

tasting through...

SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA WINE BENEFITS FROM:

- ★ COASTAL INFLUENCE (cool currents/ocean breezes allow grape to ripen slowly in this warm climate)
- ★ VARIED TERROIR (there is not a 'one size fits all' for soil types, climates, or landmarks - mountains and desert areas can lead to different expressions of a grape)
- ★ INNOVATION (with a more global approach, wines are moving away from bulk and into more premium wines, allowing for experimentation of single-vineyards, wild yeasts, skin contact and the adoption of more sustainable/organic farming practices)
- ★ VALUE (quality has risen and prices remain relatively affordable compared to wines from more established regions)

HISTORY

- grape growing and wine making go back to the 1650's when the Dutch settled at the Cape of Good Hope, however, it was dependent on the labor of the enslaved people until slavery was abolished in the 1860's - many workers were not freed, however, and only paid in alcohol (*the 'dop' system*) until the early 1990's; dop was abolished in 1961, but still used as a reward, which created alcohol-related problems among workers
- during the apartheid era (1948-1994), South African wines were seen as inferior and boycotted or given trade restrictions, which limited their reach in other countries
- during this time The KMV (co-operative) dominated the industry - it regulated production of only highly yielding varieties like Colombard, Chenin Blanc, and Cinsault used mainly for Brandy
- In 1994 the apartheid ended and South Africa was able to enter the global market again, but negative associations took a while to overcome
- In the past 30 years, the industry has improved its wine quality and global marketing, however prices are still low on the majority of wines

CLIMATE/LANDMARKS/WINEMAKING

- Warm and Mediterranean** - most of the Western Cape has mild winters and warm dry summers, however among the mountains and moving inland can become more continental or arid
- The Atlantic and Indian Ocean** - cooling influences for a typically warm/sunny area
- The Benguela Current** - moves north from Antarctica, cooling the coastal areas
- The Cape Doctor** - a south-easterly wind during spring and summer that extends cooling from the Benguela current (keeps disease at bay, but can damage vines)
- Grape Growing - many avenues; both irrigated land, leading to high-yielding vines and inexpensive styles, as well as unirrigated land that dry-farm old vines and are more premium/costly
- oak is used for premium wines (these wines are also fermented in oak for better integration) or use of concrete, no malolactic fermentation for white wines
- blending is often used and wines can be **white cape blends** (Chenin dominant with other white grapes), **red cape blends** (Pinotage and/or Rhone variety dominant), or **Bordeaux blends**

CLASSIFICATIONS

- Wine of Origin Scheme certifies specific areas:
 - Geographic Unit (GU)**: larger area (Western Cape) which is the only main one as it accounts for nearly all SA wine
 - Region**: smaller area named after a major feature of that area (Coastal Region)
 - District**: smaller area within a region typically based on a common center or mountain range (Stellenbosch)
 - Ward**: a defined area within a district based on common soils and climate (not on the map - Simonsberg is within Stellenbosch and may be on a bottle label)

SIGNATURE VARIETIES:

- ★ CHENIN BLANC (white)
- ★ PINOTAGE (red)

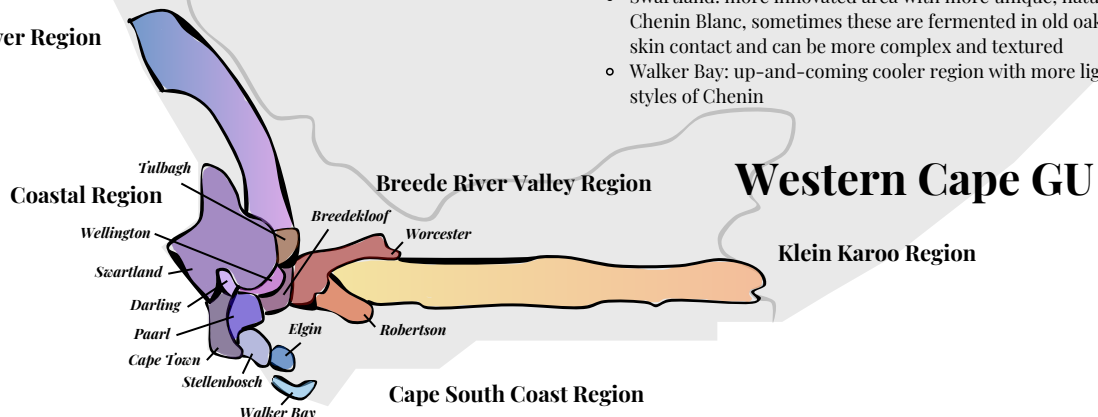
PINOTAGE

- South Africa's signature grape, a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsault, developed in 1925
- can be traditional (bolder) style, or more light and elegant; both styles can be made into higher volume inexpensive wines and premium/expensive wines
- Style**:
 - Traditional styles have full body, deep color, dark fruit, high tannin, + high alcohol
 - Modern styles are lighter and more elegant (cooler climates or picked earlier), paler in color, more red fruited, with medium alcohol, and tannin
- Cost**:
 - Inexpensive made with stainless steel or used barrels
 - Premium/Expensive see cold soaks for deeper color extraction, extended French oak aging (50%+ new, although dropping) and are released a couple of years after vintage

CHENIN BLANC

- South Africa is the largest producer of Chenin Blanc in the world.
- Wines are known for their versatility, ranging from crisp and dry to rich and full-bodied (The style bridges the gap between France and USA) but always with riper/bruised fruit quality and high refreshing acidity
 - Stellenbosch: more traditional/classical area, with fruit-driven wines balanced by a fresh, crisp acidity and sometimes more use of oak
 - Swartland: more innovated area with more unique, natural styles of Chenin Blanc, sometimes these are fermented in old oak or even with skin contact and can be more complex and textured
 - Walker Bay: up-and-coming cooler region with more light and bright styles of Chenin

Olifants River Region



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PINOTAGE

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CHENIN BLANC

Olifants River Region

Coastal Region

Tulbagh
Wellington
Swartland
Darling
Paarl
Cape Town
Stellenbosch
Walker Bay

Breede River Valley Region

Breedekloof
Worcester

Robertson

Western Cape GU

Klein Karoo Region

Cape South Coast Region

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