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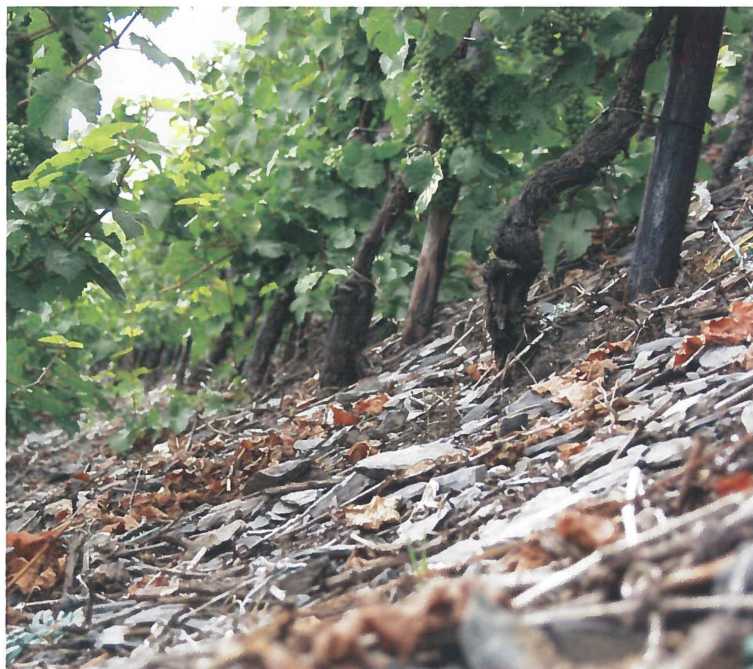
Germany Germany is the country producing the highest concentration of world-class Rieslings. Whether dry and steely, medium-sweet and floral, or lusciously sweet, German winemakers' mastery of this variety is unquestionable. However, there is more to German wines than one variety. In particular, the amount of red wines being made is increasing and Pinot Noir, here called Spätburgunder, has a growing reputation for premium quality.

CLIMATE AND GRAPEGROWING

Most of the wine regions in Germany have a cool continental climate, with all the associated problems, although the vineyards in the far south in Baden are noticeably warmer. Summers can be wet; however, the rain generally declines in autumn during the final stage of ripening. The long, cool ripening period gives the grapes time to reach sugar ripeness while retaining their acidity. When the conditions are right, noble rot will develop and botrytised sweet wines can be made in every region in Germany. Annual weather conditions vary considerably, leading to significant variation in the quality, quantity and styles of wine made from year to year.

In such marginal conditions, small differences in vineyard location can make significant differences in the quality of wine. In nearly all regions the best sites are found on steep and often stony slopes with a southerly aspect, which maximise the available heat and sunlight. These vineyards have to be worked by hand and on the most extreme slopes equipment has to be manoeuvred into place by winches. On these slopes, vines are head-pruned, individually staked and the canes tied in at the top of the stake to maximise grape exposure to light and

Vineyards with a favourable aspect and a high concentration of slate on the surface benefit from extra warmth.



circulation of air. Where vineyards are located near a river, reflected sunlight can also help the grapes to ripen, and the air movement created by flowing water can help protect against frosts.

Because of the fact that wines are classified by must weight (the level of sugar in the grape juice), the harvest can be spread out over a number of weeks and months. It is possible to make a range of *Qualitätsweine* and *Prädikatsweine* each year from an individual vineyard. Pickers will pass through the vineyard several times in order to ensure that they get the ideal grapes for each category of wine. Grapes can also be sorted and categorised after each picking.

GRAPE VARIETIES AND WINE STYLES

In order to satisfy the demands of the local market, the ongoing trend in German winemaking is for dry styles of wine. These wines, both red and white and at all quality levels, will quite often simply be sold as *Qualitätsweine*. *Prädikatsweine* are largely the preserve of white wines and in order to keep things simple these styles will only be discussed in the context of Riesling which, in terms of vineyard plantings and wine quality, is the most important grape variety in Germany. It is important to note that other grape varieties are also produced as *Prädikatsweine*.

Riesling

Riesling is the most widely planted grape variety in Germany. The variety expresses itself differently from region to region, and even from vineyard to vineyard, due to variations in the climate and soil. Flavours can range from delicate and floral to a richer peachy fruit character. Wines can range from bone dry to lusciously sweet. The dry styles are often labelled as *Qualitätsweine*. They range from light and fruity to very concentrated and intense and many of the very best are labelled *Grosses Gewächs* (GG) – see section *German Wine Laws and Labels* opposite. On the other hand, nearly all wines labelled as *Prädikatsweine* will have residual sugar, but up to the category *Auslese* it is possible for these wines to be made in a dry style. The key to understanding *Prädikatsweine* is to think of them as an indicator of style.

Kabinett – These wines are the most delicate *Prädikatsweine*. Rieslings made in this style will be light

in body, with high acidity and flavours of green apple or citrus fruit often balanced with residual sweetness. The sweet styles will have an alcohol level between 8–9% abv whereas drier styles can reach 12% abv. It is possible to sweeten these wines after fermentation by adding unf fermented grape juice (*Süssreserve*) but this is not a technique that is used to make high-quality wines. The best sweet styles of *Kabinett* are made by stopping the fermentation early, before the yeast has converted all of the sugar in the juice to alcohol. This achieves a better sugar/acid balance.

Spätlese – These wines are made in the same way as *Kabinett* but they are more concentrated, riper and have a little more body, alcohol and, where relevant, sweetness, compared with a *Kabinett* wine from the same region. Citrus and stone fruit aromas (peach or

apricot) are common characteristics of *Spätlese* wines made from Riesling.

Auslese – These wines are made from individually selected extra-ripe bunches of grapes. Whether dry or sweet, *Auslese* wines are richer and riper compared with *Spätlese* wines from the same region and regardless of style noble rot can play an important part in the flavour profile of these wines.

Beerenauslese (BA) and Trockenbeerenauslese (TBA) – Noble rot is essential to achieve the must weights necessary for TBA. It is not essential for wine labelled BA (it is possible to reach the minimum must weight without noble rot); however, noble rot is typical for these wines. Some sites are well suited for these wines but BA and TBA are not necessarily made every year and

GERMAN WINE LAWS AND LABELS

The vast majority of wine produced in Germany is PDO and this will be the focus here. Some PGI wines are made and they are labelled *Landwein*. Wine without a GI is simply labelled *Deutscher Wein*.

For PDO wine there are 13 delimited regions, some of which are covered in this chapter. However, these regions are not linked to specific grape varieties as is the case in the widely copied French appellation system. Instead, wines are typically varietally labelled and classified by minimum must weight at harvest. There are two fundamental levels in the system, **Qualitätswein** and **Prädikatswein**, and the latter is subdivided into six *Prädikat* categories. Each *Prädikat* can be made in a variety of different sweetness levels. The key information is shown in the table.

Minimum must weight at harvest	Category of PDO wine	Wine style
lowest	<i>Qualitätswein</i>	dry to medium sweet
	<i>Prädikatswein</i>	
	• <i>Kabinett</i>	dry to medium sweet
	• <i>Spätlese</i>	dry to medium sweet
	• <i>Auslese</i>	dry to sweet
	• <i>Beerenauslese</i> (BA)	sweet only
	• <i>Eiswein</i>	sweet only
	• <i>Trockenbeerenauslese</i> (TBA)	sweet only
highest		

Wine Labels

All PDO wines must come from only one region and the name of the region will appear on the label. For *Prädikatsweine* the *Prädikat* level will also appear on the label. Varietal labelling is common and labels may also include information about the following three areas:

Sweetness – Dry wines can be labelled *trocken* and wines that are off-dry or medium can be labelled *halbtrocken*. Some producers feel that *halbtrocken* has a negative association with lower quality wines and use the term *feinherb* instead. Unlike the other two terms, *feinherb* is not legally defined. Many wines do not have any indication of sweetness on the label but this can often be deduced from either the wine category or the alcohol level.

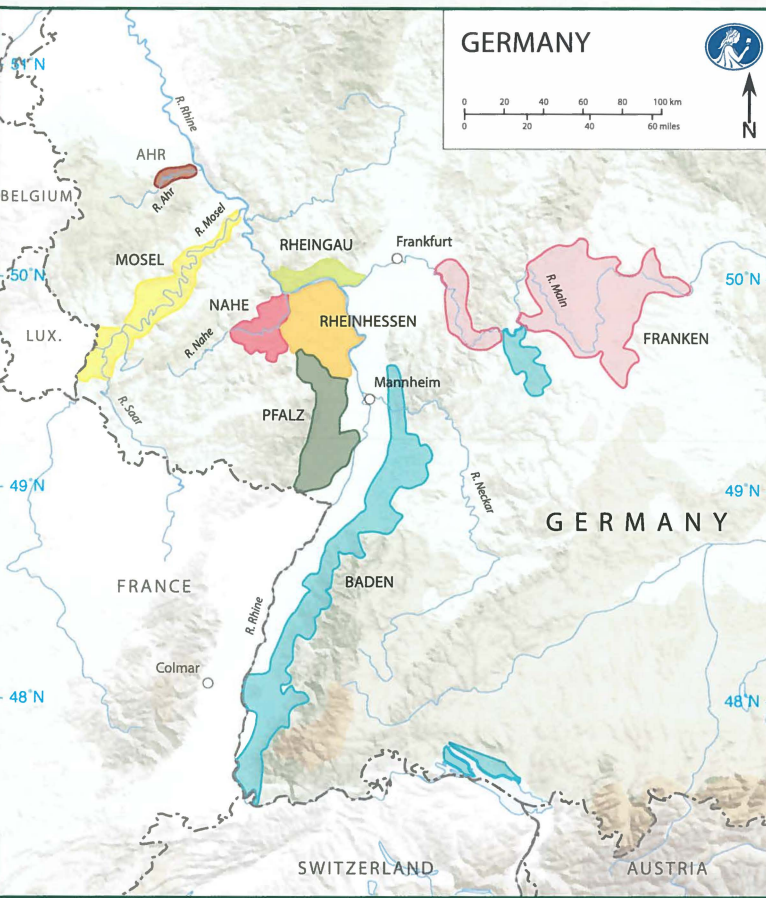
Vineyard location – This is commonly stated on German wine labels. The name of the village comes first and this is followed by the name of the vineyard. For example, a wine labelled *Piesporter Goldtröpfchen* is from the vineyard of *Goldtröpfchen* located in the village of *Piesport*. The vast majority of the wines labelled this way will be from small single vineyards. However, lower quality wines that are made from grapes that come from a large number of neighbouring vineyards can be labelled in the same way (for example, *Piesporter Michelsberg*).

There is nothing on the label to indicate whether a wine is from a single vineyard or not but the retail price is normally a very reliable indicator.

Indications of quality – The *Prädikat* levels are a good indicator of style, something discussed in the section *Riesling*. However, there are no legally defined labelling terms, such as *Premier Cru* and *Grand Cru*, that can be used to indicate the quality level of a wine.

This has to some extent been addressed by an independent group of German wine producers called the **Verband Deutscher Prädikatsweingüter (VDP)**. The members have classified their vineyards which, by consensus, include the vast majority of the best sites in Germany.

This classification is typically only seen on labels when members make dry *Qualitätsweine* from the best vineyard sites. These dry wines are called **Grosses Gewächs** and this is indicated by the letters GG and a bunch of grapes that are embossed on the neck of the bottle. The varieties permitted by the VDP vary from region to region. It is important to note that *Grosses Gewächs* is a trademark of the VDP and is not part of the German wine law. Nevertheless, these are considered to be the very best dry wines made in Germany.

**KEY**

	2000–4000 m
	1000–2000 m
	500–1000 m
	200–500 m
	0–200 m

volumes vary considerably when they are made. These wines are sweet and low in alcohol with flavours of honey, dried stone fruit, candied peel and flowers. They rank among the best sweet wines in the world.

Eiswein – These are genuine rarities and are made infrequently. Importantly, noble rot is not a key component of this style and the focus is rather on varietal purity. The best of these wines achieve a very fine balance between acidity and sweetness. Winemakers also seek to maintain varietal flavours, which can be accentuated by using carefully selected yeast, handling the juice with care and avoiding processes that could mask the flavours of the grape, such as MLF or new oak.

Other White Grape Varieties

Müller-Thurgau (Rivaner) is a crossing made in the 1880s between Riesling and Madeleine Royale. It ripens earlier than Riesling but it does not have the same high level of acidity or flavour intensity. It can produce an attractive floral and fruity wine but in Germany it rarely produces wines of high quality. It remains the second most widely planted white variety but it is now in steady decline as the market for the inexpensive medium-dry/

medium-sweet *Qualitätsweine* made from the variety has declined.

Silvaner is the third most widely planted white grape variety and is mainly found in those regions where it has traditionally been strong, in particular Rheinhessen and Franken. Silvaner is made in both dry and sweet styles. It generally gives wines that are both less acidic and less overtly fruity than Riesling and can sometimes have an earthy quality. On the right site it is capable of producing high-quality wines.

There are important and growing plantings of Grauburgunder/Ruländer (Pinot Gris) and Weißburgunder (Pinot Blanc), which are often labelled using the French or Italian name and typically made in a dry style.

Black Grape Varieties

Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir) is the third most planted grape variety in Germany. It thrives in the warmer vineyard areas and is particularly important in Pfalz and Baden. Wines are dry and either relatively light and fruity or made in a more concentrated style that often includes oak aromas.

Dornfelder is the other black variety that is widely planted. It produces particularly deeply coloured wines. Other varieties include Portugieser, Trollinger and Schwarzriesling (Meunier). These varieties typically produce light-bodied and fruity wines although intensely coloured and flavoured examples with some oak character exist. The vast majority of these wines are sold as *Qualitätsweine* and consumed by the domestic market.

WINE REGIONS**Mosel**

This region includes the River Mosel, from where it joins the River Rhine (Rhein) to the German border and its two small tributaries, the Saar and the Ruwer. White grapes and Riesling in particular dominate production. Riesling is the only permitted variety for GG wines.

Production is concentrated in the centre of the region in an area known as the Middle Mosel where there are a number of villages that have an established reputation for top-quality wine. The best known are **Piesport**, **Bernkastel** and **Wehlen**. The best vineyards are found on very steep slopes with slate soils right next to the river. The Rieslings here are typically lighter in body, lower in alcohol and higher in acidity compared with the wines of Rheingau, Rheinhessen and Pfalz. Floral and green fruit flavours predominate.

The cooler Saar and Ruwer account for only a tiny percentage of the overall plantings in the Mosel. The best wines are similar in both style and quality to the Middle Mosel often showing an even higher level of acidity. In cooler vintages grapes from even the best sites do not ripen fully and are used in sparkling wine production.

Nahe

The vineyards of the Nahe are spread over a wide area that lies in between the Mosel and Rheinhessen. The best vineyards are situated on the banks of the River Nahe itself in the short section between the villages of **Schlossböckelheim** and Bad Kreuznach. These vineyards are on steep south-facing slopes. The best wines are made from Riesling, which is the most widely planted variety here, and can be made in a style that lies in between that of the Mosel and the fuller bodied wines from Rheingau, Rheinhessen and Pfalz. This is the only permitted variety for GG wines. They have the pronounced acidity of the Mosel but they can have a slightly riper fruit character as the climate here is warmer.

Rheingau

The Rheingau is a small but prestigious region. Most vineyards are situated on the slopes of the north bank of the River Rhine (in the west of the region) and the River Main (in the east) and have a southerly aspect. This, combined with the protection offered by the Taunus hills to the north, provides optimal conditions for ripening grapes.

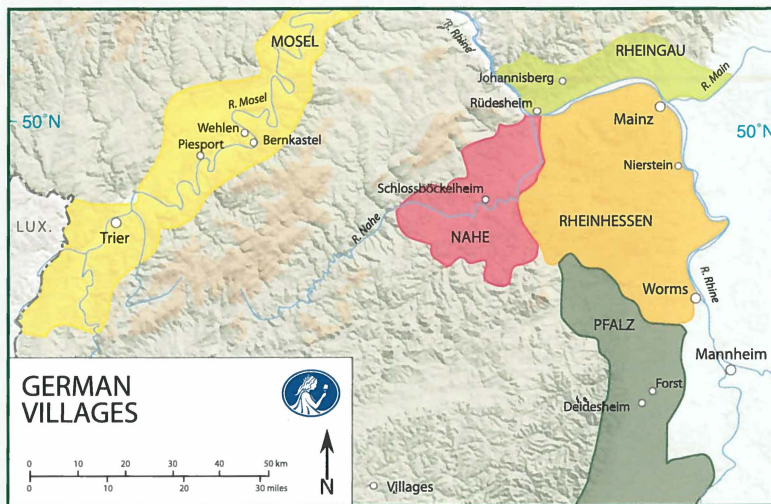
The majority of the vineyards lie on the slopes to the west of the region and surround the villages of **Johannisberg** and **Rüdesheim**. Riesling dominates plantings and the majority of the wines are made in a dry style. The Rieslings have a medium to full body and a distinct ripe peach character to their fruit flavours. The humid conditions generated by the Rhine mean that some of Germany's best BA and TBA wines are made here too. The vineyards to the east of the region on the Main are centred around the village of Hochheim. The Rieslings can be riper and fuller bodied due to a slightly warmer climate. Some excellent Spätburgunder is also made here to the west of Rüdesheim in the village of Assmannshausen. GG wines can be made from Riesling or Spätburgunder.

Rheinhessen

This is the largest vine-growing region. A very broad range of black and white varieties are planted here. Müller-Thurgau and Riesling are the two most planted varieties of either colour. Black varieties, mostly Dornfelder, Portugieser and Spätburgunder, make up approximately 30 per cent of the plantings. GG wines here can be made from Riesling or Spätburgunder.

The reputation of Rheinhessen was based on the steeply sloping vineyards on the west bank of the Rhine centred around the village of **Nierstein**. This area, often referred to as the Rheinterrasse, produces some of the fullest-bodied Rieslings in Germany.

In recent years a number of growers working in areas that do not have a long-standing reputation for wine production (for example the area in the south of the region near Worms) have started to produce top-quality wines. As a result, Rheinhessen has gained a reputation for innovation and excellence.



Pfalz

Pfalz is the second largest wine-growing region in Germany. The majority of the vineyards can be seen as a continuation of the vineyards of Alsace. They run in a narrow 80 kilometre strip north from the French border and lie to the east of the Haardt Mountains, which are a continuation of the Vosges. This means that the Pfalz is the driest of the German regions and in very warm years the vines can suffer from water stress.

Riesling is the most widely planted variety and has the longest reputation for high-quality winemaking. Müller-Thurgau is also widely grown, while plantings of Grauburgunder and Weißburgunder are gradually increasing. Black grapes account for just under 40 per cent of the vineyard area. Dornfelder is the second most widely planted variety of either colour and there are significant plantings of Portugieser (for the local market) and Spätburgunder (which is gaining an international reputation). GG wines can be made from Riesling, Weißburgunder or Spätburgunder.

The most established quality vineyards surround **Forst** and **Deidesheim**, an area often referred to as 'Mittelhaardt'. Set on the steep slopes to the west of the villages, the vineyards here produce a ripe, fuller-bodied style of Riesling. As has happened in Rheinhessen, young and energetic growers are making top-quality wines outside of this core region. The majority of wines are now made in the drier styles.

Baden

Baden is the warmest and most southerly wine region and produces the fullest-bodied German wines with the highest alcohols. Baden's vineyards are spread over a large geographic area although in terms of vineyard area it is only the third largest vine-growing region in Germany. Most of the vineyards are spaced out over a narrow strip of land that follows the Rhine to the Swiss border. Nearly a third of the plantings are concentrated

KEY

500–1000 m
200–500 m
100–200 m
0–100 m

Aspect and slope are key factors that determine fruit quality in Mosel.



in the areas of Kaiserstuhl and Tuniberg, which are situated opposite Colmar in Alsace.

The best vineyards are on the south-facing slope of the Kaiserstuhl (an extinct volcano) and make the most of the available warmth. This area has developed a reputation for top-quality Spätburgunder, the most widely planted variety in Baden. There are also substantial plantings of Müller-Thurgau, followed by Grauburgunder, Weißburgunder and then Riesling. GG wines can be made from a range of white and black varieties.

Franken

White winemaking dominates in Franken but, unusually for Germany, Riesling is neither the most widely planted nor is it considered to be the most prestigious grape variety. Here Silvaner comes into its own. The early flowering and ripening Silvaner is susceptible to frost damage, and is planted in the warmest sites. Consequently, Silvaner is able to achieve a concentration that is rarely achieved elsewhere in Germany.

The best wines from the south-facing slopes around Würzburg are dry with a richness on the palate and often an earthy quality. They are bottled in distinctive flask-shaped bottles. GG wines can be made from Silvaner, Riesling, Weißburgunder, Grauburgunder or Spätburgunder.