



CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the physical location and general climate of Austria's major wine regions.
- Recognize Austria's signature grape variety and other important grapes.
- Describe Austrian wine law and the hierarchy of Austrian wine designations.
- Discuss the other main wines and wine regions of central and eastern Europe.

Eastern Europe has as old and rich a tradition of winegrowing as the western parts of Europe, but its wine industry was halted and much of its infrastructure destroyed by World War II and the subsequent Soviet domination of most of the area. Of the countries discussed in this chapter, only Austria and Switzerland in central Europe remained outside of communist rule, which seemingly focused on high output, resulting in a decrease in quality.

Austria maintained a wine industry that competed on the world wine market during this time, although it ran into its own quality issues in the 1980s, which seriously damaged its reputation for more than a decade. Meanwhile, Switzerland kept its wine production levels constant, but its wines are largely unseen outside of the country, partly because they are domestically consumed and partly because the Swiss franc is higher in value than other currencies, which makes Swiss wines prohibitively expensive.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, some progress has been made in reviving eastern Europe's wine production. At the same time, the European Union has spread eastward in a series of expansions, drawing much of eastern Europe into its sphere, and greatly influencing the wine of many eastern European countries.

AUSTRIA

Austria's wine industry has become a source of fine wines after many years of acting as a supplier of bulk wines for the German wine market. The change was brought on by a public relations crisis in the mid-1980s when a few brokers chemically adulterated some wines to artificially give them added richness. After several subsequent years of disastrous export sales, the Austrians tightened controls and began focusing on quality. As a result, Austria's reputation has rebounded, along with its exports. It is still a relatively small player on the international market, but its wines are well regarded.

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Austria is centrally located in Europe, southeast of Germany and northeast of Italy. The Alps cover much of the country, especially toward the west, so only the lower hills and plains in the eastern part of the country are really suitable for winegrowing. The majority of Austria's vineyard land lies in the three eastern states of Niederösterreich (Lower Austria), Burgenland, and Steiermark (Styria), which border the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia.

Wine Regions of Austria

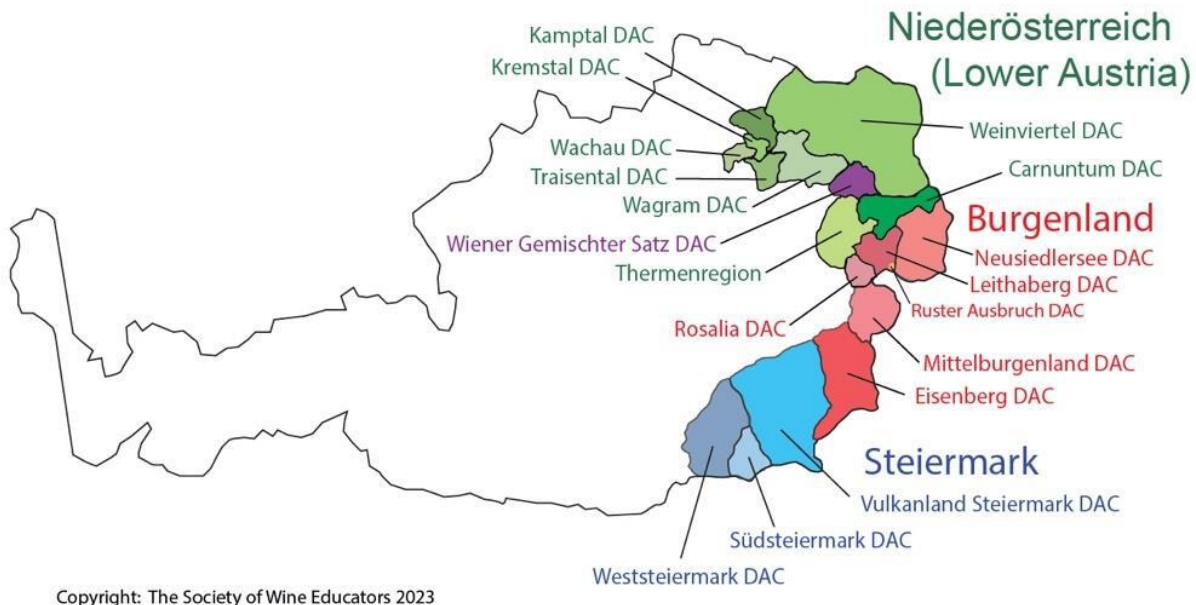


Figure 14–1: Austrian wine regions

As in most of central Europe, the climate in eastern Austria is cool continental. Summers are mild and winters are very cold. The climate is similar to that of Baden in southern Germany, which lies at the same latitude just to the west. Its viticultural conditions are similar, as well.

GRAPE VARIETIES

There are 40 grape varieties authorized for use in Austrian wine bottled at the PGI or PDO level. These include 26 white and 14 red varieties.

White wine production dominates in Austria, accounting for over 66% of the total. The country's signature grape variety is the indigenous Grüner Veltliner, a spicy white grape that is popular internationally and is known for citrus, white pepper, and mineral characteristics. Young examples provide fresh fruit and vibrant acidity, while wines produced from older vines and better vineyards

are capable of aging for three to ten years. Outside Austria, Grüner Veltliner is found only in a few places, mostly in eastern Europe. Approximately one-third of Austria's total acreage under vine—nearly 35,530 acres (14, 380 ha)—is planted with Grüner Veltliner.

- Welschriesling: not true Riesling, but a variety that makes fragrant, perfumed, high-acid wines
- Müller-Thurgau: a cross of Riesling and Madeleine Royal, this grape is a reliable producer, but it makes wines that are low in acid and relatively unremarkable
- Weissburgunder: Pinot Blanc
- Riesling: most commonly produced in a dry style, but also in the full range of sweetness levels up to Trockenbeerenauslese
- Chardonnay: also known here as Morillon

The second most widely planted grape, and the most prominent red, is Zweigelt. This cross between Blaufränkisch and St. Laurent, when well made, displays a medium body and cherry flavors with a peppery finish.

Other significant red varieties include the following:

- Blaufränkisch: Also known as Lemberger or Kékfrankos, this is one of the few Austrian grape varieties with commercial importance in the United States. It produces a full-bodied wine with high acidity, solid tannins, and dark-berry fruit flavors.
- St. Laurent: Although this variety makes up only a small percentage of planted acreage in Austria, it is increasingly exported. This member of the Pinot family produces medium-bodied wines with medium tannins and cherry-berry flavors.

LEADING GRAPE VARIETIES OF AUSTRIA	
Red Grapes	White Grapes
Zweigelt	Grüner Veltliner
Blaufränkisch	Welschriesling
Spätburgunder	Riesling
Blauburger	Weissburgunder
St. Laurent	Müller-Thurgau
Portugieser	Chardonnay (Morillon)
Merlot	Sauvignon Blanc
	Muskateller/Muscat

Figure 14–2: Leading Grape Varieties of Austria

KMW CONVERSION

The Austrian measure for must weight is called *Klosterneuburger Mostwaage (KMW)*. KMW can be converted to other systems through these approximations:

- 1° KMW = about 1.2 Brix
- 1° KMW = about 5 Oechsle

AUSTRIAN WINE LAWS

The place-of-origin and classification categories used for Austrian wines are similar, but not identical, to the system currently used in Germany. The classification hierarchy, based on minimum levels of ripeness, as well as other attributes, is as follows:

- *Wein*: The basic category, Wein was recently renamed from the more old-fashioned term *tafelwein*. Wein may be labeled with a vintage date and/or a grape variety, but may not carry a place-

- of-origin more specific than “Österreich” (Austria).
- *Landwein*: The Landwein category represents wine with a geographical indication and is considered PGI-level wine. Wines produced under this category are labeled with one of three *Weinbauregionen* (Landwein regions): Weinland Österreich, Steierland, or Bergland.
 - *PDO wines*: Austria uses three distinct terms to refer to its PDO-level wines: Qualitätswein, Prädikatswein, and *Districtus Austriae Controllatus* (DAC). These wines must be sourced from a single quality wine region (Weinbaugebiet), subregion, or a specifically-defined Districtus Austriae Controllatus (DAC). These wines account for approximately two-thirds of Austria’s total production. While a great majority of the PDO-level wine in Austria is produced in its easternmost states, all nine of Austria’s Federal States are designated as PDO wine-producing appellations.

Austrian Qualitätswein must be produced from grapes harvested at a minimum of 15° KMW; those that are harvested at a minimum of 19° KMW may qualify for Prädikatswein status.)

Austria’s Prädikatswein are divided into subcategories based on ripeness levels very much like the categories used for German Prädikatswein. However, there are a few distinct differences in the two systems:

- In Austria, Kabinett wines are considered a subset of Qualitätswein rather than the beginning rung on the ripeness ladder of the Prädikat.
- The Austrian Prädikat includes guidelines for a dried-grape wine, known as *Strohwein* or *Schilfwein*.

With Kabinett wines moved down to the lower quality wine category, the Prädikatswein levels for Austrian wine, from least to most ripe, are as follows:

- Spätlese: minimum 19° KMW

- Auslese: minimum 21° KMW; unripe grapes must be removed from the bunches
- Beerenauslese (BA), Eiswein, and Strohwein/Schilfwein: minimum 25° KMW
- Trockenbeerenauslese (TBA): minimum 30° KMW; the majority of the grapes must be affected by botrytis

Although Austria's wines have historically used must weight (sugar content) as a designation of quality, there was concern among Austrian producers that their wines would be broad-brushed as being universally sweet. Accordingly, Austria sought to further define quality for its dry wines. For instance, in the Wachau, an industry organization known as *Vinea Wachau (Vinea Wachau Nobilis Districtus)* instituted the terms *Steinfeder* (the lightest style), *Federspiel* (classic, or middleweight wines), and *Smaragd* (the fullest-bodied wines) to indicate increasing levels of ripeness for wines that are dry on the palate. However, many in the industry felt that a more appellation-based system was needed.

Consequently, in 2003, Austria introduced an appellation system that follows the terroir-based concept developed in France and promoted by the European Union. The Austrian system designates classified grape-growing regions as *Districtus Austriae Controllatus* (DAC), which may be considered the highest level of quality in Austria.

The DAC designation can only be used for the specified grape varieties considered the most outstanding and most typical of the delineated region. Each DAC specifies alcohol levels, aging regimens, and other specific details; in addition, some include quality tiers such as those designated as *Klassik*, *Reserve*, or regional specificity including village and single vineyard wines. Wines that are produced within these DAC areas but that don't meet the DAC requirements must be labeled with a more generic area.

AUSTRIAN WINE STYLES

A key difference between Austrian and German wine styles is that

Austrian wines (excluding dessert wines) are typically dry. Austria also produces some wine styles unique to the area. These include the following:

- *Strohwein* (*Schilfwein*) is a dried-grape wine that uses grapes of at least BA ripeness that have been air-dried on mats made of *Stroh* (straw) or *Schilf* (reeds) or hung on strings, much like the recioto wines of Veneto (Italy). Grapes for Strohwein/Schilfwein must be dried for a minimum of three months if picked at 25° KMW. Otherwise, they may be picked at 30° KMW and stored for two months. The raisinated grapes are then pressed, and the juice is fermented into a sweet wine.
- *Bergwein* (mountain wine) is produced using grapes that are grown on extraordinarily steep mountain slopes with at least a 26% gradient.

AUSTRIAN APPELLATIONS

Niederösterreich (Lower Austria)

Niederösterreich is the largest winegrowing region in Austria in both geographical area and vineyard acreage. This landlocked area has a continental climate with warm, dry summers and severe winters. The Danube River flows southeast through the region, and many of the more renowned vineyards are planted along its path. Subregions of the Niederösterreich include:

- Weinviertel DAC: Weinviertel is the largest subregion of Niederösterreich, stretching from the Danube Valley to the borders of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. DAC wines must be 100% Grüner Veltliner, and tend to be quite pungent, spicy, and peppery. Reserve DAC wines may have a subtle botrytis character.
- Traisental DAC, Kamptal DAC, and Kremstal DAC: These three areas have similar climates, and all produce DAC wines from either Grüner Veltliner or Riesling. The Grüner Veltliner produced in these regions tends to be lighter and more delicate in style as compared to those of the Weinviertel.

- Wachau DAC: Located in a valley following the path of the Danube River, the Wachau DAC produces a variety of grapes and wine styles. However, the top-tier wines of the DAC—produced from designated, single-vineyard sites known as *Rieden*—are made exclusively from Riesling and Grüner Veltliner.
- Wagram DAC: The Wagram DAC is located along the Danube River to the east of Wachau, Kremstal, and Kamptal. Grüner Veltliner is the most widely-planted grape in the region and is typically made into rich, flavorful, and characteristically spicy white wines. Other leading grapes include Roter Veltliner (a pink-skinned grape that—despite its name—has no direct genetic link to Grüner Veltliner), Riesling, Pinot Noir, and Zweigelt. Prior to 2007, this area was known as *Donauland*.
- Thermenregion: Thermenregion is located quite far from the moderating influence of the Danube, and produces a good deal of red wine, focusing on Zweigelt. Some unique grapes, such as Rotgipfler and Zierfandler (Spätrot), are grown here as well.
- Carnuntum DAC: The Carnuntum DAC, located to the south and east of Vienna, is approved for the production of dry wines (single-variety as well as blends). White wines may be produced using Chardonnay, Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc), or Grüner Veltliner; red wines may be based on Zweigelt or Blaufränkisch. All varietally-labeled wines produced under the Carnuntum DAC must contain 100% of the named variety. Blended wines must contain at least 67% (two-thirds) of the aforementioned grape varieties.



Figure 14–3: Vineyards in Austria, during the Südsteiermark-Classic auto rally

Table 14–1: Austrian Wine Regions

AUSTRIAN WINE REGIONS		
Weinbauregionen (Landwein Regions)	Weinbaugebiete (Quality Wine Regions/ Federal States)	Subregions
Weinland Österreich	Burgenland	Eisenberg DAC
		Leithaberg DAC
		Mittelburgenland DAC
		Neusiedlersee DAC
		Rosalia DAC
		Ruster Ausbruch DAC
	Niederösterreich (Lower Austria)	Carnuntum DAC
		Kamptal DAC
		Kremstal DAC
		Thermenregion
		Traisental DAC
		Wachau DAC
		Wagram DAC
		Weinviertel DAC
	Wien (Vienna)	Wiener Gemischter Satz DAC
Steierland	Steiermark (Styria)	Südsteiermark DAC
		Vulkanland Steiermark DAC
		Weststeiermark DAC
Bergland	(None)	(None)
Source: Austrianwine.com, 2022		
Note: All nine of Austria's Federal States are registered with the EU as PDO wine-producing regions (Weinbaugebiete); this would include Carinthia (Kärnten), Tyrol (Tirol), Salzburg, Vorarlberg, and Oberösterreich (Upper Austria) in addition to the four major Weinbaugebiete/ Federal States listed above.		

Burgenland

Burgenland is located to the south of Niederösterreich and shares a border with Hungary. The presence of Lake Neusiedl, the largest closed-basin lake in Europe, creates ideal conditions for the growth of *Botrytis cinerea* in parts of the area.

Burgenland contains six DAC regions, as discussed below.

- **Mittelburgenland DAC:** This area produces red wines based on the Blaufränkisch grape variety. These wines are known for full body, deep color, and spicy aromas as well as red and black fruit flavors. Classic wines must be matured in stainless steel or used oak and should not show any oak influence. Reserve wines, which require an additional year of aging, are often aged in new

oak.

- Eisenberg DAC: Surrounding Eisenberg Hill in the southern portion of Burgenland, the Eisenberg DAC produces red wines from the Blaufränkisch grape variety under regulations similar to those of the Mittelburgenland DAC.
- Neusiedlersee DAC: Located to the east of Lake Neusiedl and stretching to the Hungarian border, the Neusiedlersee DAC produces red wines based on the Zweigelt grape variety. In 2020, sweet white wines were approved for production in the Neusiedlersee DAC as well.
- Leithaberg DAC: The vineyards of Leithaberg stretch between Lake Neusiedl to the east, and the Leitha Mountains (Leithagebirge) to the west. The warm winds around the lake encourage ripeness, while the mountains provide for a significant diurnal swing and cool temperatures at night. White wines of the Leithaberg DAC may be single-varietal or blended wines produced using Grüner Veltliner, Pinot Blanc, Chardonnay and/or Neuburger (an indigenous cross of Roter Veltliner and Sylvaner). The red wines of the Leithaberg DAC are based on Blaufränkisch, with an allowed (combined) maximum of 15% Zweigelt, St. Laurent, and/or Pinot Noir.
- Rosalia DAC: The Rosalia DAC is named for the *Rosaliengebirge*—Rosalia Mountain Range—that comprises a portion of the Alpine Foothills on the border between Burgenland and Niederösterreich. The DAC is approved for dry wines only, in red or rosé. Red wines are produced from the Blaufränkisch or Zweigelt grape varieties; rosé may be made from any red grape varieties approved for PDO wines in Austria.
- Ruster Ausbruch DAC: Ruster Ausbruch, one of the most famous wines of Austria, is produced on the western shore of Lake Neusiedl in the town of Rust. This sweet, botrytis-affected white wine was awarded DAC certification in 2020. The grapes used in Ruster Ausbruch—including Chardonnay (Morillon), Muskateller (Muscat), Pinot Gris, and Pinot Blanc, among others—must be harvested at a minimum of 30° KMW, equivalent to TBA (Trockenbeerenauslese) levels of ripeness. The tiny Ruster

Ausbruch DAC is located within the larger Leithaberg DAC.

Steiermark (Styria)

Steiermark, the southernmost wine-producing region in Austria, is home to less than 10% of the nation's vineyards. This is a hilly, almost mountainous region with deep valleys and many vineyards planted on south-facing slopes in order to intercept the vivid sunlight. The climate here is slightly warmer than most other viticultural areas in Austria (although the winters can be just as cold). As such, viticulture here is quite different than the rest of the country, with Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay among the leading varieties.

As of the 2018 vintage, each of Steiermark's three subregions has been promoted to a DAC, and new *Verordnungen* (regulations) are now officially in force. These three DACs are discussed below:

- **Südsteiermark DAC:** Sauvignon Blanc, the leading grape of the Südsteiermark, is planted in nearly 20% of the region's vineyards. However, this is a large growing area—currently there are 6,234 acres (2,563 ha) planted to vine—and Riesling, Pinot Gris, and Chardonnay are well-represented as well. The area makes for a stunning landscape, with rolling hills punctuated by staggering slopes—some with an incline as steep as 45°. The soils in the flatter regions are primarily marine sediment, while the hills and slopes contain marl and conglomerate soils. The climate during the vegetative cycle typically consists of warm and humid days combined with cool nights, allowing for a long growing season and complex, concentrated grapes.
- **Vulkanland Steiermark DAC:** As its name implies, Vulkanland Steiermark is rich in volcanic soils that set this region apart from much of the rest of Austria. The area has 3,765 acres/1,524 ha planted to vines, many of them planted on the slopes of the area's long-dormant volcanoes, some reaching elevations as high as 1,968 feet/600 meters. A wide range of vines are cultivated in the region, including Welschriesling, Chardonnay

(Morillon), Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc), Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris), Sauvignon Blanc, and Zweigelt.

- Weststeiermark DAC: Weststeiermark, characterized by steep hills and deep valleys, is one of the smallest wine-growing regions of Austria (by acreage) with just over 1,200 acres (500 ha) planted to vines. The area is primarily known for its Schilcher Rosé, now labeled as “Schilcher Klassik Weststeiermark DAC.” Schilcher Rosé is produced from the red Blauer Wildbacher (Schilcher) grape variety—which accounts for nearly 85% of all vine plantings in the area. Other styles of wine produced in Weststeiermark include Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc), Welschriesling, and Müller-Thurgau; red wine (albeit a small amount) is produced from Blauer Wildbacher as well.

Wien (Vienna)

The city of Vienna (Wien) lies on the Danube River and is the only European capital city to have a PDO within its city limits. The vineyard area is tiny—just over 1,500 acres (610 ha)—but quite significant in terms of culture and history. In the past, much of the economy of the area was based on viticulture and wine production. *Heurigen* (seasonal wine taverns) were a popular annual tradition, where the local winemakers served their newly-produced wine in and around the vineyards at harvest time.

Another tradition of the area (shared in other parts of Austria as well) was *Gemischter Satz*—wines made from several different grape varieties fermented together. The Wiener (Viennese) Gemischter Satz DAC was approved in 2013 for white wines produced using at least three grape varieties. The grapes must be harvested, pressed, and fermented together, with no more than 50% from any single grape variety, and a minimum of 10% each of at least three varieties. The wines are meant to be fruit-forward and are not allowed to show significant influence of oak. An unusual factor of this DAC is that the grapes must not only be processed together but also must be grown together in a field blend (side by side in the vineyard).

While the regulations require a minimum of three different varieties, 15 varieties are approved for use and may be present in a single wine. Approved varieties include traditional Austrian varieties such as Grüner Veltliner, Sylvaner, Traminer, Rotgipfler, Neuburger, Weissburgunder, and Grauburgunder, as well as international varieties such as Chardonnay.



Figure 14–4: Hungarian vineyards at Badacsony

HUNGARY

Over 70% of Hungary's wine production is white. The Furmint grape variety is often used to produce dry white wines and is used as part of the blend in Hungary's famous dessert wine, Tokaji Aszú. One of the best-known red wines of Hungary, Egri Bikavér (*Bull's Blood of Eger*) is a full-bodied wine traditionally made from Kadarka grapes blended with other red varieties such as Kékfrankos (Blafränkisch), Kékoportó (Portugieser), Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Menoire, Pinot Noir, Syrah, Blauburger, and Zweigelt. A newer version of this traditional wine, Egri Bikavér Superior, was introduced in 2004 when Hungary became a member of the EU. Egri

Bikavér Superior requires that at least five of the recommended varieties be used.



Figure 14–5: The Old Town of Dubrovnik, Croatia

Tokaji Aszú

The most famous wine from Hungary is the dessert wine Tokaji Aszú. The luscious, sweet Tokaji Aszú has a centuries-old history and managed to survive Soviet control in the twentieth century. Tokaji Aszú is produced in the Tokaj PDO located in Northern Hungary (a small part of the region extends into eastern Slovakia as well).

The authorized grape varieties of the Tokaj region include Furmint, Hárslevelű, Kabar, Kövérszőlő, Sárgamuskotály (Muscat), and Zéta. The climate in certain portions of the vineyard region in Tokaj is ideal for encouraging the development of botrytis in the vineyards. In addition to its famous dessert wines, the area produces dry white wines and sparkling wines.

The primary grape varieties used for Tokaji Aszú are Furmint and Hárslevelű, which provide enough acidity and aromatic character to keep the wine from being cloying. The production of Tokaji Aszú

starts with late-harvested, botrytis-affected grapes; in this condition, the grapes are called aszú. The aszú grapes are gently mashed into a thick paste and then mixed with a normally fermented base wine for a day or two, allowing the wine to absorb the sugar and flavors of the aszú. The wine is then raked and aged in small casks for a few years in underground tunnels where film-forming yeast similar to the flor of the Sherry region grows.

Eszencia

Also produced in the Tokaj region, Eszencia is often referred to by its English name, Essencia. Eszencia is made from the free-run juice of the sweetest, most-botrytized, hand-selected berries. This type of wine requires a minimum of 45% residual sugar and often takes years to ferment to a content of 5% to 6% alcohol by volume.

CROATIA

Croatia has a winemaking tradition stretching back more than 2,000 years. However, like the other member states of the former Yugoslavia, it was somewhat wracked by warfare or controlled by a communist dictatorship for most of the last century. Despite this, Croatia has been an independent democratic republic since 1991 and is working to revitalize its wine industry, which has the benefit of the fine winegrowing conditions along the Adriatic Sea. Croatia became a member of the European Union in 2013.

Croatia is well-known as the native home of the Crljenak Kaštelanski grape variety—also known as Tribidrag—that was taken to the United States and eventually renamed Zinfandel. Crljenak Kaštelanski also made its way to Italy, where it is known as Primitivo.

The most widely grown white grape in Croatia is Graševina, known elsewhere as Welschriesling. White wine accounts for nearly two-thirds of the wine produced, with Malvasia, the high-yielding Bogdanuša, and international varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, and Chardonnay among the other leading white grapes.

Widely grown red grapes include Frankovka (the local name for Blaufränkisch), Teran, and Plavac Mali (a close relative of Crljenak Kaštelanski), as well as international varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Croatia's wine country is divided into two broad regions—a coastal region and an inland region—separated by the Dinaric Alps. The two regions are very different in terms of climate, terroir, and wines produced. The inland region, *Kontinentalna Hrvatska* (Inland Croatia), stretches eastward over 150 miles (240 km), covering much of the eastern half of the country to the border with Hungary. A majority of wine produced in Inland Croatia is white, and most is consumed locally.

The western half, *Primorska Hrvatska* (Coastal Croatia), extends along the Adriatic coastline for 330 miles (530 km), with vineyard areas interspersed among islands and inlets formed by the Kvarner Gulf. The climate is overall Mediterranean, with maritime influences in the south and warmer areas in the north, particularly around the Istrian Peninsula. The majority of the wines and an even greater majority of the high-quality wines of Croatia are produced in these coastal areas.

SWITZERLAND

Switzerland—a relatively small producer of wine—exports little of its output, as the country's domestic demand is three times its production volume. Swiss wines are also very expensive outside of Switzerland, given the high value of the Swiss franc.

Switzerland, not a member of the European Union, has its own governing body in charge of wine law. This organization, typically referred to as the OIC, has three different official titles—one for each of the country's three official languages: *Organisme Intercantonal de Certification* (French), *Interkantonale Zertifizierungsstelle* (German), and *Organismo Intercantonale di Certificazione* (Italian). Official

wine regions and controlled appellations similar to the French AOC system began to be implemented in the 1990s. These appellations, many of which specify grape varieties and some of which specify winemaking and wine styles, are largely overseen by the individual cantons (states).

Despite being set amid the rugged Alps, Switzerland has many protected valleys with fine weather for winegrowing. The primary areas of production are in the French-speaking part of the country along the northern shore of Lake Geneva and in the Valais, the valley of the Rhône River, to its east. Switzerland now produces slightly more red wine than white, with Pinot Noir the leading red grape, followed by Gamay and Merlot. Chasselas, an indigenous white grape also known as Fendant, is the leading white variety.

ROMANIA

The former Soviet satellite Republic of Romania spent most of the twentieth century making large amounts of bulk wine to send east to the Soviet Union. However, in recent years, Romania has begun to restore its quality wine industry, and Romania's 2007 entry into the EU has led to an influx of investment and expertise, as well as easier access to markets in the West.

Romania is, in general, home to a continental climate—moderated in places by the Black Sea, Danube River, and Carpathian Mountains. Romania is home to over 40 appellations, and wine is produced in many areas throughout the country. The country's oldest appellation—the Târnave DOC—is located in the center of the country surrounding the Carpathian Mountains; while the well-known sweet wines of the Cotnari DOC are produced in the Moldovan Hills (near the eastern border).

As victims of the original phylloxera epidemic, many of Romania's vineyards were replanted to French varieties at that time. Today, a dual focus on both indigenous and international grapes has led to

varietally labeled wines as well as unusual blends of both French and Romanian varieties. The two most widely planted white grapes are Fetească Alba and Fetească Regală, both of which produce light, aromatic wines with varying levels of sweetness. Widely planted international white varieties include Muscat, Aligoté, and Sauvignon Blanc. Pinot Noir is often thought to be the leading red grape for the export market, while the native Fetească Neagră is considered to be the flagship red variety of the country.

BULGARIA

Bulgaria (officially, the Republic of Bulgaria) has a long history of wine production and was for a time—as recently as the 1970s and early 1980s—a leading producer and exporter of wine in terms of volume. Tumultuous political forces in the years that followed served to halt the growth and progress of the industry for a time. However, Bulgaria began its transformation to democracy in 1990 and became a member of the European Union in 2007. During this same time, the country began to slowly modernize and improve its wine industry. For now, the majority of the country's wine is made from international grape varieties and positioned for export. Boutique projects, traditional practices, and native grape varieties remain a small but thriving part of the industry.

Located in the eastern portion of the Balkan Peninsula, Bulgaria has a diverse topography and a temperate continental climate with hot summers, long, cold winters and four distinct seasons. The Danube River defines a portion of the northern border of the country and separates Bulgaria from Romania, its neighbor to the north. The northern portion of the country consists mainly of the vast lowlands of the Danube Plain, while the southern portion is dominated by highlands and elevated plains. The Black Sea borders the country to the east.

Vine plantings are more or less split evenly between red and white varieties. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are the most widely

planted international red varieties, followed by Syrah, Pinot Noir, and Zinfandel (among others). Mavrud, Rubin (a Nebbiolo X Syrah cross), and Gamza (known elsewhere as Kadarka) are considered to be native to Bulgaria and are grown throughout the country. Other red varieties include Melnik, a highly tannic variety mostly planted in the Struma River Valley, and Pamid, a thin-skinned, early-ripening variety.

Rkatsiteli and Dimiat, common throughout Eastern Europe, are the two most widely planted white grapes. The native Misket Cherven (which translates literally as "Red Misket") is a highly aromatic, pink-skinned variety grown throughout the hillier areas of the country. In addition, many international white grape varieties, including Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, and Viognier, are grown throughout Bulgaria.

SLOVENIA

Slovenia (officially the Republic of Slovenia) is a small European country with a long history of wine production. Its location on the Mediterranean coast and sharing a border with four established wine-producing countries (Italy to the west, Austria to the north, Croatia to the south and southeast, and Hungary to the northeast), places it at the crossroads of Europe's wine culture.

Slovenia has been an independent nation since 1991 and a member of the European Union since 2004. PDO wines are categorized as *zaščiteno označbo porekla* (ZOP). There are currently 14 defined ZOP designations, as well as several variations within the ZOPs, such as those for traditional method sparkling wines, botrytis-affected wines, and wines with a certain degree of aging. The 14 ZOPs are contained within the country's three designated PGI wine regions, known in the Slovenian language as *zaščiteno geografsko označbo* (ZGO). These three regions are:

- Podravje: The Podravje ZGO is located in the inland east of the

country, surrounding the valleys of the Pesnica, Drava, and Mura Rivers. This is the largest of the three regions, producing roughly half of the country's wine.

- Primorska: The Primorska ZGO is located on the coast, across the Adriatic Sea from Venice and sharing a border with Italy's Friuli region. Several of the wine areas located within Primorska straddle the Italian-Slovenian border, divided only by politics; Slovenia's Goriška Brda ZOP becomes Italy's Collio Goriziano DOC across the Italian border, and Slovenia's Kras ZOP becomes Italy's Carso DOC.
- Posavje: The Posavje ZGO is located in the southeast of Slovenia, along the border with Croatia. The name Posavje (Lower Sava) refers to its proximity to the end of the Sava River valley. This is the country's smallest—and perhaps most old-fashioned—wine-producing region.

Grape varieties grown in Slovenia reflect the influence of Italy, Germany, and Austria, and include French (international) varieties as well. White wines are the leading product here; widely planted white grapes include Riesling, Gewürztraminer (Traminec), Müller-Thurgau (Rizvanec), Pinot Gris (Sivi Pinot), Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay. White grapes popular in Friuli such as Tai (Friuliano) and Ribolla Gialla are grown primarily in Primorska, near the Italian border. Leading red grape varieties include Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, St. Laurent, Pinot Noir (known as Modri Pinot), and Refosco.



Figure 14-6: Political map of Central and Eastern Europe

GEORGIA

Many archeologists believe that a portion of present-day Georgia is the site of the world's first cultivated vineyards. While we may never know the exact location of the world's first vineyards, it is certain that Georgia has one of the oldest and most unique wine-producing cultures in the world, such that the Georgian tradition of aging wine in large, egg-shaped earthenware vessels known as *kvevris* (often spelled "qvevri") has recently been added to UNESCO's list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Georgia has been an independent state since 1991 and has its own set of regulations and standards for wine. The constitution of Georgia currently contains the "Law of Georgia on Wine and Vine," first passed in 1998. These laws specify winemaking zones (controlled appellations recognized by the EU), as well as specifications for grape varieties, definitions of approved wine styles, and a list of approved winemaking and viticultural practices. Georgia and the European Union have maintained trade relations since 1996; however, at present, Georgia does not have official status as a candidate for EU membership.

Today, Georgia has just over 110,000 acres (44,500 ha) under vine, widely distributed throughout the country. In some parts of the country, wild vines of the *Vitis vinifera silvestris* subspecies are still found. The country's long involvement with grape growing—both wild and industrial—has led to over 500 identifiable indigenous varieties. Close to 90% of Georgia's wine is made from these indigenous grapes, however, only about 35 are used for commercial winemaking. The most widely grown grape is the white variety Rkatsiteli, which is also the predominant white grape of eastern Europe. Rkatsiteli makes light, floral, crisp white wines. Saperavi, the leading red grape, makes high-alcohol wines with good potential for aging.

CRIMEA

Crimea, shaped basically like a peninsula that extends into the Black

Sea, has the best viticultural conditions of the former Soviet Union. The area has a long history of sparkling wine production, beginning with the 1878 founding of Novy Svet Winery. Novy Svet Winery is famous for producing a sparkling wine known as "Brut Paradiso," which won the "Grand Prix de Champagne," beating out many famous Champagne producers at the 1900 World's Fair in Paris.

During Soviet times, the Crimean Peninsula was the largest wine supplier in the USSR, some of which used to be known by the colorful name *Sovetskoye Shampanskoye* (Soviet Champagne). These sparkling wines have retained their popularity and are increasing in production. Still wines made primarily using international varieties, and a fortified wine known as *Etalita*, are produced in Crimea as well.

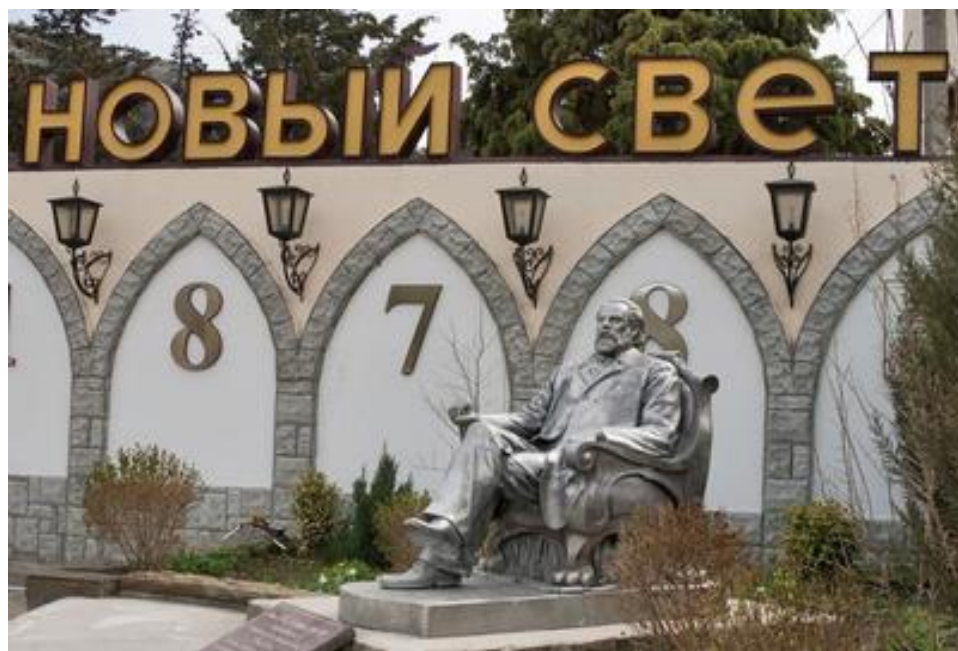


Figure 14–7: Monument to the founder of the Novy Svet Winery in Crimea