

Austria

As with many other facets of their cultures, Austrians harbor intense pride for their wines. Similarly to the other countries we have visited, the wine culture is intrinsically tied to the terroir and the culture from which it has emerged.

Like Spain, Austria has seen something of a resurgence of enthusiasm for both their classic varietals (as well as some newcomers, like Zweigelt) and the German-speaking nation has become a highlight for old-world wine enthusiasts. Let's take a look at some of the regions, producers and wines from one of the most scenic countries in Europe.



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Austria's wine-production regions are essentially divided into two larger areas: **N**eiderösterreich and Burgenland, which are further subdivided into several smaller DACs, or *Districtus Austriae Controllatus*, which are similar in differentiation to France's AOC system.

The Danube River is in many ways the centerpiece of the nation, and likewise, much of Austrian wine country runs along its banks. Austria's climate, being both inland and significantly colder for much of the rest of Europe's wine country, renders overall smaller yields but often results in more deeply concentrated wines.

Bordering the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia on the east, Austrian wine tends to be both at once idiosyncratically unique while also sharing cuisine and influence (as well as some grape varietals) with these other countries. Meanwhile, on the southwest border, Switzerland's influence bleeds into the food scene, most notably with excellent cheeses and other local fare.

Austrian wine ranges from robust and deeply complex (Zweigelt) to light and refreshing (Gruner) sweet and rich (Reisling). Let's take at some of the most notable regions.



Neiderösterreich

Although Vienna may be more synonymous with stately medieval churches, and pictureque cosmopolitan European cityscapes, few major European cities are as deeply enmeshed with the nation's wine culture and history. With literally thousands of acres of vineyard land throughout the residential districts, Vienna (or Wien) has historically been focused heavily on producing wine specifically to be sold in the small inns and taverns that help to sustain the city's tourism and local economy. However, in recent years, producers in the region have begun to more seriously cultivate some of the Austrian flagship varieties, including Zeirfandler, Rotgipfler and Neuburger alongside some excellent Pinot

Noir and several highly regarded white varieties.

The Danube River bisects a large portion of the Austrian wine producing areas, and due northwest from Vienna lies the region of Wagram which is widely known as one of the premier white wine producing regions in Austria. Although Wagram produces both whites and reds, it is responsible for excellent Grüner Veltliner, which is widely considered one of Austria's finest exports, as well as Reisling and Welschreisling.

Last but not least, Wachau is Austria's most famous wine region. Similarly to Wagram, Wachau is known (likely even more so) for outstanding Grüner, but Reisling is the truly notable wine from the region, where top tier Reisling is produced throughout the nearly 900 wine producing sites in the relatively short 12-mile stretch along the banks of the Danube.





Burgenland

While Neiderösterreich is cooler and more well known for its production of white wines, Burgenland, which is located just south, offers a warmer climate which facilitates production of some of the nation's best reds. However, the marshy land surrounding Lake Neusiedl provides a singularly unique growing environment as the mists that surround the shallow lake encourage excess of botrytis (noble rot) in the autumn which renders some of the best sweet white wines in the world.

Between the unique environment of the Neusiedlersee region, the warmth and variety of landscapes throughout Burgenland, especially in the venerable Mittelburgenland provides enough

variation in moisture heat and temperature to produce the widest variation of wines in any region in Austria.

Most notably, Burgenland is known for superior reds including Pinot Noir, as well as the regional specialties of Zweigelt, Blaufränkisch and Sankt Laurent. Also, the tiny village of Rust is known for producing Ruster Ausbruch, which is often compared to nearby Hungary's flagship grape, Tokaj.

Burgenland has grown in stature, especially in the last fifty years, and has created a reputation for developing some of Austria's best wine. While it still maintains an air of rustic charm, checkered with delapidated castles and tiny villages, it is rapidly transforming into a truly excellent wine-producing region.

Featured Wines

WEINGUT FRANK
Zweigelt Ried Altenbergen
Herrnbaumgarten
2016

Zwesigelt is grape hybrid native to Austria, and the Ried Altenbergen is the essence of the soil, climate and domestic red varieties of this region. Only the best vintages from Weingut Frank are bottled for public sale.

Deep dark, ripe cherry, good enough to eat, despite its massiveness, fruit is always in the foreground, delicate, fine tannins.

This robust red will pair especially well with lamb, steak, or braised beef.

ECKER ECKHOF
Gelber Muskatellar
Wagram
2017

Bernhard Ecker emphasizes fruity white and dense harmonic red wines on his small, family-owned estate vineyard.

Also known as Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains, this varietal is predominantly known as an excellent aperitif, with a noticeable element of nutmeg.

Lightness and ease are the virtues of this refreshing, lovely summer wine. With faint floral honeysuckle the palate delivers the varietal flavors of honey and grape through a prism of lemon zestiness. The finish is dry and long.

PAUL ACHS: LUST & LEBEN
Red Blend
Burgenland
2018

Lust & Leben is an approachable and easy drinking red blend of 50% Zweigelt, 30% St. Laurent, 20% Blaufränkisch. The wine is fermented in stainless steel tanks and is aged for 18 months in a combination of used Burgundian piece and large French and Austrian oak casks.

In this region, it's not unusual to find dishes like goulash or stuffed peppers in the region, all liberally spiced with paprika well-suited to complement these hearty and spicy flavors but offers broad versatility at the table thanks to its firm acidity and savory character.

NIGL: FREHEIT
Grüner Veltliner
Kremstal
2019

Martin Nigl's Freiheit is sourced from 4 different vineyards in the hills above the city of Krems. The name Freiheit means "freedom" and is believed to be some of the first privately owned vineyard land in the valley not controlled by the Church or a feudal estate.

Ann Krebiehl of *Wine Enthusiast*: "Fresh notes of green Conference pears mix with a vivid overtone of pear drop. The palate speaks of crisp freshness, clean-cut pear fruit, subtle yeasty nuance and fine concentration. This is slender but wonderfully fresh and bright."

Price: \$100 for the four pack \$150 with the added bonus wine

Featured Cheeses

BERGGENUSS Raw Cow

From the tiny village of Entlebuch, Switzerland. Berggenuss has a thin, natural rind surrounding a light golden-yellow paste. The interior of the cheese has a few holes in it and some crystals. Nutty and grassy. The flavor of the cheese is something between an aged Parmigiano-Reggiano and alpine cheeses such as Gruyère. The cheese has a nutty taste that's just a tiny bit sharp. A perfect pick for cheese lovers. Aged approx 4 months

TETE DE MOINE Raw Cow

8 centuries ago, in the Swiss Jura Mountains, monks of Bellelay Abbey had a sense of humor. Fashioning small cylindrical "monk's head" cheeses, they invented a machine, called a girolle, to thinly shave away layers from the top, exposing a bald spot. This Semi-Hard cheese has a dense texture and a seriously intense, fruity flavor. One of the stronger, sweeter Swiss cheeses. It pairs nicely with fresh or dried fruits or dessert wines of equal intensity

RACLETTE WEISWEIN Raw Cow

A semi-hard cheese made on both sides of the French and Swiss Alps. Made using ancestral methods with unpasteurised milk of cows grazing on the alpine meadows. The name Raclette comes from the French word 'racler', which means 'to scrape'. The cheese has got a thin, rind and a pale yellow pate. It has a very distinctive pleasant, aromatic smell with a creamy texture, similar to Gruyere cheeses, which does not separate even when melted. The flavor is nutty and milky.

Includes: Tony Packo's Original Dill Pickles and Potter's Rye Cracker Crisps **\$40**





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