

tasting through...

GERMANY

GERMAN WINE BENEFITS FROM:

- ★ COOL CLIMATE (enhances acidity)
- ★ MOUNTAINS (steep hillsides protect from winds and also help with aspect/ripening)
- ★ RIVERS (radiate heat and extend the growing season)
- ★ SOILS (retain heat to aid in ripening)
- ★ HUMIDITY + DRY AUTUMNS (usually perfect conditions for botrytis)

TOP VARIETIES:

- ★ RIESLING
- ★ PINOT NOIR (Spätburgunder)

RIESLING

- 1/4 of all German plantings
- late budding and frost resistant, so perfect for cooler temperatures
- late ripening, so needs enough sun exposure and a dry autumn to ripen fully
- high acid, even when fully ripe, which gives it huge aging potential
- styles can be dry to sweet and have various characteristics depending on subregion, but typically semi-aromatic honeysuckle/white floral notes with stone and orchard fruits
- Noteworthy ageing notes include toast, honey, and petrol
- TDN is the compound responsible for the petrol/gasoline aroma; the sensory threshold for this compound is around 2ug/L but aged Riesling can have levels as high as 50ug/L (studies vary on the exact threshold); there are precursors to TDN called carotenoids which increase with exposure to sunlight, and water stress as well as age after bottling!

PINOT NOIR

- known locally as Spätburgunder
- thrives in warmer areas like Baden and Pfalz
- cool climate so always light body, higher acid and delicate structure
- typically aged in neutral oak or larger oak vessels, so more aromatic and less oak indicators
- some producers use whole cluster fermentation to contribute stem tannin

CLIMATE/LANDMARKS

- cool + continental climate
- Rhine river and tributaries/Mosel River all radiate heat and extend the growing season
- the best vineyards are on steep slopes, maximizing sunlight exposure
- autumns are long and dry, which aid in botrytis (Noble Rot)
- the Taunus and Haardt Mtns shelter vineyards from cold wind and rain
- dark-colored slate soils in Mosel retain heat and help ripen grapes

WINEMAKING

- vineyard management can be labor-intensive on steep slopes (no machines/hand harvesting)
- fermenting *dry* is becoming more preferred/more of the norm
- enrichment (chaptalizing) increases final alcohol content up to 2-3% depending on the zone - this was common practice, but is becoming less due to global warming
- large commercial wineries may sweeten post-fermentation with *süßreserve* (unfermented/partial-fermented grape must) while small quality focused producers will stop fermentation to add sweetness (w/ SO₂ or racking/filtering)
- stainless steel fermentation is the norm, but some producers experiment with German/French oak and lees aging

CLASSIFICATIONS

1. **Deutscher Wein:** *Lowest quality*, inexpensive, youthful, rarely exported
2. **Landwein:** Less quality (PGI equivalent), rarely exported, in most regions must be trocken or halbtrocken, riper than Wein, but can still be chaptalized
3. The two tiers of *top quality wine* (PDO category) are **Qualitätswein (QbA)** and **Prädikatswein (QmP)** and both must be produced in one of Germany's 13 quality regions (anbaugebiete) stated on the label

- **Qualitätswein (QbA)** is the overarching PDO with less stringent regulations, 7% minimum alcohol, wines can be chaptalized; commonly labeled by sweetness on label:
 - **Trocken:** A dry wine with ~4 g/l RS or less (can be 9 g/l if acid is high enough)
 - **Halbtrocken:** A "half-dry" or slightly sweet wine with 4-12 g/l RS (up to 18 g/l RS if acid is high enough)
 - **Feinherb:** An unofficial term to describe an off-dry wine similar to Halbtrocken
 - **Liebliche:** A medium sweet wine with 12-45 g/l RS
 - **süß or Süss:** A sweet wine with more than 45 g/l RS
- **Prädikatswein** (a subcategory of Qualitätswein) is broken down into levels determined by levels of sugar in the grape at harvest on the Ochsle scale. *Prädikat* = level of ripeness at harvest (wines may NOT be chaptalized, they are often sweet but can also be dry - up through Auslese + must have min 7% alc):
 - **Kabinett** 7-12% alcohol, usually dry-medium sweet, lightest body
 - **Spätlese** "late harvest" usually 7% alcohol min, higher fruit concentration
 - **Auslese** "select harvest" hand harvested, can have noble rot, 7% alcohol min, most are sweet (last category that can be dry), honeyed quality
 - **Beerenauslese** "berry select harvest" hand harvest, raisinated, typically noble rot, 5.5% alcohol min, always sweet, low yields
 - **Eiswein** same must weight as Beerenauslese, but picked when frozen, 5.5% alcohol min
 - **Trockenbeerenauslese** "dry berry select harvest", must be affected by botrytis, extremely sweet, 5.5-8% alcohol

- **VDP (Verband Deutscher Prädikatsweingüter)** is an optional association with strict regulations and members are audited every 5 years - it has a 4 tier vineyard classifications system (which mirrors Burgundy's village/vineyard system) and includes **Gutswein** (regional wines), **Ortswein** (village wines), **Erste Lage** (Premier Cru/first class sites), **Grosse Lage** (Grand Cru sites) which can be further broken into **Erstes Gewächs** and **Grosses Gewächs** (GG)

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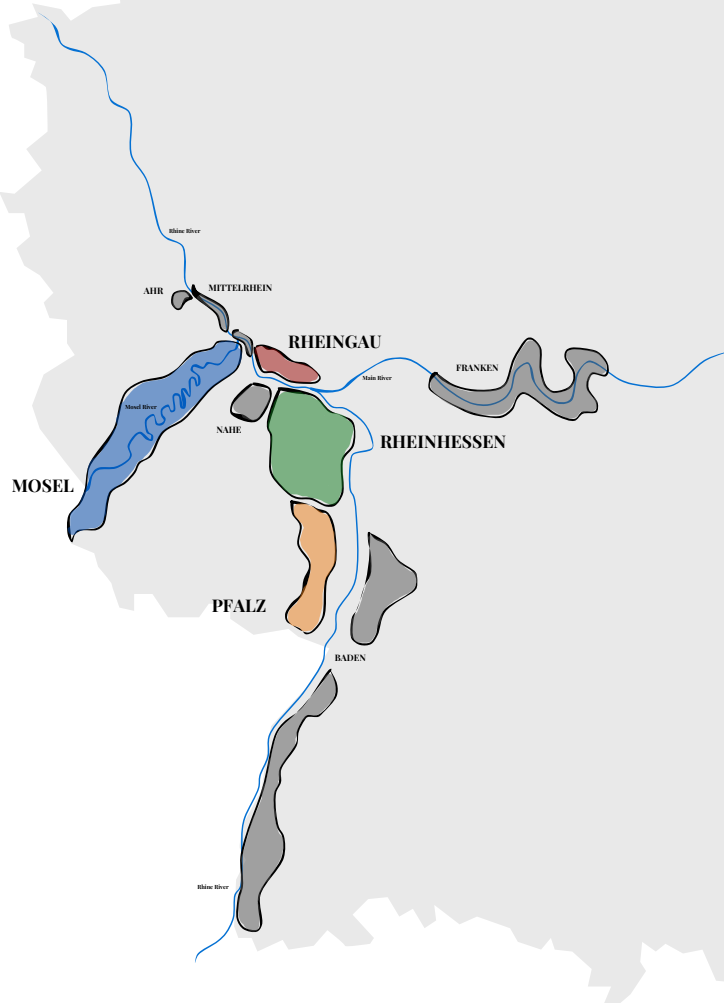
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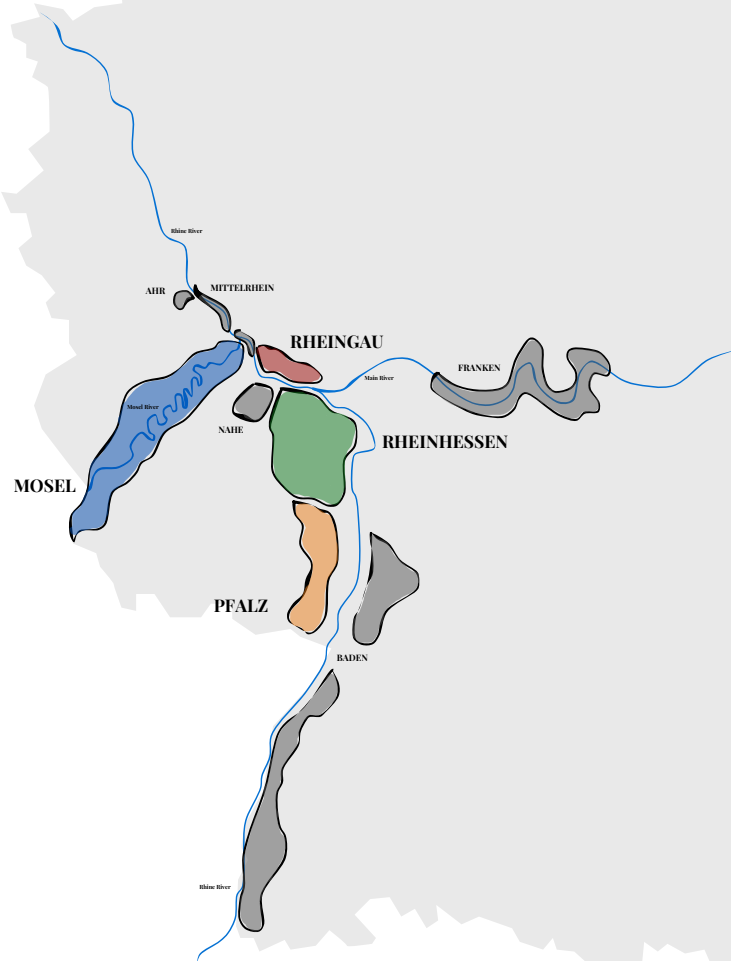
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