



AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the general roles and positions of Australia and New Zealand in the global wine industry.
- Describe the basic elements of the Australian appellation system and wine labeling laws.
- Identify the physical locations and general climates of Australia's and New Zealand's major wine regions.
- Recall the significant grape varieties grown in Australia and New Zealand.

Among the nations of the Pacific collectively known as Oceania, the countries of Australia and New Zealand have developed a strong wine industry for production, consumption, and trade. These two countries have quickly gone from being the upstart newcomers on the world wine market to being well-established mainstream sources, and they now face the challenging transition from unbridled growth to market share maintenance.

AUSTRALIA

Australia has a relatively long history of winemaking; some areas have been making wine with traditional European grapes since the 1800s. Australia also has a well-deserved reputation for innovation, as evidenced by the positioning of Shiraz as a uniquely Australian style of Syrah, the use of nontraditional blends, and the widespread use of alternative labels and packaging.

Today, Australia is among the world's heavyweights in the wine industry, consistently ranking among the top ten countries for wine production. Wine is an important agricultural commodity in Australia, and a considerable amount of it is intended primarily for export markets.

Grapes are grown in all of Australia's states and territories, although commercial wine production is non-existent (or nearly so) in the Northern Territory. The majority of the country's vineyards and wineries are located in the southeastern quadrant and, to a lesser extent, along the southwestern coast.

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Australia is a large country, roughly the size of the continental United States, situated in the South Pacific Ocean southeast of the Asian landmass. It extends well into the tropics, but the southern third of the country is within the temperate latitudes that begin at 30° south. This is where almost all of the vineyards are found, mainly in the states of South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria, but also in Western Australia and the offshore state of Tasmania.

On average, the country is hot and dry and relatively inhospitable to grapes. Irrigation, especially in the areas surrounding the few large rivers, notably the Murray, Darling, and Murrumbidgee, provides the water necessary to turn barren stretches of the outback into lush, green vineyard land. In terms of the potentially excessive heat, location is the key to producing quality wine grapes. More moderate climatic conditions are found in the following areas:

- Along parts of the southern coast where vineyards are exposed to maritime cooling by the usual westerly winds, especially around Adelaide in South Australia, near Melbourne in Victoria, and south of Perth in Western Australia
- In Australia's primary mountain chain, the Great Dividing Range, which parallels the southeastern coast from Melbourne to Brisbane. Vineyards here benefit from cooler temperatures at

higher elevations of up to 3,600 feet (1,100 m). Vineyards also line the western slopes of the mountains, where the range forces the westerly winds to drop much of their precipitation

- On the island of Tasmania—the southernmost part of Australia—which is surrounded by frigid ocean waters, making it the country’s coolest winegrowing area

LEADING GRAPE VARIETIES OF AUSTRALIA	
Red Grapes	White Grapes
Shiraz/Syrah	Chardonnay
Cabernet Sauvignon	Sauvignon Blanc
Merlot	Semillon
Pinot Noir	Pinot Gris
Grenache	Riesling
Mourvèdre	Muscat Gordo Blanco
Tempranillo	Colombard
	Verdelho
	Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains
	Viognier

Figure 18–1: Leading Grape Varieties of Australia

GRAPE VARIETIES

The grape variety for which Australia is best known is Shiraz. This is the same grape as the Syrah of the Rhône Valley in France, acquiring its alternative name in the eighteenth century when people

mistakenly thought that the grape had originated in Shiraz, Persia. Australian Shiraz has proven very popular around the world, and it is the country's most widely planted grape, accounting for more than a quarter of vineyard acreage.

Among red grapes, the next most prominent are Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, both of which are frequently bottled as single-variety wines or blended with Shiraz. Although planted in much smaller quantities, Mourvèdre and Grenache are also frequently blended with Shiraz to create Rhône Valley-style wines, often referred to as GSM (Grenache-Shiraz-Mourvèdre).

Australia's white wines have also been in great demand in export markets. Chardonnay is the most prevalent white grape, accounting for more than half of all white wine production. Other leading white grape varieties include Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Semillon (an important product of the Hunter Valley), Viognier, and Pinot Gris.

Other varieties with significant plantings include Pinot Noir, Chenin Blanc, Gordo Blanco (Muscat of Alexandria) and Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains. In line with Australia's emphasis on innovation and diversity, a range of alternative varieties—including Vermentino, Fiano, Sangiovese, Barbera, Cabernet Franc, Touriga Nacional, and Grüner Veltliner (among others)—are being planted across the country.

AUSTRALIAN WINE LAWS

Australia's place-of-origin system is similar to that of the United States in that the appellations, officially known as *geographical indications* (GIs), are simply areas on a map. They place no restrictions on the viticultural or winemaking procedures of grape growers or winemakers within their boundaries.

As of December 2022, there are approximately 114 GIs in Australia. As in the American system, the place of origin for a wine can be the country as a whole or one or more states, such as Victoria or South Eastern Australia, even though these are political divisions and have

no intrinsic viticultural meaning. Within the states are many more GIs: large ones called *zones*, most of which contain at least one smaller *region*—which may in turn contain *subregions*. It is in the smaller place-of-origin areas that some sort of homogeneity and distinctiveness, judging from a winegrowing standpoint, can be found. *Wine Australia* (previously known as the Australian Grape and Wine Authority) is the statutory agency in charge of the process.

In order to list a single GI on a wine label, at least 85% of the wine's grapes must have been grown in that appellation. If the proportion is less than 85%, then the winery has the option of either listing all of the GIs that apply or choosing a larger GI that meets the 85% prerequisite.

Vintage dates and single grape varieties on a wine label have the same minimum level requirement of 85%. If more than 15% of a blending grape is added, which is not unusual, the label can either forgo naming any grape varieties or list them all, in descending order of content. For example, a "Semillon-Chardonnay" contains 50% or more Semillon (but presumably less than 85%, or else it would simply say "Semillon") and 50% or less Chardonnay.

Aside from mandating the usual label information, Australia is the first country to require a "Best Before" date on some wines, as is typical on many other foodstuffs in all countries. The requirement applies only to wines that are not meant to have a shelf life of more than two years, and in practice it is usually only seen on bag-in-box products.

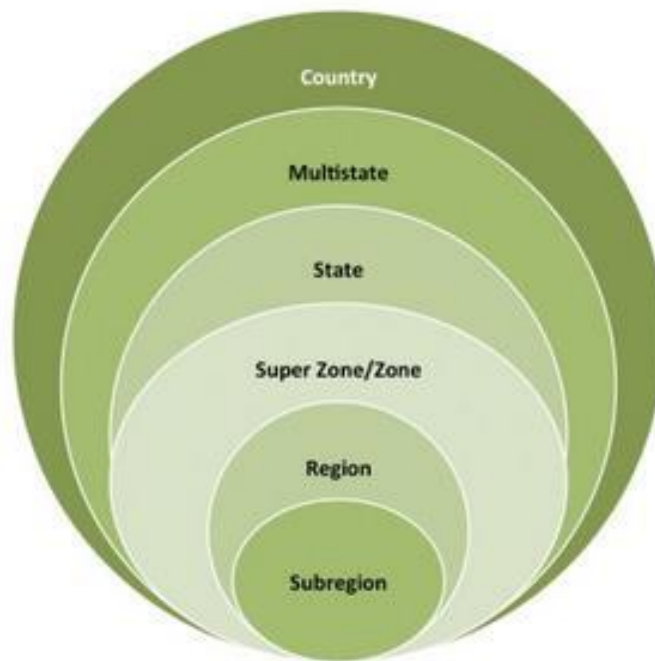


Figure 18–2: Australian geographical indications

AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS

Australia's place-name protection system was established in 1993. It has several levels that are nested one within another:

- *Multistate*: "South Eastern Australia" combines New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, and parts of Queensland and South Australia into a single gigantic appellation.
- *State*: Leading wine-producing states include New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, and Queensland.
- *Zone*: A zone is an area within a state, but is not necessarily delineated based on viticultural characteristics. The Adelaide zone itself contains three smaller zones and is therefore often called a *super-zone*.
- *Region*: A region is part of a zone that is defined by its viticulturally common features. A region must be a contiguous area that has "measurable homogeneity in grape growing

attributes.” Additional requirements ensure that regions have a respectable level of activity by multiple grape growers. Regions cannot overlap.

- *Subregion:* The requirements for a subregion are the same as those for a region, except that the viticultural homogeneity must be substantial.

AUSTRALIAN WINE STYLES

Australia is known primarily for its high-alcohol, fruit-driven, full-bodied wines. This is partly a natural result of the almost unlimited sunshine and warm-to-hot temperatures experienced in many areas of Australia, and partly a function of consumer demand for this style of wine. These wines range from simple, inexpensive, high-volume brands that have been very successful around the world to complex, handcrafted, pricier examples that are prized by aficionados of big, bold wines. Medium-alcohol wines with more natural acidity are also made in the cooler areas, but these represent only a small percentage of production. Overall, red wines are a bit more prevalent than white wines.

In addition to making table wines, Australia makes an array of sparkling wines and dessert wines. The sparkling wines, generally from the cooler regions, include not only the typical versions made from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir (either alone or blended), but also a considerable amount of sparkling red made from Shiraz. Dessert wines include botrytized Rieslings and Semillons as well as late-harvest Muscats. Port-style fortified wines are an Australian specialty, made from Muscat or various combinations of red grapes. Both dessert and fortified wines are known in Australia as “stickies.”

Selected Wine Areas of Australia



Copyright: The Society of Wine Educators 2023

Figure 18–3: Selected Wine Areas of Australia

AUSTRALIAN APPELLATIONS

South Eastern Australia

South Eastern Australia is a multi-state GI encompassing the entirety of New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, and the Australia Capital Territory—as well as a portion of South Australia and a narrow swath of southern Queensland. This vast area covers the majority of the commercial vineyards of Australia, with the exception of those found

in the state of Western Australia. A large volume of wine—typically value-priced, and much of it sourced from multiple regions, grape varieties, and even vintages—is labeled under the South Eastern Australia GI.

South Australia

Located in the center of the southern half of the Australian land mass, the state of South Australia is responsible for nearly half of the country's total output of quality wine each year. Geographically, South Australia is large and impressive: from east to west, the state stretches on for nearly 750 miles (1,200 km). Its southern border follows the coastline of the Great Australian Bight, while the Mount Lofty and Flinders Mountain Ranges are located further inland. As such, the climate, soils, and topography vary considerably across the vast state. Some of the better-known GIs of South Australia include the following:

- Clare Valley: Located about 80 miles/130 km north of Adelaide, many of the vineyards of the Clare Valley are planted at elevations ranging from 1,300 feet to 1,640 feet (400 meters to 500 meters) above sea level. While Shiraz is the mostly widely planted grape by acreage, the Clare Valley is particularly well-known for its high-quality, intensely flavored, and age-worthy dry Riesling.
- Barossa Valley: Located in the warm, dry interior of the state—and having avoided any problems with phylloxera—the Barossa Valley is home to some of the oldest vines and wineries in the country. This region is primarily known for powerful red wines based on Shiraz.
- Eden Valley: The Eden Valley region is located just inland (east) of the Barossa Valley, and at a slightly higher elevation—and therefore, with a slightly cooler climate. The Eden Valley's intense sunshine and extended growing season are ideal for the cultivation of Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon in addition to the region's highly regarded dry Riesling.
- McLaren Vale: Located about 22 miles/35 km south of the city

of Adelaide—and stretching from the Gulf of Saint Vincent inland towards the Mount Lofty Ranges—the McLaren Vale GI enjoys a generally Mediterranean climate. The area is primarily renowned for Shiraz; but other varieties—including Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache, and Chardonnay—thrive here as well.

- Coonawarra: This is the best known of the six regions of the Limestone Coast Zone, famous for its bright red soil—*terra rossa*—which rests over a free-draining limestone base. Due to its soil composition and warm summers, this area produces some of the country’s most distinctive Cabernet Sauvignon.
- Riverland: Riverland is an expansive region located in the eastern section of South Australia (bordering the state of Victoria). Riverland is one of the largest-producing GIs in Australia in terms of volume, and most of the country’s largest wine brands have vineyards here. A range of grape varieties are grown in Riverland—led by Shiraz, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Petite Verdot.

Table 18–1: Australian Geographical Indications

AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS					
State/Zone	Region	Subregion	State/Zone	Region	Subregion
South Eastern Australia (Multi-state zone including New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, and parts of Queensland and South Australia)			Western Australia		
South Australia Adelaide (Super-zone, includes Mount Lofty Ranges, Fleurieu, and Barossa)			Central Western Australia		
Barossa	Barossa Valley	High Eden	Eastern Plains, inland and north of Western Australia		
	Eden Valley		Greater Perth	Peel	
Far North	Southern Flinders Ranges	South West Australia	Perth Hills		Swan Valley
	Fleurieu		Currency Creek	Swan District	
Kangaroo Island			Blackwood Valley		
Langhorne Creek			Geopraphe	Albany	
McLaren Vale			Great Southern		
Southern Fleurieu			Denmark		
Limestone Coast	Coonawarra		Frankland River		
	Mount Benson		Mount Barker		
	Mount Gambier		Porongurup		
	Padthaway		Manjimup		
	Robe		Margaret River		
Wrattonbully	Pemberton				
Lower Murray	Riverland	West Australian South East Coastal			
Mount Lofty Ranges	Adelaide Hills	Queensland			
	Adelaide Plains Clare Valley	Granite Belt			
		South Burnett			
The Peninsulas			Victoria		
New South Wales Big Rivers	Murray Darling*	Central Victoria	Bendigo	Nagambie Lakes	
	Perricoota		Goulburn Valley		
	Riverina		Heathcote		
	Swan Hill*		Strathbogie Ranges		
Central Ranges	Cowra		Upper Goulburn		
	Mudgee	Gippsland			
	Orange	North East Victoria	Alpine Valleys		
Hunter Valley	Hunter	Port Phillip	Beechworth		
	Broke Fordwich Pokolbin Upper Hunter Valley		Glenrowan		
			King Valley		
Northern Rivers			Hastings River		Rutherglen
	Northern Slopes		New England Australia		North West Victoria
		Shoalhaven Coast	Swan Hill*		
South Coast	Southern Highlands	Macedon Ranges			
	Southern New South Wales	Canberra District	Geelong	Great Western	
		Gundagai	Mornington Peninsula		
Hilltops		Sunbury			
Tumbarumba		Yarra Valley			
Western Plains		Western Victoria	Grampians		
		Henty			
Pyrenees					
Tasmania					
Northern Territory					
Australian Capital Territory					
* Partially in Big Rivers and partially in North West Victoria. Source: Wine Australia					



Figure 18–4: Old-vine Grenache in Australia’s Barossa Valley

New South Wales

New South Wales—located on Australia’s east coast and surrounding the dynamic city of Sydney—is Australia’s most populous state. New South Wales is where (in the 1800s) James Busby planted some of the country’s first European vines and remains home to Wyndham Estate—one of the country’s oldest wineries, established in 1827. The Great Dividing Range separates the moderate-climate coastal areas from the more arid interior, with much of the state’s vineyard acreage concentrated in the heavily irrigated agricultural areas inland of the mountains. The leading GIs of New South Wales include the following:

- Hunter Valley: With a history dating back to the beginning of Australian viticulture, this area just north of Sydney is hot and humid, made suitable for winegrowing by the cooling effect of the afternoon sea breezes. The zone is known particularly for its Semillon—sometimes referred to *Hunter Riesling* or *Hunter Honey*—and often capable of extended aging. Other leading grapes of the Hunter Valley include Verdelho, Shiraz, and Cabernet Sauvignon.
- Mudgee: Mudgee—after the Aboriginal name for *nest in the hills*

—is located inland of the Hunter Valley, on the west side of the Great Dividing Range. With vineyards approaching 2,000 feet (610 m) in elevation, the area is sunnier and less humid than its famous neighbor to the east. The region focuses on deep, intensely flavored red wines crafted from Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, and Merlot. However, Mudgee was also one of the first areas in the country to cultivate and produce varietal Chardonnay (which remains the leading white grape).

- Riverina—whose name describes it well, evoking a *river-crossed plain*—is the largest of Australia's regions in terms of total land area. The rivers of the area—including the Murray and the Murrumbidgee—provide much-needed irrigation. Many of the grapes grown here are used in branded, bulk wine (including the country's famous mega-brand, Yellow Tail). However, fine wine is produced here as well; and some areas possess the humid, misty mornings and dry, warm afternoons conducive to the development of noble rot—making Semillon-based dessert wines a (niche) specialty.

Victoria

Viticulture in Victoria—mainland Australia's smallest and coolest (climate) state—dates to the 1830s, when vines were planted at Yering Station, just east of Melbourne. A few decades later, gold was discovered in the area and the population—as well as the demand for wine—exploded. Unfortunately, this early success was short-lived, as Phylloxera devastated the area beginning in the 1870s and many of Victoria's vines were uprooted by government decree. The wine industry began to rebound in the 1960s and these days, prime vineyards and quality wine producers may be found across the state. The leading wine regions of Victoria are discussed below.

- Yarra Valley: The Yarra Valley—located just inland of the city of Melbourne and following the path of the Yarra River—is home to Yering Station and the first-ever commercial vineyards in Victoria. The area's rolling topography, proximity to Port Philip Bay, and overall cool climate allow for the production of world-

class Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, which together account for nearly 75% of all plantings.

- Mornington Peninsula: This small, seaside region enjoys a distinctly maritime climate and is home to over 200 small-scale vineyards and boutique wine producers. Located about 45 miles/70 km southeast of Melbourne, the area is surrounded on three sides by bodies of water (Port Philip Bay, Western Port Bay, and the Bass Strait). Pinot Noir—planted to nearly 48% of the vineyards—is the leading grape variety, followed by Chardonnay and Pinot Gris.
- Rutherglen: Located close to Victoria's northern border, the Rutherglen Region has a markedly hot, continental climate. While table wines (mainly Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon) are produced in the area, Rutherglen is best known as Australia's leading region for fortified wine. Rutherglen Muscat—intensely sweet, fortified, often well-aged, and sometimes oxidized—is produced using dark-skinned Muscat Rouge à Petit Grains grapes (known locally as *Brown Muscat*). A fortified wine produced using Muscadelle—often served as an aperitif—is known as *Topaque*.
- Heathcote: Known for premium Shiraz, Heathcote has a distinctive climate influenced by cool winds that descend from the Mount Camel Ranges and moderate the summer temperatures, allowing for an extended growing season and optimum phenolic development. Heathcote is also noted for its soils—containing calcium-rich, volcanic greenstone—prized for their capability to retain water and largely eliminating the need for irrigation.
- Murray Darling: Murray Darling—a large region shared between the states of Victoria and New South Wales—is a warm-to-hot climate region spread across a flat, semi-arid plain. The area is marked by the presence of the Murray River and planted to a wide range of grape varieties, including Vermentino, Barbera, Nero d'Avola, and Sangiovese in addition to the varieties more typically found in Australia.

Western Australia

Despite its impressive size—it covers basically the entire western third of the country—the state of Western Australia produces just a small percentage (estimated at 7%) of Australia's wine. While much of the state (particularly the area in the north and east) is too hot to support quality viticulture, some ocean-cooled sections of the southwest coast—as well as the hills and valleys surrounding the city of Perth—have been making fine wine since the 1800s. The best-know wine regions of Western Australia include the following:

- **Margaret River:** Located at Australia's southwestern extremity, Margaret River is arguably the state's most acclaimed region. The area benefits from the constant sea breezes blowing in from Geographe Bay and the Indian Ocean; this keeps the area very cool in what would otherwise be a warm-to-hot climate. Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz do very well here; however, the Margaret River Region is especially prized for its white wines—including elegant Chardonnay and intense Sauvignon Blanc–Semillon blends.
- **Great Southern:** The expansive Great Southern GI stretches for close to 95 miles/153 km along the south coast of Western Australia. Proximity to the coast as well as its solid placement within the temperate zone—the region's northern edge aligns quite well with the 34th parallel—keeps the region cool, especially in the areas closest to the coast. Riesling and Pinot Noir reign in the cooler areas; Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, and Chardonnay are grown further inland.
- **Perth Hills:** Located just inland of the city of Perth and following the contour of the Darling Scarp, the Perth Hills Region extends for over 70 miles/110 km from north-to-south. The hills, valleys, and slopes of the area—ranging from 500 feet/150 meters to 1,310 feet/400 meters in elevation—create a patchwork of climates and terroir. Leading grapes include Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, and Semillon.
- **Swan District:** The Swan District—along with its Swan Valley subregion, tucked into the district's southeast corner—is located

north of the city of Perth. The area's warm-to-hot, mostly Mediterranean climate is at times cooled by the *Freemantle Doctor*—the name given to the prevailing breezes blowing in from the Indian Ocean. The Swan District specializes in the classic wines of Australia—including Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Chardonnay.

Tasmania

The island of Tasmania—located 150 miles (241 km) off the coast of Victoria—is the southernmost of Australia's wine areas. The island—home to a wide range of soils as well as snow-capped mountains, temperate rainforests, and coastal plains—is quite diverse in terms of topography and boasts the coolest climate in all of Australia. Pinot Noir is the leading grape variety, but white grapes—including Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc, and Riesling—outnumber red plantings by a small margin. Many of the grapes grown Tasmania are used to produce sparkling wine—a specialty of the region.

Queensland

The large state of Queensland—located in Australia's northeastern corner—is well known for Gold Coast surfing beaches, the Great Barrier Reef, and the dynamic city of Brisbane. While most of the area—particularly the large expanse located to the west of the Great Dividing Range—tends to be too warm and humid for viticulture, it does have a small-but-growing wine industry (much of it geared towards wine tourism). The Granite Belt GI—located in the far south of the state close to the border shared with New South Wales—features high-elevation vineyards planted to a range of grape varieties led by Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Verdelho. The state's other GI—South Burnett, situated along the 26th parallel and featuring a sub-tropical climate—is the northernmost geographical indication (region) in the country.

NEW ZEALAND

Known as *Aotearoa*, “Land of the Long White Cloud,” New Zealand was initially discovered by the Maori, who arrived from their native East Polynesia, in 1300. The Maori people account for 15% of the current population. The Dutchman Abel Tasman was the first European to see the country in 1642, but it wasn’t until 1769 that explorer James Cook claimed New Zealand for Great Britain. The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840, formally established a peaceful relationship between the Maori and the British. In 1947, New Zealand became an independent country.

The country’s oldest winery—Mission Estate Winery, located in the Hawke’s Bay region—was established in 1851 and still exists today. However, during the 1920s, phylloxera wiped out many of New Zealand’s vines and it wasn’t until the 1970s that the country began to once again establish a viable wine industry. With New Zealand’s relatively recent entrance into the global wine industry and its limited landmass, its wine production is fairly small, but the country has quickly made a name for itself as a producer of high-quality wine.



Figure 18–5: New Zealand’s Marlborough region

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

New Zealand is situated in the Pacific Ocean approximately 1,200 miles (1,930 km) east of Australia and a long way from any other large landmass. It is comprised of two main islands, the North Island and the South Island, and lies completely within the temperate winegrowing latitudes, spanning 36° to 45° south. However, its climate is cooler than might be expected for a place with its distance from the equator, since it is surrounded by cold ocean waters and few parts of the country are more than about 50 miles from the sea.

The primary topographic feature of New Zealand is the Southern Alps, a high mountain chain that runs the length of the South Island along the western coast. Given that the winds normally rise from the west, these mountains keep the eastern part of the island drier and sunnier than it would be otherwise. The North Island does not have the same mountain chain, but some shorter mountain systems and a few high volcanic mountains perform a similar function in places. As such, most of New Zealand’s vineyards are found in the eastern part of the country—in the rain shadow of the Southern Alps or the North Island volcanoes—or in the warmer, northern part of the North Island.

Table 18–2: New Zealand Geographical Indications

NEW ZEALAND GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS

Enduring G.I.	Geographical Indications	Local Geographical Indications (sub-zones)
NORTH ISLAND	Auckland	Kumeu
		Matakana
		Waiheke Island
	Hawke’s Bay	Central Hawke’s Bay
		Gimblett Gravels**
	Gisborne	Manutuke**
		Ormond**
		Patutahi**
	Northland	
	Waikato/Bay of Plenty**	
	Wairarapa	Gladstone
Martinborough		
Masterton		
SOUTH ISLAND	Canterbury	Canterbury Plains**
		North Canterbury
		Waipara/Waipara Valley
		Waitaki Valley/Canterbury**
	Central Otago	Alexandra**
		Bannockburn
		Bendigo**
		Cromwell/Lowburn/Pisa**
		Gibbston**
		Wanaka**
	Marlborough	Awatere Valley**
		Southern Valleys**
		Wairau Valley**
	Nelson	Moutere Hills**
		Waimea Plains**
	Waitaki Valley/North Otago	

*Indicates that as of December 2022, an application for official geographical indication status is on file with the New Zealand Intellectual Property Office.

**Indicates that an application has not yet been filed for official standing as a geographical indication; these areas continue to be considered "unofficial"

Source: New Zealand Wine (www.nzwine.com) and the New Zealand Intellectual Property Office, 2022

Note: No asterisk indicates that the geographical indication has been registered and is in force as of December 2022.

LEADING GRAPE VARIETIES OF NEW ZEALAND	
Red Grapes	White Grapes
Pinot Noir	Sauvignon Blanc
Merlot	Chardonnay
Syrah	Pinot Gris
Cabernet Sauvignon	Riesling
	Gewürztraminer
	Sauvignon Gris
	Viognier

Figure 18–6: Leading Grape Varieties of New Zealand

Major Wine Regions of New Zealand



Figure 18–7: New Zealand wine regions

GRAPE VARIETIES

New Zealand's cool climate is tailor-made for white grape varieties, with over 80% of production focused on white wine. Sauvignon Blanc is the undisputed leader, accounting for close to 65% of all vines planted throughout the country. Sauvignon Blanc has an affinity for the terroir of New Zealand, producing wines that are

considered to be both excellent in quality and quite unlike Sauvignon Blancs grown anywhere else. New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc typically shows a combination of tropical fruit flavors, stone fruit flavors (peach, nectarine, apricot), and grassiness that is both unique and very popular among consumers. Chardonnay and Pinot Gris are the other leading white grapes, while Riesling and Gewürztraminer are grown in smaller amounts.

Pinot Noir—currently planted to just over 14% of the country's total vineyard acreage—is concentrated in Marlborough, Central Otago, Canterbury, Wairarapa (Martinborough), and Nelson. Merlot is the second most widely planted red grape. Other red varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, Cabernet Franc, and Syrah are planted in very small amounts, and are mostly found in the warmer areas such as Hawke's Bay, Gisborne, and Auckland.

NEW ZEALAND WINE LAWS

The Geographical Indications (Wine and Spirits) Registration Act of 2006 created a registration system for wine and spirit geographical indications in New Zealand; however, the act was never brought into force. In November of 2016, a revised bill—the Geographical Indications (Wine and Spirits) Registration Amendment Act—was passed and entered into force in July of 2017.

Soon thereafter, applications defining the specific boundaries of New Zealand's geographical indications began to be filed with the New Zealand Intellectual Property Office. Three geographical indications—New Zealand, South Island, and North Island—were immediately approved as “enduring geographical indications.” Other applications for wine and spirit geographical indications (regions) and “local geographical indications” (subregions) have been submitted, and many of these have been accepted. (See table 18-2 for details, current as of December 2022.) New Zealand's geographical indications (excluding enduring indications) will need to be renewed after the first five years, and every ten years thereafter.

New Zealand wines are required to contain a minimum of 85% of a stated grape variety, vintage year, or region of origin—if such information is included on the label.

NEW ZEALAND APPELLATIONS

Marlborough

The Marlborough region on the South Island is home to over 68,700 acres (27,800 ha) of vineyards—accounting for roughly two-thirds of New Zealand’s vines and grape production. The region is heavily planted to Sauvignon Blanc and has in many ways shaped the explosive growth in the New Zealand wine industry. Pinot Noir is the second most widely planted grape, and despite growth in other regions, Marlborough is still the largest grower of Pinot Noir in the country. Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Gewürztraminer, and Viognier are grown here as well. Production of high-quality traditional method sparkling wines—sometimes marketed under the Méthode Marlborough brand—is small, but critically renowned.

Cloudy Bay—which lent its name to the now-famous, ground-breaking producer of Sauvignon Blanc—and Clifford Bay are both situated along the coast of Marlborough. The Marlborough region can be considered to have three separate areas (considered unofficial subregions for the time being)—from the Wairau Valley in the north, to the Awatere Valley further south, and the Southern Valleys on the inland side.

- Wairau Valley: The Wairau Valley (known by the Maori as *Kei puta te Wairau*—the place with the hole in the cloud) is one of New Zealand’s sunniest places. The region is known for stony, alluvial soils and a cool climate that tends to become drier as one heads inland.
- Awatere Valley: The Awatere Valley is located to the south of the Wairau Valley, stretching inland from the coast into the Kaikoura Ranges. This is one of the coolest, driest, and windiest areas of Marlborough—and many of the vineyards have some elevation.

- The Southern Valleys: Located inland, the vineyards of the Southern Valleys—consisting of the Omaka, Fairhall, Brancott, Ben Morvan and Waihopai Valleys—wind and wrap around the surrounding hills. The area has great diversity in terms of mesoclimates and soils, but it does tend to heavier, more clay-based soils than the areas closer to the coast.

Hawke's Bay

Hawke's Bay is the second largest of New Zealand's wine regions, in terms of both acreage and production. It is, however, in a distant second place (as compared to Marlborough) with just over 12,440 acres (5,034 ha) planted to vines. Located on the North Island—in one of the wider portions of the landmass—this is one of New Zealand's warmest regions as well as the country's leading producer of red wine other than Pinot Noir. Red grapes—primarily Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah—account for just over one-third of the region's total planting. Hawke's Bay is also an important area for Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, and Pinot Gris.

A key feature of the region is the Gimblett Gravels area. Gimblett Gravels, located 12 miles (19 km) inland, is a relatively warm area with unique soil made up of a mix of greywacke (a sedimentary sandstone) and a variety of mineral and rocky fragments (the gravels). Gimblett Gravels is primarily planted to red Bordeaux varieties and Syrah.

Gisborne

Located just to the north of Hawke's Bay—on the east coast of the North Island—Gisborne is heavily planted to white grapes. Nearly 50% of the region's vineyards are planted to Chardonnay—leading to the area's self-proclaimed nickname as the "Chardonnay capital of New Zealand." Other leading white grapes include Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blanc, and Gewürztraminer. Sparkling wine is a specialty here, in addition to the more typical styles of dry varietal wines. Merlot accounts for much of the small amount of land planted to red grapes.

Gisborne benefits from its position at the widest part of the country, where the prevailing westerly winds are warmed as they cross the island. The region's vineyards stretch inland from Poverty Bay on the eastern coast, with many vines planted on the rolling hillsides and along the interior valleys. As the easternmost wine region in a country located just west of the International Date Line, this is the first wine region in the world to greet each new day. Gisborne currently has three (currently unofficial) subregions—Manutuke, Ormond, and Patutahi.

Wairarapa

Wairarapa is small-producing wine region located on the southern end of New Zealand's North Island near the city of Wellington—and within the political region (province) also known as Wellington.

Slightly more than 50% of the vines are planted to Pinot Noir, and another large portion is planted to Sauvignon Blanc—Pinot Gris, Syrah, and Riesling make up most of the rest. The majority of the vineyards are planted about 18 miles (30 km) from the sea and as such, the area has a mostly maritime climate. However, some protection is provided by the Rimutaka and Tararua Mountain Ranges. Wairarapa has three sub-regions—Masterton, Martinborough and Gladstone.

Waitaki Valley/North Otago

The Waitaki Valley viticultural area follows the course of the Waitaki River for 46 miles (75 km) along its path between the foothills of the Southern Alps and the east coast of New Zealand's South Island. The wide bed of the Waitaki River is considered a traditional boundary between the states of Otago and Canterbury. Vines are planted on both sides of the river as well as up into the sloping hills surrounding the riverbed. The area on the north side of the river is located within the state of Canterbury and considered an unofficial sub-region of the Canterbury GI.

The portion located within the state of Otago (mainly to the south of the river) is a separate geographical indication known as Waitaki

Valley/North Otago. The area has unique limestone-based soils—a reminder of its ancient past, when it was covered by the sea—as well as loess and alluvial deposits. Waitaki Valley/North Otago is a remote, cool-climate area planted mainly to Pinot Noir, Riesling, Pinot Gris, and Chardonnay.

Central Otago

Central Otago, situated near the southern end of New Zealand's South Island with vineyards located as far south as 45°S, is one of the southernmost wine producing regions in the world. This is an inland, mountainous region tucked into the eastern side of the Southern Alps, and the highest-elevation wine region in New Zealand. As such, the climate here, classified as moderate continental, is more extreme than other regions of New Zealand with hot, dry summers and cold winters. Many of the vineyards are planted on the area's steeply-angled mountain slopes; in the flatter areas, frost protection efforts are sometimes needed.

Central Otago is heavily focused on Pinot Noir and has established a positive reputation for its wines. Central Otago Pinot Noir typically has excellent structure, moderate to full tannins, and aromas associated with red fruits, raspberries, and herbs. Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blanc, and Riesling are produced here as well.

Central Otago currently has six subregions:

- **Wanaka:** Wanaka is the northernmost subregion, located about (80 km) north of Queenstown, tucked between the Crown Range and the Southern Alps. Lake Wanaka (the fourth largest lake in the country) helps to moderate the climate.
- **Gibbston:** Gibbston, located to the east of Queenstown in the Kawarau Gorge area, has the highest-elevation vineyards in Central Otago. This area has a cooler climate than some surrounding areas, assuaged in some spots by north-facing vineyards.
- **Bannockburn:** Bannockburn, located along the south bank of the Kawarau River, is one of the warmest and driest spots in Central

Otago. The harvest here can be up to a month ahead of the rest of Central Otago. Bannockburn was registered as an official geographical indication in early 2022.

- Alexandra: Alexandra is the most southerly subregion. The climate here is dry and the weather can tend to extremes.
- Bendigo: Bendigo, one of the warmest of the subregions, has a wealth of stony soils and vineyards planted on north-facing slopes.
- Cromwell/Lowburn/Pisa: This area covers the ground between Gibbston and Bannockburn with most vines planted on the lower terraces of the mountains as well as the valley floor.

Canterbury

The Canterbury region, extending along the South Island's eastern coastline, lies between the Southern Alps and the Pacific Ocean. This is a large region—the official geographical indication for wine production covers the entirety of the political region (province) of the same name—covering a total of more than 17,000 square miles (44,000 square km). However, only about 3,500 acres (1,419 ha) are planted to vineyards. This sunny, mild-climate region can have dry, warm summers—often punctuated by the area's dry *nor'wester* winds in addition to the cooling sea breezes. Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc are the leading grape varieties of Canterbury, followed by Chardonnay, Riesling, and Pinot Gris.

The great majority of the area's vineyards are planted in the large (official) sub-region of North Canterbury. This area comprises the northern half of the region, bounded by the Rakia River to the south. The Waipara Valley—an official subregion situated within the boundaries of North Canterbury, located about 30 miles (48 km) north of the city of Christchurch—is of particular renown. It is centered on gravel and clay soils in the rolling hills surrounding the inland valley of the Waipara River.



Figure 18–8: Cabernet Sauvignon harvest in New Zealand's Hawke's Bay region

Nelson

Nelson, located west of and adjacent to Marlborough on the South Island, is noted for Sauvignon Blanc, but Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Riesling are grown here as well. The town of Nelson, sitting on the edge of Tasman Bay, was established in 1841 as the South Island's first city.

This geographically small region is the only one that is situated west of the Southern Alps on New Zealand's South Island, yet it is surrounded on all sides by smaller mountain ranges. The protection of these mountains gives Nelson one of the sunniest climates in New Zealand (along with Marlborough), earning the area the nickname "Sunny Nelson."