The Rhine forms most of Germany's border with Switzerland and France as it flows westward from Lake Constance to Switzerland, then along the French–German border north past Alsace, continuing on through western Germany until it flows out of the winegrowing region altogether and into the Netherlands.

The second most important wine river in Germany is the Mosel. It winds its way out of France's Vosges Mountains (where it is the Moselle), past Luxembourg, and then northeast through prime wine territory, until it empties into the Rhine. Other significant tributaries of the Rhine include the Ahr, Nahe, Main, and Neckar Rivers.



Figure 13–1: The Old Town Hall in Bamberg, Germany

Germany's climate is northern continental with mild summers, cold winters, and moderate precipitation year-round. In such a cool climate, wine grapes struggle to ripen before winter arrives, which is why the vineyards are concentrated near waterways. The flowing water moderates local climates and reflects sunlight back onto the vineyards, helping to warm the vines in this marginal climate. At this northerly latitude, south-facing hillside vineyards have a distinct advantage, maximizing both sun exposure and warmth. In Germany, as well as the rest of the Northern Hemisphere, vineyards on the north side of a river also benefit from extra sunlight reflecting off the water. Many of the top vineyard sites, notably in the Mosel and Rheingau, have dark blue and red slate-based soils that are ideal for absorbing solar heat during the daytime and radiating it back at night.

Germany is divided into 16 states (*Länder*). The winegrowing regions are primarily in the states of Baden-Württemberg, Hesse, and Rhineland-Palatinate.

GERMAN GRAPE VARIETIES

As might be expected in this climate, white grape varieties predominate in Germany, accounting for two-thirds of the total. More than 100 varieties are permitted, but in practice about 20 or so comprise almost all of the vineyard acreage.

Riesling is the most widely planted grape in the country, taking up more than one-fifth of the vineyard acreage. It is especially dominant in the Rheingau and Mosel areas. Müller-Thurgau, a Riesling X Madeline Royale cross developed for hardiness but somewhat lacking in resemblance to Riesling with regard to taste and longevity, is the second most common white grape.

Other leading white grape varieties include Silvaner, Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris, also known as Ruländer), and Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc). German Gewürztraminer is well-known, but it is not widely grown. Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Kerner (a Riesling X Schiava Grossa cross) are present as well.

Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir)—the leading red grape variety—is surprisingly widespread; in recent years its acreage has increased such that it is now the country's second most widely planted grape overall (after Riesling). Other important red grape varieties include Dornfelder, a deeply-hued red grape renowned for its floral aromas, and Blauer Portugieser, much of which is used in light red wines or rosé.

LEADING GRAPE VARIETIES OF GERMANY	
Red Grapes	White Grapes
Spätburgunder	Riesling
Dornfelder	Müller-Thurgau
Blauer Portugieser	Silvaner
Trollinger	Grauburgunder
Blaufränkisch	Weissburgunder
St. Laurent	Kerner
	Gewürztraminer

Figure 13–2: Leading Grape Varieties of Germany

GERMAN WINE LAWS

Quality Levels

In keeping with the EU wine blueprint, German wine law, reformed in 2009, divides wines into three broad categories. These categories are further defined both by geographic location and the degree of ripeness achieved by the grapes at harvest.

The various levels of the classification hierarchy, in ascending order of quality, are as follows:

- *Wein*: This category, previously referred to as *Tafelwein*, or table wine, is used for basic wine. There are very few guarantees of quality at this level. Most *wein* is made for the domestic market. These wines may be enriched or chaptalized to increase the final alcohol level. Some of the wine available at this level is imported bulk wine, mostly from Italy. In order to use the term *Deutscher Wein*, the wine must be 100% German in origin.
- PGI—*geschützte geographische Angabe (ggA)*: This category

contains what used to be referred to as *Landwein* (country wine). At this level, the grapes are required to be slightly riper than those for allowed for use in *wein*; however, chaptalization is permitted. A minimum of 85% of the grapes must be grown in one of Germany's 26 designated Landwein regions, with the region specified on the label. These wines are typically produced in either a dry (*trocken*) or off dry (*halbtrocken*) style.

- PDO—*geschützte Ursprungsbezeichnung (gU)*: This category contains the highest tiers of quality wine, as defined by the German government. These wines must be produced using grapes from one of the thirteen Anbaugebiete (specified winegrowing regions) and denote a place-name on the label (with 100% of the grapes sourced from the named place).

The subcategories of German PDO (gU) wines are as follows:

- *Qualitätswein* is the lower level of the two PDO subcategories. These wines represent the largest proportion of German wine output. Grapes used for Qualitätswein must reach sufficient ripeness for recognition as a quality wine. However, chaptalization is permitted for this category.
- *Prädikatswein* is the highest quality level designation. (The term *Prädikat* means "distinction.") These wines must be produced using grapes of sufficient ripeness, and chaptalization is not permitted. One of the six levels of the *Prädikat* must be stated on the label.



Figure 13–3: German wine categories

The subcategories for Prädikatswein, in ascending order of grape ripeness, are as follows:

- *Kabinett*: light- to medium-bodied wines made from grapes with the lowest ripeness level of the Prädikat. These wines average 7% to 10% alcohol.
- *Spätlese* (late harvest): wines of additional ripeness made from grapes harvested after a designated picking date. With the extra ripening time, the grapes develop more intense flavors and aromas than Kabinett.
- *Auslese* (selected harvest): wines made from grapes that have stayed on the vine long enough to have a required level of sugar. These wines can be intense in bouquet and taste, and have a potential alcohol level in excess of 14%.
- *Beerenauslese* (BA; selected berries): rich, sweet dessert wines made from individually harvested berries that are sweeter than Auslese and that may also be affected by the honeyed influence of botrytis, known in German as *Edelfäule*.
- *Eiswein* (ice wine): wines made from frozen grapes harvested at

a BA level of ripeness or higher. Having already become overripe from staying on the vine until as late as January, these grapes are harvested after they freeze in the vineyard. They are crushed immediately, and much of the water in the berries is discarded as ice, leaving grape must with a very high sugar level (see chapter 5).

- *Trockenbeerenauslese* (TBA; selected dried berries): wines from individually picked berries that are overripe to the point of being raisins and often further shriveled by botrytis. TBAs are considered to be among the world's greatest dessert wines.



Figure 13–4: German Prädikat levels

The six Prädikat levels are not necessarily a hierarchy of quality. Kabinett wines are certainly the most basic of the Prädikat wines, but after that the differences are more stylistic and a matter of taste than indicative of an absolute scale of quality. The three dessert wines, Beerenauslese, Eiswein, and Trockenbeerenauslese, make up a very small fraction of production.

The Prädikat levels ensure that the grapes used in a specific wine have achieved a minimum level of ripeness. The riper levels are

considered desirable, as the use of underripe grapes may result in wines that are highly acidic, light in alcohol, and with flavors that are not fully developed. The ripeness of the grapes is assessed by measuring the amount of sugar present in degrees *Oechsle*, a system based on the density or must weight of the juice (the more solids, primarily sugar, in the juice, the denser the liquid will be).

Despite the emphasis on sugar content in the grapes, the Oechsle value does not necessarily translate to sweetness in the finished wine. High sugar content can lead to either high alcohol content in a dry wine or high sweetness levels in a low-alcohol wine, or anything in between, depending on the winemaker's preference. Approximately two-thirds of all German wine production is dry.

OECHSLE

The Oechsle scale is based on the density of the grape must:

- $\text{Oechsle} = (\text{density} - 1.0) \times 1,000$

Must with a density reading of 1.074 is said to measure 74° Oechsle. Oechsle values can range from the 40s (seriously underripe) to well over 150 in dried grapes. Kabinett grapes may range from 70° to 85° Oechsle.



Figure 13–5: Hierarchy of place-names for German PDO wines

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS

- *Anbaugebiete*: Germany has 13 recognized wine regions, known as Anbaugebiete, for PDO wines. Both Qualitätswein and Prädikatswein require a single Anbaugebiet as a place of origin. These Anbaugebiete are further divided into the following progressively more exclusive geographical areas: Bereiche, Grosslagen, and Einzellagen.
- *Bereiche*: There are approximately 40 Bereiche. A Bereich can be thought of as a regional or district appellation, along the lines of AOC Côtes du Rhône, DO Catalunya, or a county in the United States. Each Anbaugebiet contains at least one Bereich. A Bereich is often indicated by the word *Bereich* on the label, as in *Bereich Bernkastel*.
- *Grosslagen*: There are approximately 160 Grosslagen. A Grosslage is a grouping of numerous vineyards into a convenient administrative package. There was little, if any, effort to take terroir into account when these areas were established,

so they are largely meaningless from a terroir standpoint. Each Bereich includes multiple Grosslagen.

- *Einzellagen*: There are more than 2,700 Einzellagen. Each Grosslage contains numerous Einzellagen. An Einzellage is, in theory, a single vineyard, but this ignores the fact that these areas were created by cobbling together tiny vineyards (there were once 30,000 Einzellagen) into new vineyards with a minimum of 5 hectares (12.4 acres). Again, the logic appears more administrative than viticultural. Nevertheless, these are still relatively small vineyard areas with reasonably homogeneous conditions. The vineyards are often divided among many different owners.

If a Grosslage or Einzellage appears on a wine label, the name is typically preceded by a village name. The addition of the village name is helpful, as many of the Grosslagen and Einzellagen stretch across several towns—such as the famous *Sonnenuhr* vineyard that encompasses *Wehlener Sonnenuhr* (in the village of Wehlen) and *Zeltinger Sonnenuhr* (in the adjacent village of Zeltingen). In addition, some names occur more than once, at separate locations—such as *Rauenthaler Rothenberg* (in the village of Rauenthal) and *Geisenheimer Rothenberg* (in the village of Geisenheim).

The Future of Geographical Indications in Germany

Beginning in 2020, a few new PDO regions were registered in Germany. These regions—which include the *Monzinger Niederberg* PDO in the Nahe and the *Uhlen Blaufüsser Lay* PDO in the Mosel—are small, very specific areas within the larger Anbaugebiete. In addition, their rules dictate the use of approved grape varieties, limits on yield, and certain required methods of production—similar to an *appellation d'origine contrôlée* (AOC) as used in France. These new PDOs represent a departure from the typical label designations previously used in Germany.

Furthermore, in April of 2021, new guidelines were announced regarding the future of geographical indications in Germany. The

new regulations—which include an expanded emphasis on village-, commune- and vineyard-specific appellations—are expected to be implemented as of the 2025 vintage.

GERMAN WINE LABELS

In addition to the information provided on a German wine label described in figure 13-6, wines made by the grape growers are designated *Erzeugerabfüllung* or *Gutsabfüllung*. *Gutsabfüllung* is the equivalent of “estate bottled.” *Erzeugerabfüllung* also includes cooperatives of growers and means “producer bottled.” The term *Abfüller* indicates a wine produced at a commercial winery that buys grapes from other sources. All German PDO wines will also show an *Amtliche Prüfungsnummer* (AP Number) on the label. The AP number is issued after government approval and identifies the wine and the specific testing center where it was approved, as well as the village of origin, winery of origin, and other information.

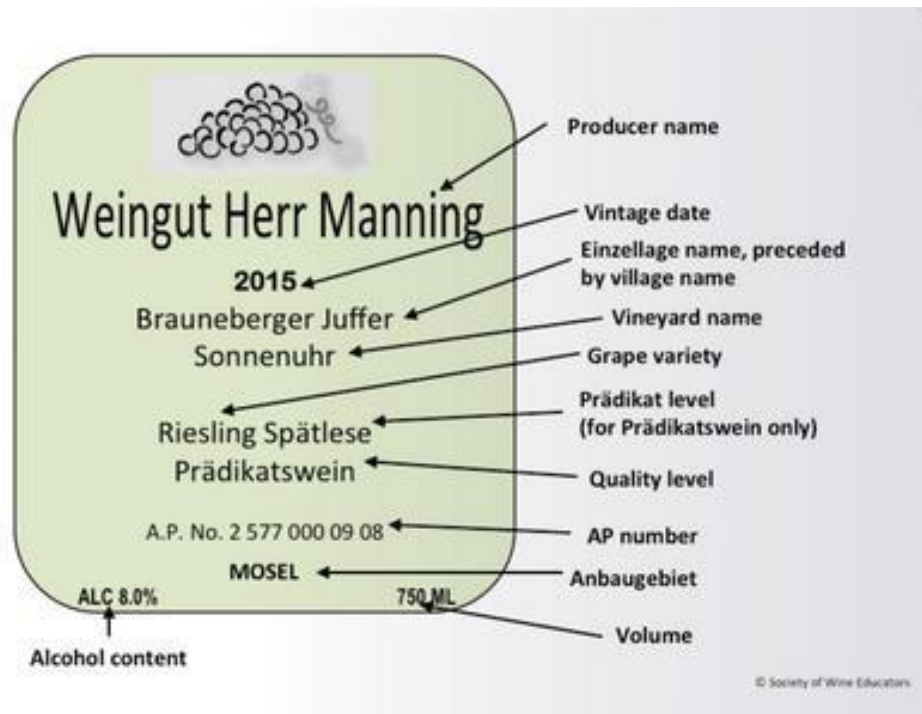


Figure 13–6: German wine label and explanation of its content

VDP CLASSIFICATION

The Association of German Prädikat Wine Estates (Verband Deutscher Prädikatsweingüter, or VDP) is an organization of Germany's leading wine estates committed to terroir-driven viticulture. Beginning in the early 2000s, it implemented a four-tier classification system for individual vineyards loosely modeled on the hierarchy used in Bourgogne. It should be noted that the VDP hierarchy is extralegal; that is, it is not a government-mandated labeling requirement but rather may be used alongside government-required label information.

There are four levels of classification in the VDP system, listed from highest to lowest:

- *VDP Grosse Lage*: The highest-level vineyards of the estate, translated as "great site." A dry wine from a VDP Grosse Lage vineyard may be designated by the initialism "GG" (Grosses Gewächs) and is labeled with the term "Qualitätswein Trocken." A VDP Grosse Lage wine with natural, ripe sweetness is labeled with one of the traditional Prädikat levels: Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese, Eiswein, or Trockenbeerenauslese.
- *VDP Erste Lage*: The second-highest-level vineyards of the estate, translated as "first site." Dry wines at this level are also labeled as "Qualitätswein Trocken," while each region can define the taste profile of off-dry (halbtrocken or feinherb) wines. Naturally sweet wines at the Erste Lage level will be labeled with one of the traditional Prädikat levels.
- *VDP Ortswein*: Translates as "classified site wine." These wines are sourced from vineyards at the equivalent of a village appellation. These wines may also be labeled as "Qualitätswein Trocken" if dry and, if naturally sweet, with the terms *halbtrocken* or *feinherb*, or one of the levels of the Prädikat.
- *VDP Gutswein*: Represents good entry-level wines, equivalent to an estate wine or regional wine. The wines originate from an estate's holdings within a region, and they meet the stringent standards prescribed by the VDP.

One interesting item of note concerning the label terms used in the VDP classification is that for the top three tiers—Grosse Lage, Erste Lage, and Ortswein—the Prädikat levels are reserved for use with wines that retain some natural sweetness. Under the VDP system, dry wines produced under these three tiers are labeled with the term *trocken* (in addition to the GG used by the Grosse Lage properties) as opposed to a Prädikat level. According to the VDP, this enables the levels of the Prädikat to reflect their original meaning, indicating natural sweetness, as opposed to the modern usage of the Prädikat terminology, which—it may be argued—does not reflect a correlation between Prädikat level and actual taste profile.



Figure 13–7: VDP logo

GERMAN WINE STYLES

In Germany's northern climate, grapes are typically left on the vine as long as possible to get as ripe as they can, and are often brought into the winery just before winter sets in. Historically, the cold temperatures after harvest had a tendency to cause the new wine to stop fermenting before all of the sugar had been converted to alcohol. Given the high acidity of Riesling and some of the other grape varieties grown in Germany, especially when they are underripe, the residual sugar was beneficial. Thus, the typical style of German wine became white wine somewhere between off-dry and fully sweet. This style was very popular both at home and on the export market, and the country's sweet wines were prized internationally for centuries.

When tastes changed in the late twentieth century, consumers began drinking drier wines, and Germany's exports plummeted. These days, the German wine industry is trying to promote both the production of dry wines at home and consumer awareness of these wines abroad. In addition, red varieties are increasingly grown throughout the country. Today, more than one-third of German wine production is red, and a large proportion of whites are dry.

WINEMAKING CONSIDERATIONS

In principle, grapes at any ripeness level can be made into sweet or dry wine. However, in some cases the natural sugar in the grapes is so low that the potential alcohol level is barely enough for the wine to be stable and to meet the legal definition of wine. In these cases, the winemaker's choices are as follows:

- Make a low-alcohol, off-dry or dry wine.
- Chaptalize: in some cases, sugar may be added to the must before fermentation to increase the potential alcohol level. Chaptalization is not, however, allowed for use with Prädikatswein.
- Make a low-alcohol, sweet wine by adding *süßreserve* (unfermented grape juice) to the wine after fermentation.

Grapes classified for use with Prädikatswein have sufficient potential alcohol to produce stable wine even if the fermentation is stopped early. As such, winemakers may use grapes harvested at the lower levels (Kabinett, Spätlese, or Auslese) to produce dry Prädikatswein or may halt the fermentation before completion and preserve some level of sweetness.

INDICATIONS OF SWEETNESS

With so many choices of styles, it can be difficult for consumers to know what to expect from a bottle of German wine. There is as yet no mandatory industry-wide system in place that makes it clear to consumers how sweet a particular German wine is or how its

sweetness was achieved. Nevertheless, there are clues available on every label, and various groups of German winemakers and individual producers have come up with ways to make the style apparent.

The simplest way to advise the consumer of the wine's sweetness level is to state it plainly. Many labels carry the exact residual sugar level in grams per liter. Others use qualitative terms that give a general idea of the sweetness. English-language words may be used on some wineries' exports to English-speaking countries, but the traditional German terms are seen more often:

trocken dry up to 9 g/L*

halbtrocken off-dry 9–18 g/L**

feinherb off-dry legally undefined, but in the same range as halbtrocken

lieblich, halbsüß half-sweet 18–45 g/L

süss or *süß* sweet more than 45 g/L

* No more than 2 g/L above acidity level

** No more than 10 g/L above acidity level



Figure 13–8: Riesling taste profile

In 2008, in an attempt to clarify matters for the consumer, the International Riesling Foundation created the Riesling Taste Profile, which permits Riesling producers to use a scale on their back labels to indicate the wine's sweetness level to consumers. While participation is voluntary, its use has caught on among some producers. The individual winery determines the placement of the

arrow based on a set of technical guidelines in concert with its tasting assessment.

DESSERT WINES

The three highest Prädikat levels, BA, TBA, and Eiswein, represent some of the world's exemplary dessert wines. These wines are normally low in alcohol, high in acid, and very sweet. Botrytis aromas and flavors may be present in the BA and TBA wines, but grapes for Eiswein have not necessarily been affected by noble rot.

Required minimum ripeness levels for BA, Eiswein, and TBA grapes vary somewhat by Anbaugebiet. However, they are within the range of 110° to 125° Oechsle for BA and Eiswein and between 150° and 154° Oechsle for TBA. Grapes for German Eiswein must be harvested while frozen on the vine at an ideal temperature of at least $-8^{\circ}\text{C}/18^{\circ}\text{F}$. For this reason, most grapes for Eiswein are harvested in the early hours of the morning, often before dawn. While the harvest for Eiswein often begins in November or December, it is quite possible for it to occur in January or February of the year following the harvest for the more typical styles of wine. If this is the case, the vintage date of the finished wine will reflect the calendar year of the growing season.

RED WINES

Red wines are an increasingly important part of German wine production. In the past two decades, red grape varieties have more than doubled in vineyard area and now account for some 36% of Germany's acreage. These vineyards are mostly found in the warmer south of the country, particularly in Württemberg and Baden. This is still a fairly cool area, so German red wines are often on the light side, all the more so because the most prominent red variety is Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir), which is typically light in color and tannin. Germany also produces a substantial amount of rosé. A rosé made from a single variety of at least Qualitätswein quality may be labeled with the term *Weissherbst*.

SPARKLING WINES

High-acid, slightly underripe grapes are the perfect ingredient for sparkling wine, and Germany makes a lot of it. Germans reportedly have the world's highest per-capita consumption of sparkling wine. A good deal of German sparkling wine is known as *Sekt*, which is typically produced via by the tank method (although use of the traditional method is allowed). Off-dry and semisweet versions of *Sekt* are widely produced and very popular. Simple, fruity aerated sparkling wines known as *Schaumwein* ("foam wine") are produced by carbonation. Spätburgunder and wide range of white grape varieties are used for making German sparkling wine.



Figure 13–9: Vineyards in the Mosel

WINE REGIONS

MOSEL

The Mosel is one of the best-known wine regions of Germany, famous for its high-acid Rieslings. It is one of the larger areas in terms of production, responsible for almost one-sixth of the country's wine.

Geography and Climate

The Mosel River snakes its way past some of Germany's most

famous vineyard sites as it flows from Trier northeast to Koblenz, where it joins the Rhine. The river is tortuously winding, and its banks are often very steep. This is the most northerly great wine region in the world, and its cool climate makes it difficult to fully ripen even the most cold-hardy grapes.

The best-performing vineyards are those facing south on steep slopes, providing the ideal aspect for maximizing sun exposure. In many spots, the thin, sandy topsoil is scattered with bits of broken slate that help with heat retention and prevent erosion of the soil. Despite the overall cold climate, Germany's continental setting allows some hot summer days during the peak growing season that help to raise sugar levels without sacrificing acidity.

The Mosel has several side tributaries, the most important in wine terms being the Saar and Ruwer Rivers (until 2007, the Anbaugebiet was known as Mosel-Saar-Ruwer). The central area, known as the Mittelmosel, is home to many of the most famous sites.



Figure 13–10: Vineyards in Zell-Merl in the fall

Grape Varieties and Styles

Riesling dominates the Mosel with about 62% of the vineyard land.

Other leading white grapes include Müller-Thurgau, Elbling, and Grauburgunder. Red grapes, led by Spätburgunder, account for just slightly over 10% of the total plantings.

Acidity is the hallmark of Riesling, and the Mosel produces Rieslings that exemplify this trait; yet these wines are balanced by rich flavors of stone fruits and honey and, sometimes, a moderate sweetness. Wines of the Mosel usually contain no more than 10% alcohol, and they are traditionally bottled in tall, slender green bottles.

Mosel Appellations

The Mosel Anbaugebiet has six Bereiche, including Bernkastel, Burg Cochem, Saar, and Ruwertal. The region's quality is attested to by the fact that it has over 500 Einzellagen, more than any other region.

RHEINGAU

The most famous stretch of vineyards along the Rhine is the Rheingau. This small area produces just 2% of Germany's total wines, but its reputation is at least equal to the Mosel's.

Geography and Climate

The Rheingau's vineyards have the most favored position on the Rhine. For about 15 miles (24 km) after passing the cities of Mainz and Wiesbaden, the Rhine flows westward, giving the entire right bank an ideal southern exposure, with additional sunlight reflecting up from the wide river. This macroclimate affords maximum sun and warmth, along with protection from cold north winds. Red slate soils hold heat during the day and radiate it onto the vines overnight.

Grape Varieties and Styles

The vineyards of the Rheingau with the best reputations are heavily invested in the country's classic grape, Riesling, which takes up more than three-quarters of the region. The excellent southern exposure of the vineyards produces elegant, full-bodied Rieslings. It also provides enough warmth to ripen Spätburgunder well; this variety takes up more than half of the remaining vineyard space.

Rheingau Appellations

This Anbaugebiet has just one Bereich, Johannisberg, with more than 120 Einzellagen.

NAHE

The Anbaugebiet of Nahe lies southwest of the Rheingau, where the river of the same name flows into the Rhine. The Nahe Valley, west of Rheinhessen, produces Rieslings that are well respected, if not especially well-known. However, while white wine does dominate, Riesling represents only about one-quarter of the production here. The region has many fine vineyard sites on the south-facing slopes of the mainly east–west valleys of the Nahe and its tributaries.

RHEINHESSEN

Rheinhessen is located on the south and west bank of the Rhine across from the Rheingau and north of the Pfalz. It leads Germany's winegrowing regions both in area under vine and overall wine production. The Rheinhessen forms a low, flat plateau and has a generally warm, dry climate. Most of its vineyards are currently planted to Riesling and Müller-Thurgau, but Dornfelder is not far behind.

PFALZ

The Pfalz lies to the west of the Rhine, and its southern edge is not far from the northern tip of French Alsace. It is the second largest Anbaugebiet in terms of acreage. With the region's name coming from the Latin word *palatium*, meaning "palace," it is often referred to by the English equivalent, Palatinate. Quite sunny and warm during the growing season, this fertile region is known mainly for simple, inexpensive wines produced in large quantities, but that is changing as some vintners begin to focus on low yields and premium bottlings. Riesling accounts for nearly 25% of the total plantings in the Pfalz. Other leading grape varieties include Müller-Thurgau and Grauburgunder, along with the red varieties Dornfelder and Spätburgunder.

FRANKEN

The easternmost Anbaugebiet of the former West Germany, Franken covers a large area of the Main River Valley, but with fairly sparse plantings of vines. Due to the region's cold climate and short growing season, the earlier-ripening varieties of Müller-Thurgau and Silvaner play a significant role, and the area is primarily known for everyday white wines. Franconian wines are easily recognizable by the region's use of a traditional squat green or brown flask called a *Bocksbeutel*.

HESSISCHE BERGSTRASSE

A tiny region with only 1,150 acres (465 ha) planted to vines, Hessische Bergstrasse is a spur off the northern part of the Baden region. The area is known for white wines, with almost half of the acreage currently planted to Riesling. The name of the region means "Hessian Mountain Road."

Wine Regions of Germany



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Figure 13–11: German wine regions

WÜRTTEMBERG

Württemberg is a large region that focuses on red wine, with almost

75% of the vineyard area dedicated to red grape varieties such as Trollinger, Schwarzriesling (Pinot Meunier), and Lemberger. Most of the vines are planted on the slopes of the Neckar River Valley and on the banks of the Neckar's tributaries, but a few are isolated well south on the shore of Lake Constance. Rainfall and humidity are higher in Württemberg than in other German wine regions.



Figure 13–12: German vineyards in winter

BADEN

Geographically, Baden covers the most ground of the 13 winegrowing areas, stretching 150 miles (240 km) along the eastern bank of the Rhine between Mannheim and Switzerland. However, only a fraction of the area is planted to grapes, making it the third largest Anbaugebiet in vineyard acreage, after Rheinhessen and Pfalz. Baden consists of two large unconnected segments along the east side of the Rhine, plus three small subareas along western Lake Constance. Baden's Kaiserstuhl Bereich is considered the warmest of Germany's growing areas. Spätburgunder is by far the most widely planted grape variety in Baden, followed by Müller-Thurgau and Grauburgunder. Weissherbst—a single-variety, high-quality rosé—

based on Spätburgunder is a specialty of the region.

AHR

One of the northernmost regions, Ahr is among Germany's smallest, with just over 1,300 acres (526 ha) planted to vines. Ahr is (somewhat surprisingly) known for red wines, which account for over 80% of total production. Spätburgunder is the leading grape variety, although Portugieser and Dornfelder are widely planted as well. The region follows the short path of the Ahr River from its source in the village of Blankenheim to its confluence with the Rhine. The land surrounding the Ahr River consists of a series of sheltered valleys lined with steep, south-facing slopes. This topography, combined with the heat-retaining properties of the dark slate and greywacke (sandstone) soils, allows the red grapes of the area to reach a consistent level of ripeness. The red wines of the Ahr tend to show relatively high tannins and oak-derived notes of spice—despite the northerly latitude (50°N).

MITTEL RheIN

Another small region, the Mittelrhein is located along a stretch of the Rhine Valley downriver (north) from the Rheingau. The Mittelrhein features steep banks dotted with castles and small vineyards. Most of the terraced vineyards are planted to Riesling.

SACHSEN AND SAALE-UNSTRUT

These two areas, part of the former East Germany, are the northernmost and easternmost of the German Anbaugebiete. Together, they comprise 2,600 acres (1,050 ha) and produce very little wine. Müller-Thurgau, Riesling, and Weissburgunder are the most widely planted grape varieties.

Table 13–1: German PDO Wine Regions

GERMAN PDO WINE REGIONS				
Anbaugebiete		Bereiche	Grosslagen	Einzellagen
Ahr	1	Walporzheim/Ahrtal	1	43
Baden	9	Badische-Bergstrasse, Bodensee, Breisgau, Kraichgau, Kaiserstuhl, Markgräflerland, Ortenau, Tuniberg, Tauberfranken	17	315
Franken	3	Mainviereck, Maindreieck, Steigerwald	23	216
Hessische Bergstrasse	2	Starkenburg, Umstadt	3	23
Mittelrhein	2	Loreley, Siebengebirge	11	111
Mosel	6	Bernkastel, Burg Cochem, Moseltor, Obermosel, Saar, Ruwertal	19	524
Nahe	1	Nahetal	6	328
Pfalz	2	Mittelhaardt-Deutsche Weinstrasse, Südliche Weinstrasse	23	325
Rheingau	1	Johannisberg	10	123
Rheinhessen	3	Bingen, Nierstein, Wonnegau	24	434
Saale-Unstrut	3	Mansfelder Seen, Schloss Neuenburg, Thüringen	4	18
Sachsen	2	Elstertal, Meissen	3	17
Württemberg	6	Bayerischer Bodensee, Kocher-Jagst-Tauber, Oberer Neckar, Remstal-Stuttgart, Württembergisch Unterland, Württembergisch Bodensee	15	207
Source: German Wine Institute, 2022				