

12. Austria

Austria is known for its high acid, dry white wines made from Grüner Veltliner and Riesling. It also makes sweet white wines. Recently, a number of red wines, many based on local grape varieties such as Zweigelt and Blaufränkisch, are also becoming better known.

Though somewhat of a newcomer to the world stage in wine, Austria has been making wine since the Bronze Age. The Romans and the Magyars also influenced wine production throughout the centuries. However, it was the Cistercian monks in the 10–12th centuries, as in many other wine regions of Europe, who had perhaps the most impact. These monks brought with them Burgundian wine culture and even helped establish the terraced hills seen in Wachau and its neighbouring appellations today. During the 15th and 16th centuries, there was a large expansion of the total vineyard area to 150,000 hectares (three times the area present in 2018). However, due to invasion from Turkey, high taxes on wine, and increased popularity of beer, vineyard areas continued to decrease from the 17th century onwards. In the late 1800's phylloxera, powdery and downy mildew also caused decreases in vineyard area. During this time, there was already a culture of scientific research into vineyard management and winemaking which continues today. In the early 1900s, the first Austrian wine laws were created, for example forbidding hybrid vines.

In the mid-1970s and 1980s a high proportion of wines was being exported, particularly from Burgenland, and in order to compete on price with other nations, a small number of large volume producers started adding diethylene glycol, an antifreeze agent, to their wines to increase volumes and to simulate sweetness. This was discovered in 1985. As a result, Austrian wine exports dropped from almost 30 million litres in 1985 to under 5 million litres in 1986. However, the Austrian Wine Marketing Board was established in 1986 to help change the international image of Austrian wine. Since 2000, the volume of exports has more than doubled but the value has increased by six times, meaning consumers are now willing to pay premium prices for high quality Austrian wine. Unless otherwise stated, all of the statistics in this section come from the Austrian Marketing Board's annual report.¹

12.1. The Growing Environment and Grape Growing CLIMATE

Most of western Austria's terrain is mountainous and not necessarily suited to commercial grape growing. However, more favourable conditions for grape growing can be found as the Alps flatten towards the Pannonian plain and along the Danube.

Overall, Austria has a cool continental climate, however, a number of influences can affect local climate in different parts of the country. Those vineyards in the north of country, such as Weinviertel, are influenced by cool northerly winds, whereas the vineyards in the south, in Steiermark, have more influence from the Adriatic, and are therefore warmer. Vineyards in the east, such as those in Burgenland, near the Hungarian border are influenced by the warmer Pannonian climate, whereas those in the west, such as the vineyards on the Danube, may experience cooler breezes from the Alps.

Spring frosts can be an issue in many regions and in Steiermark hail can also cause damage. Winter freeze is rarely an issue; however, damage can occur in particularly cold winters. In low rainfall years water stress can be an issue in some regions, especially those with thin free draining soils (see next paragraph), and irrigation may be required.

SOIL

Generally, there are two major soil types; thin soils over rock (granite or gneiss, crystalline bedrock material known locally as Urgestein) and richer soils such as loess.

Riesling is usually planted on the thin soils as it tends to need less water than Grüner Veltliner. Due to its greater requirement for water, Grüner Veltliner is typically planted on either loess or, where it is present, clay. Other soil types include limestone and schist (such as on the Leithaberg hills) as well as gravel and volcanic material (such as in Steiermark and parts of Kamptal).

VINEYARD MANAGEMENT

In the 1980s the main training method was the Lenz Moser system in which vines are cordon trained to the height of 1.2–1.4 m (higher than other systems and requiring wider rows to avoid shading). The system was popular for high volume production as once established it requires little maintenance and allows many vineyard tasks to be mechanised. This has largely been superseded by single or double Guyot (replacement-cane) with VSP trellising, which is better suited to high quality production.

Machine harvesting is more common on flatter lands in parts of Weinviertel and Burgenland, however in the vineyards around the Danube, such as Wachau, Kremstal, and Kamptal, the vines are planted on hand built, steep stone terraces that means all work is carried out by hand, adding to cost. Growers have indicated that growing vines on these terraces can take 3–5 times as many hours as those vines on flatter land.



Before winter pruning

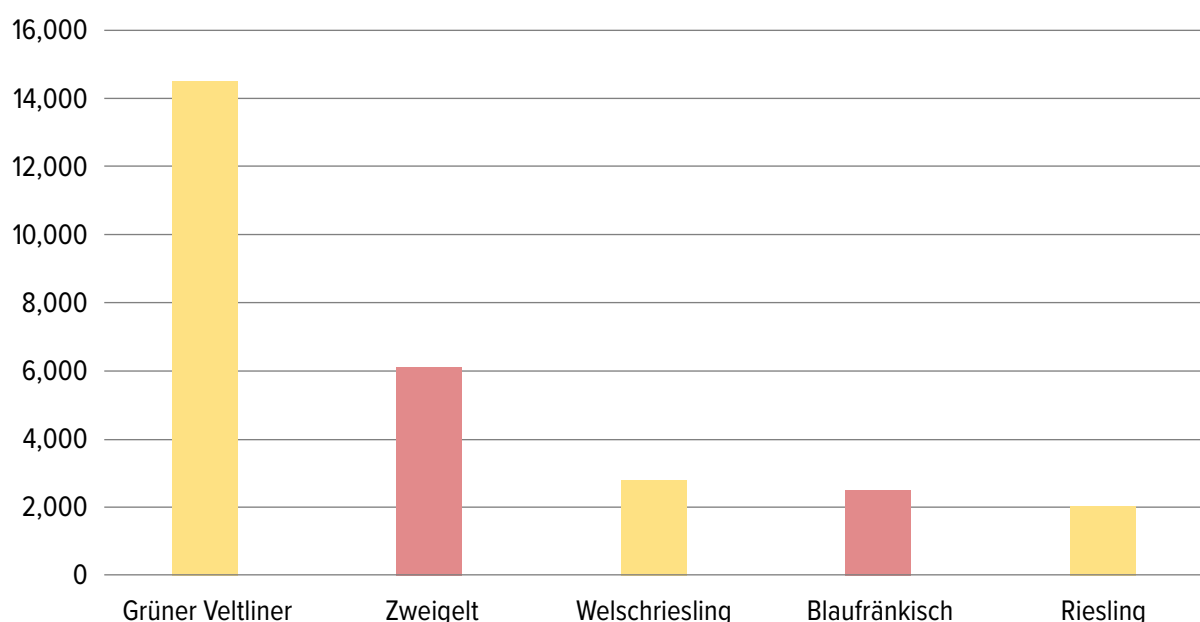
Disease pressure is low in many parts of Austria, because of moderate precipitation – ranging from 450 mm in the Weinviertel to 850 mm in Steiermark. This lower disease pressure has contributed to 15 per cent of all vineyards following certified organic practices with an additional 18 per cent certified sustainable. Rainfall can be low during the growing season, particularly in Niederösterreich, and so irrigation may be required.

Maximum yields per hectare are legally capped at 67.5 hL/ha. However, the average yield over the five years from 2017 to 2021 was around 54 hL/ha. This is in line with Austria's modern image which is focussed on creating high quality wines, rather than wines for bulk production.

GRAPE VARIETIES

Austria is best known for its native grape varieties. Two-thirds of all vineyards in Austria are planted with white grape varieties, in particular, Grüner Veltliner. Zweigelt is the most planted black grape variety.

Austria, top varieties, hectares, 2022



Source: Austrian Wine Marketing Board

Grüner Veltliner

This variety is widely planted and accounts for 33 per cent of all plantings in Austria. Unlike Riesling, it does not thrive in dry soils, and so is better suited to clay and loess soils, which can retain higher levels of water. It can be very vigorous if planted on fertile soil, and so careful canopy management is necessary in order to produce ripe grapes. The skins are thick, and if left in contact with the juice for too long, can contribute a phenolic taste, or bitterness to the wine. The skins also contain the chemical compound rotundone that gives a peppery aroma, characteristic of this variety.

The wines made from Grüner Veltliner have medium (+) to high acidity and are typically not oaked. They range from simple wines, with citrus and green fruit aromas made for early drinking, of acceptable to good quality and inexpensive price to wines with pronounced citrus and peach fruit and great complexity of aroma and flavour, which can be aged in bottle. These

wines are very good to outstanding quality and premium priced.

Zweigelt

This is the most planted black grape variety accounting for 14 per cent of all grapes. It is a crossing between the Sankt Laurent (see details under [Thermenregion](#)) and Blaufränkisch varieties. It ripens earlier and more easily than Blaufränkisch and can be high yielding. It is also a vigorous variety, and so leaf removal and canopy management are very important in order to produce quality grapes. Potassium deficiency in this variety can lead to withering of the grapes before they ripen, leading to loss of crop for that vintage. The grape is widely planted throughout the country, thanks to its ease of ripening and the fact that it is not susceptible to frost or rot.

Wines made from Zweigelt generally have a medium (+) level of acidity with medium tannin levels. Red fruit, particularly cherry, dominate the flavours and aromas. Styles range from easy drinking, fruity unoaked wines that are acceptable to good quality and inexpensive to mid-priced, to full bodied, oaked styles that have the possibility to age. The latter are of very good quality and can command premium prices.



Grüner Veltliner

Welschriesling

Not related to Riesling, this grape is the second most planted white grape variety in Austria. It has high levels of acidity and can have somewhat neutral aromatics. It is mainly found in Steiermark and usually made into fresh, neutral, unoaked, dry wines, of acceptable to good quality and inexpensive in price. Plantings of Welschriesling are in decline partially due to a decrease in consumption of this simple, dry style.

There are also large plantings in Burgenland around the humid Neusiedlersee region. Thanks to its thin skins it can be affected by noble rot, and then used for sweet wines production, labelled as Beerenauslese or Trockenbeerenauslese (TBA). These wines have high levels of acidity, with pronounced tropical fruit aromas and dried fruit, with the ability to develop in bottle. They are very good to outstanding quality and premium prices. Because of its neutral aromatics and high acidity, Welschriesling can also be used in Sekt production.

Blafränkisch

Blafränkisch is the second most planted black grape variety and tends to produce wines with medium (+) to high tannins, high levels of acidity, deep colour and black fruit flavours. This variety buds early making it vulnerable to frosts in spring. It also ripens late and therefore needs a warm climate to become fully ripe, and so is generally only found in Burgenland. Its thick skins mean it is not as prone to rot as some other varieties, which is important in the humid area around Neusiedlersee. It can produce high yields, and if left to do so will struggle

to ripen, creating wines with green aromas and flavours. However, when yields are managed it can produce some of Austria's most age-worthy and intense red wines.

The wines range from simple, fruity wines with little or no oak ageing, that are good in quality and mid-priced, to very good to outstanding wines with pronounced black fruit, spicy oak characters and high tannins that are premium priced. Leithaberg DAC and Mittelburgenland DAC are prime destinations for this grape variety.

Riesling

Riesling only accounts for under five per cent of all plantings in Austria, however it is one of the most prized varieties. It is mainly found in Niederösterreich, where it is the second most planted white grape variety, and in many instances it is planted in the warmest sites on thin soils, as it needs less water than Grüner Veltliner to thrive. The wines made from Riesling are almost always dry, can be full bodied, with medium levels of alcohol, ripe stone fruit and sometimes tropical fruit flavours, with high levels of acidity, allowing many of them to improve over 10–20 years, where they become nutty, honeyed and have petrol notes. They are typically very good to outstanding in quality and command premium prices.

12.2. Winemaking

For white wines, the most typical aim is to preserve the primary fruit and varietal characteristics of the wine. Many producers use a short period of skin contact to maximize the aromas and flavours and ferment the wine in a neutral vessel. Temperature control to prevent the loss of delicate, volatile aromas is common. Grüner Veltliner and Riesling typically do not go through malolactic conversion, partly because it would be difficult to achieve due to the low pH of the wines, and partly through the desire to retain the varietal character and fresh acidity. For the same reason, wines are stored in old wood or stainless steel. Many producers will leave the wine on the fine lees for six months or longer to add texture. Most white wines are fermented to dryness.

Red wines are typically fermented in large open-top vessels, with either punch downs or pump overs. Some producers use ambient yeast. Wines are either stored in stainless steel or matured in old oak vessels, often 300–600 L or larger, to help soften the tannins in the wine without extracting the flavours of new oak. A few premium wines are aged in barriques with a proportion of new oak. Some producers choose acacia vats over oak for maturation in both their white and red wines, as it gives a small amount of oxygenation without the vanilla characters of oak.

As in other countries, some winemakers are experimenting with techniques such as prolonged skin contact or fermentation and ageing in amphorae.

12.3. Wine Law and Regulations

Austrian wine law is a mixture of Germanic tradition and the Romanic system in which the style of wine is linked to an origin, the DAC (*Districtus Austriae Controllatus*) system. More recently, the latter has seen an increase in recognition; currently only two appellations remain without a DAC status.

As Austria is in the EU, PDO and PGI terms are also used:

- **Wein** – Wine without Geographic Indication
- **Landwein** – Wine with Protected Geographic Indication (PGI)
- **Qualitätswein** – Wine with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). *Qualitätswein* also has to undergo a government inspection to ensure it meets minimum quality standards, and the government inspection number will be stated on the label.

Together, *Wein* and *Landwein* only account for around 8 per cent of all production, with *Qualitätswein* (including *Prädikatswein*) making up the remainder.

Within the *Qualitätswein* category, wines may also be labelled as:

- **Klassik** – wines with a vintage declared and showing varietal character
- **Reserve** – dry wines with a minimum 13% abv, typically harvested and released later than the standard wines

Like German wine law, *Qualitätswein* also has a higher category within it, known as *Prädikatswein*. Again, like German wine law, the different *Prädikat* levels are based on must weight at time of harvest.

Kabinett does not fall into the *Prädikatswein* system in Austria. For the categories *Spätlese*, *Auslese*, *Beerenauslese*, *Eiswein* and *Trockenbeerenauslese* (TBA), see [*Qualitätswein*](#) in Germany. In addition, TBA wines from the city of Rust, situated on Lake Neusiedlersee, are labelled *Ausbruch*.

Regionally Typical Qualitätswein – DAC

Austria introduced an amendment to the wine law legislation in 2002 to create an appellation system, which is aimed to promote regional typicity. Only these wines are permitted to display their origin, such as Weinviertel or Kamptal, on the label, whereas those that do not conform to the legislation, would have to use the larger area of Niederösterreich on their label. The first DAC region to be validated was the Weinviertel in 2001. There are 17 DAC wine growing regions.

In order to use the geographic origin on the label, only specific permitted grape varieties are allowed in each DAC, to help ensure regional typicity and profile are maintained. Those wines that do not meet the tasting panel criteria of what is deemed ‘typical’ for that region, will be rejected. At the same time, this may also lead to a situation where new-wave wines may not be eligible for DAC status even though their quality may be high. Like the AOC system in France or the DOCG system in Italy, the DAC letters are not a guarantee of quality, but rather an indicator of typicity. Some regions, e.g. Wachau, require all DAC wines to be harvested by hand.

For DAC wines there is the option to use a quality hierarchy that distinguishes regional (*Gebietswein*), village (*Ortswein*) and single vineyard wines (*Riedenwein*).

Other Labelling Terms

Outside of Austrian wine law, there are associations that classify quality and origin for Austrian wines. The two most important associations are:

Österreichische Traditionsweingüter – Founded in 1992, the Österreichische Traditionsweingüter (ÖTW) is a group of producers, based in the Kamptal, Kremstal, Wagram, and Vienna, amongst other regions, who have been classifying their vineyards, in a similar fashion to Burgundy, based on soil type and climate. In 2023, 90 vineyards had been selected as *Erste Lage*.² Dry wines from these vineyards can use a designated 1ÖTW logo on their labels, as long as the two most traditional grape varieties from the wine region are used. The ÖTW has applied to have these classifications become part of Austrian Wine Law, but a final decision has yet to be made.

Vinea Wachau – This is the name of a group of quality-minded producers based in Wachau that have classification systems for the wines of the region, see more details in Wachau in Principal Wine Regions.

12.4. Principal Wine Regions

Only four of the nine federal states in Austria have any significant amount of viticulture. These are Niederösterreich, Burgenland, Steiermark and Wien.

NIEDERÖSTERREICH (LOWER AUSTRIA)

This is Austria's largest grape growing region. Two thirds of the plantings are of white varieties with Grüner Veltliner accounting for nearly half of all plantings. Many of Austria's most famous vineyards are situated in this region.

Spread over a large area Niederösterreich is generally broken down into three regions:

- Weinviertel in the north
- the regions along the Danube that are west of Vienna, which include Wachau, Kremstal, Kamptal and Wagram
- the warmer Pannonian plain in the southeast.

Wachau

This region is primarily situated along the north bank of Danube River. Riesling and Grüner Veltliner are the most planted





Terraces in Wachau

grape varieties (63 and 18 per cent respectively) and are never blended. Most of the vineyards are found on steep terraces, with the best sites facing south for maximum sunlight interception. The stone terraces retain heat during the day and radiate it back to the vine at night, ensuring very ripe fruit. The Danube also reflects heat and sun into the terraces. The soils are varied but Riesling is generally planted on soils based on gneiss, and Grüner Veltliner is planted on loess. As the Wachau only receives around 460 mm of rain per year, irrigation is necessary in many vintages, though it is controlled. In some years, humidity from the Danube can cause noble rot formation, which may not be desired by a number of producers, as the style that is preferred is dry.

The wines produced in Wachau are almost exclusively very good to outstanding in quality and tend to be premium in price. While this region is largely dominated by family-owned estates (significant producers include F.X. Pichler and Franz Hirtzberger), it is also home to a large quality-driven co-operative, Domäne Wachau.

From 2020, providing that they meet the set requirements, wines have been able to be labelled as Wachau DAC. For regional and village wines a range of grape varieties can be used, however, for single vineyard wines, only Grüner Veltliner and Riesling are permitted.

Wachau also has an association of producers, called Vinea Wachau, that have classified single vineyards based on soil and climate, which can be displayed on the bottle. They have also created registered trademarks for three different classifications of dry white wine (less than 9g/L residual sugar) to help indicate the style and quality.

- *Steinfeder* – Fruity, dry wine, with a maximum of 11.5% abv; the lightest style.
- *Federspiel* – A more concentrated, dry wine with alcohol ranging from 11.5–12.5% abv.
- *Smaragd* – Typically a highly concentrated, dry wine, with ripe fruit flavours; minimum 12.5% abv.

Due to the stony terraces and high levels of sunshine, many of the wines will have citrus, stone fruit and in the case of Smaragd wines, tropical fruit flavours. The body will range from light in the case of Steinfeder to full in Smaragd, and all three styles will have no new oak influence. All wines have medium (+) to high levels of acidity. Rieslings rarely go over 14% abv but, in hot vintages, Grüner Veltliner will sometimes exceed this. The most outstanding wines, normally found in the Smaragd category, can improve with bottle age for decades.

Kremstal

Kremstal is situated around the town of Krems and borders Wachau to the west. The region is influenced by the warm Pannonian plain to the east. Grüner Veltliner and Riesling are the most planted varieties (59 and 11 per cent respectively). Some Zweigelt is grown here (12 per cent) as it is warmer than in Wachau; this is especially true in the vineyards that are south of the Danube.

DAC wines must be Riesling or Grüner Veltliner.

Grüner Veltliner and Riesling are made in a dry style with medium (+) to high levels of acidity. Both wines will range from medium to full bodied depending on the site. Both Grüner Veltliner and Riesling produce wines ranging from good to outstanding quality levels with mid-price to premium pricing. Significant producers include Salomon Undhof, Lenz Moser and the important co-operative Weingut Stadt Krems.

Red wines are also made in the area but must be labelled Niederösterreich. Most are made from Zweigelt in a fruity, easy drinking style with little or minimal oak influence. They tend to have refreshing, medium (+) to high levels of acidity and medium levels of tannin and body with red and black fruit aromas. They are good to very good quality and mid-priced.

Kamptal

Named after the river flowing through it (Kamp), this region surrounds the town of Langenlois. Over 50 per cent of plantings are Grüner Veltliner, with Zweigelt taking second place and then Riesling. It has similar temperature and sunshine hours to Kremstal however with less humidity, so botrytis is infrequent.

The region is subject to both warm breezes from the Pannonian plain, meaning that black grape varieties can be ripened, but also cooling air from the Bohemian Massif. The resulting large diurnal range means that the wines have a high level of acidity.

Kamptal DAC states that only wines made from Grüner Veltliner or Riesling can be classified as such. Both grapes can produce wines of very good to outstanding quality, with the possibility to improve over time and can command premium prices.

The red wines of Kamptal need to be labelled as Niederösterreich, as in Kremstal. Zweigelt is made in a fruity, easy drinking style of good quality. The wines are mid-priced. However, there are also some that may have been aged in large oak casks for 12 months to add complexity, which are typically very good quality and command slightly higher prices. Recently, Pinot Noir has also seen a renaissance in the area. Significant producers include Bründlmayer and Hirsch.

Wagram

The Wagram vineyards are planted both north and south of the Danube on gently rolling hills, with a strong warming influence from the Pannonian plain. The region is based on loess soils and so Grüner Veltliner is most widely planted here. The area is also known for wines from

Roter Veltliner (no relation to Grüner Veltliner), a local white grape variety producing full-bodied whites that develop nutty aromas with bottle age. Single vineyard DAC wines are made from made with Riesling, Grüner Veltliner or Roter Veltliner. Village and regional wines can be made with a wider range of varieties.

Grüner Veltliner is made in a Klassik and Reserve style, with the latter allowing for some subtle oak influence. Other than some Eiswein and late harvest styles most wines are dry, with medium body, and high levels of acidity. They are good to very good in quality and are mid- to premium priced.

Weinviertel

This is the largest appellation in Niederösterreich and in Austria as a whole. Grüner Veltliner accounts for half of all plantings here. It is difficult to make generalisations about such a large area, but overall it is fairly dry with 400–600 mm of rain. Cooling breezes from the north allow for a high diurnal range, meaning peppery aromatics are preserved as are high levels of acidity.

The DAC states that wines can only be made from Grüner Veltliner. Reserve wines have a minimum of 13% abv and allow for some oak ageing and/or the inclusion of some botrytis affected grapes (which adds richness and complexity, but the wines are still dry).

Typically, Grüner Veltliner from Weinviertel is the most peppery in Austria, thanks to the cooling winds from the north, and has citrus and green fruit aromas, with medium to medium (+) body and high levels of acidity. The wines are good to very good quality, and range from inexpensive to premium prices. Significant producers include Sohm & Kracher.

Thermenregion

Situated close to the capital of Vienna, this region benefits from the warm air coming from the Pannonian plain, and so black grapes can ripen consistently and account for more than 40 per cent of overall plantings. This region is not part of the DAC system.

Many of the high-quality red wines are made from Pinot Noir or, local variety, Sankt Laurent. Sankt Laurent has medium (–) body, medium tannins and red cherry flavours, and is sometimes likened to Pinot Noir. These wines are often matured in oak to give flavours of spice. These are good to very good quality and are mid-priced.

The most planted white grape is Neuburger (a local white grape with subtle spicy and floral aromas), but wines from Rotgipfler (full-bodied with peach flavours), Zierfandler (aromatic with notes of peach, honey and spice) or a blend of the two is the local speciality.

BURGENLAND

Located on the border with Hungary this is one of the flattest and warmest areas in Austria where the warm air from the Pannonian plain means that it is possible to reliably ripen many different black grape varieties. Black grape varieties make up 56 per cent of all plantings, mainly Blaufränkisch and Zweigelt. The styles of red wines range from easy drinking and fruity, to full bodied and intense with new oak aromas. Grüner Veltliner and Welschriesling are the most planted white grape varieties. Grüner Veltliner does not normally reach the quality levels seen in Niederösterreich as the climate here is too warm. Welschriesling, however, plays a major role in the production of botrytised wines, some of which are outstanding in quality.

Neusiedlersee

Situated around the eastern shores of the large shallow lake, the Neusiedlersee, this vineyard area (of the same name) is flat, warm, and humid. This is the warmest area in Austria, so much so that the water of the lake can reach up to 30°C at the height of summer. In the autumn months when the air temperature drops but the water of the lake is still warm, fog forms overnight, covering the surrounding vineyards. Only the vineyards closest to the lake and the marshy areas with many small ponds are covered by the fog.

High humidity encourages botrytis to take hold. However, the warm autumn sunshine in the afternoon burns away the fog, and prevents grey rot formation. This means that Neusiedlersee has consistent noble rot in every vintage. Welschriesling is planted near the lake as its thin skins make it prone to noble rot infections. This combination leads to very good and outstanding TBA styles.

Away from the lake humidity is not as high, however, it is still very warm, and so black grape varieties are found, Zweigelt being the most planted.

TBA styles are made predominantly from Welschriesling, though other white grapes are blended and they are some of the most prized wines of this region. They are very sweet, with balancing high levels of acidity, have noble rot aromas of marmalade, and are not usually oaked. As the grapes are hand harvested over many weeks, the wines are premium priced and are very good or outstanding in quality. They are generally capable of ageing in bottle. In 2020, Ruster Ausbruch DAC was created for TBA wines that meet certain requirements from the municipality of Rust.

Dry red wines are also produced and may be varietal Zweigelt wines or blends of Zweigelt and Blaufränkisch. The DAC for Neusiedlersee is for red wines rather than the sweet wines (labelled as Burgenland), and are based on Zweigelt. DAC Klassik wines must be 100 per cent Zweigelt. They typically have flavours of red cherry fruit with no or little influence of oak, medium acidity and medium to full body. They are good to very good quality and mid-priced. The Reserve wines must be a minimum of 60 per cent Zweigelt and can be blended with Blaufränkisch, Pinot Noir or Sankt Laurent. Reserve wines are typically aged in oak. They are good to very good quality and are mid- to premium priced. Significant producers include Krutzler for red wine and Alois Kracher for TBA sweet wines.

Leithaberg

Located to the west of Neusiedlersee, this is a varied region and produces a large number of styles of wine. On the western shores of Neusiedlersee around the town of Rust, Ausbruch is produced. Thanks to the high levels of humidity and fog (see Neusiedlersee) a very sweet TBA style is produced. However, to the west of the lake humidity is less and black grape varieties are more commonly planted with Blaufränkisch accounting for 20 per cent of all plantings. The Leithaberg hills provide much needed diurnal range, so that grapes planted here have high levels of refreshing acidity.

Leithaberg DAC can apply to either red or white wines. Red DAC wines requires a minimum 85 per cent Blaufränkisch. Acidity levels range from medium (+) to high, with body ranging from medium (+) to full. They are very good to outstanding in quality with premium prices.

Dry white DAC wines are also made and can be blends or single varietals made from the grape varieties Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc), Chardonnay, Grüner Veltliner or Neuburger. Levels of acidity range from medium to high depending on the blend and body from medium (–) to medium (+). The wines are good to very good in quality and mid- to premium priced.



Bottle-aged Ruster Ausbruch

Mittelburgenland

Mittelburgenland is located to the south of Leithaberg. Exposed to the Pannonian plain, the warm climate means Blaufränkisch (51 per cent of vineyard area) can easily ripen here and accounts for more than half of all plantings.

Three DAC styles are found here, all of which must have minimum 85 per cent Blaufränkisch:

- DAC – typically aged in stainless steel tanks or large oak casks
- DAC + Vineyard designation – slightly higher minimum alcohol level and typically aged in large oak casks or barriques
- DAC Reserve – slightly higher minimum alcohol level, a longer minimum time maturing and typically aged in large oak casks or barriques

The basic DAC styles are mid-priced and good to very good in quality. The Reserve wines tend to be full bodied, with pronounced aromas and are very good to outstanding quality and premium priced.

STIEARMARK

This region, also known as Styria, is found in the south-eastern corner of Austria, on the border of Slovenia. Many vineyards are situated on steep hills and have terraces. The cold winters mean that winter freeze may be an issue. Spring frost and hail are also problematic for growers. Netting is used to help prevent hail damage.

The region is known for its crisp, dry, white wines. The most planted white grapes are Sauvignon Blanc (18 per cent of vineyard area), Welschriesling and Weissburgunder. Most wines have high levels of acidity, in part due to the large diurnal range. Many wines are made for immediate, refreshing drinking. The wines are good to very good in quality and are mid-priced.

Recently, the Steiermark has installed a DAC system for each of its sub-regions: Vulkanland Steiermark DAC, Südsteiermark DAC and Weststeiermark DAC. A range of grape varieties are permitted for the regional wines, whereas local specialties, such as Sauvignon Blanc, must be the focus of the village (Ortsweine) and single-vineyard wines (Riedenweine).

WIEN

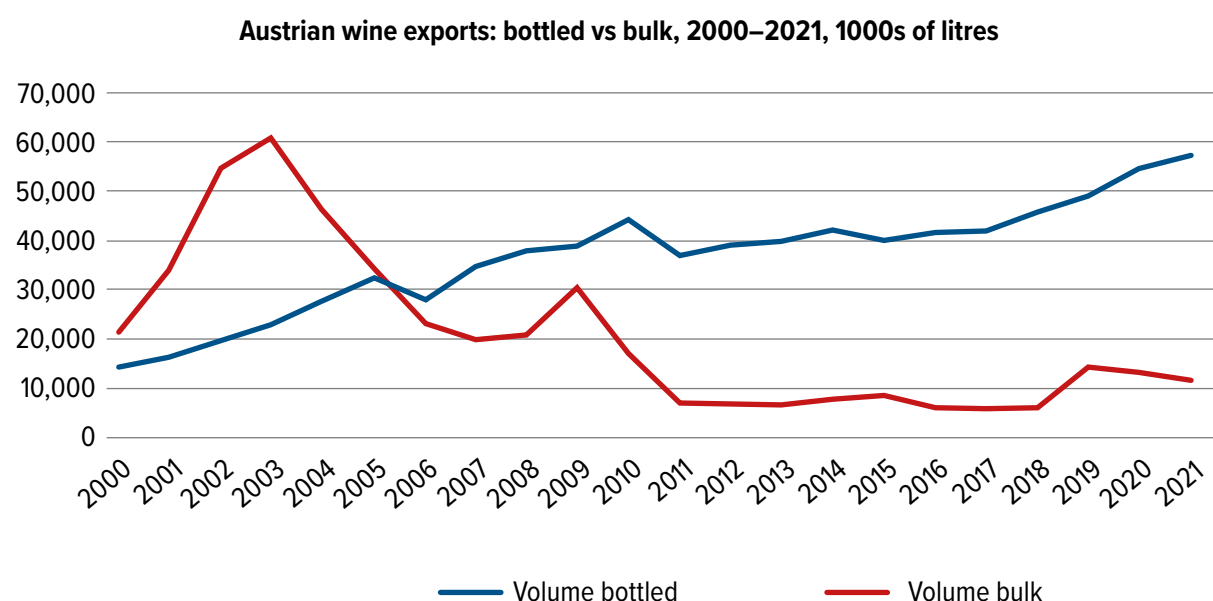
The vineyards in the Federal State of Vienna are situated around and in the capital city. Most wines produced here are made to be consumed immediately in informal local premises that sell newly made wines from the current harvest (see below).

The DAC here is a white wine called Wiener Gemischter Satz and must be a blend, of which 20 different grape varieties are permitted. It must also be dry and unoaked. DAC wines can be labelled with an indication of vineyard site and these wines do not necessarily need to taste dry. Most wines are medium (+) to high in acid with light bodies and acceptable to very good in quality with entry level to intermediate pricing, though there are also high-quality wines at premium prices.

12.5. Wine Business

The wine business in Austria is highly fragmented, with almost 11,000 wine estates. However, there has been a considerable decline in very small wine estates (often being managed on a part-time basis) over the past few decades, and an increase in the number of producers with more than 5 ha where the estate is a full-time business.

More than half of all sales of wine in Austria is sold in the hospitality sector. *Heurigen* play an important part in domestic sales, especially for smaller vineyard owners. *Heurigen* (the



Source: Austrian Wine Market Board

word comes from *heurige* meaning ‘this year’s’) are small inns or taverns that serve simple food and local wine and many of which have outdoor spaces for eating and drinking. They are most frequently open in the late summer and autumn, but many operate year round. In the retail sector, domestic wine is also dominant, accounting for two-thirds of all wines purchased.

Following the wine scandal, Austria moved to the production of higher quality wines, both in the home market and for export. The chart shows how in the last 15 years they have focussed on exporting mainly bottled wines rather than in bulk.

In 2021, Austria exported 23 per cent of its overall production by volume. The value of these exports has risen steeply in recent years. In 2015 it was worth around 140 million euro; by 2021 this had risen to 217 million. The main export market is Germany, which accounts for 60 per cent of all wine exports by volume and 40 per cent by value. Switzerland and the USA are next most important by volume.

Austrian wine is promoted by the [Austrian Wine Marketing Board](#) with a particular aim of supporting and maintaining the quality of Austrian wine.

References

- 1 [Austrian Wine Statistics Report, 2021, as of 5 July 2022](#), Austrian Wine Marketing Board (retrieved 24 January 2023)
- 2 [Vineyard classification](#), Österreichische Traditionsweingüter (retrieved 24 January 2023)