

tasting through...

# ALSACE

France

## ALSACE WINE BENEFITS FROM:

- ★ **THE SUN** (consistent sunny conditions allow grapes to fully ripen in a cooler climate)
- ★ **DRY CONDITIONS** (the Vosges Mts create a 'rainshadow effect' that blocks the wind and rains coming from the west, this prevents many diseases and allows for healthy grapes)
- ★ **ELEVATION** (the best vineyards are between 200-250m and some are as high as 400m, these have a large diurnal which fully ripens the grapes during the day and retains the acidity during the night)
- ★ **FOCUS ON PURE FRUIT** (winemakers focus on techniques that enhance the fruity and floral elements of a wine, using inert vessels, skin contact, and cool fermentations)

## CLIMATE/LANDMARKS

- **Cool/Continental** - very northern latitude and far inland (vineyards need all the sun to ripen grapes)
- **The Vosges Mountains** - block the rain from the west creating dry conditions and also create a high diurnal which allows grapes to ripen fully and retain acidity
- **Föhn Wind** - dry, warm wind coming down the mountains (raises temps and reduces disease)

## CLASSIFICATIONS/REQUIREMENTS

- One of the only regions in France that labels by the variety
- **Grand Cru** (51 Grand Cru vineyards must use the 4 Noble grape varieties, but vary on their rules - these vineyards are typically found more in the Haut-Rhin and on steeper slopes)
- larger scale, inexpensive wines are typically grown on the flat plains between the Vosges and the Rhine River (most is Pinot Blanc used for Cremant)
- Chaptalization in cool years is allowed / Irrigation is not permitted

## VITICULTURE/WINEMAKING

- vines are **trained high** to reduce frost risk and get closer to the sun (terracing is used on steep *Grand Cru* sites)
- because of the steep vineyards many **hand harvest** (*Grand Cru's must*) (machine harvesting is used on the plains)
- production is typically small scale and 35% of vineyards are organic
- **Skin Contact** is commonly used to enhance texture and flavor
- **Inert Vessels** are common to keep primary flavors (stainless steel or neutral oak, no malolactic, lees use is mild w/ no stirring)
- varying levels of sweetness (these used to be known by producer style, but now include a scale on the label)

## RIESLING

- Alsace is a perfect region for a cold hardy grape that needs a long growing season
- typically made in a dry style
- wines have medium plus intensity, with high acid, medium plus body, medium alcohol, and emphasized citrus, stone fruit, and smoky minerality
- huge aging ability gaining more petrol, honey, and wax notes over time

## PINOT GRIS

- known for being vigorous and accumulating a lot of sugar (ripens early)
- similar to Gewurztraminer can accumulate a lot of sugar/alcohol and phenolic grip
- wines have fuller body, more texture, and expressive aromatics and can become rich, honeyed, and smoky alongside orchard, stone, and floral notes (this style is completely different from Italian Pinot Grigio)

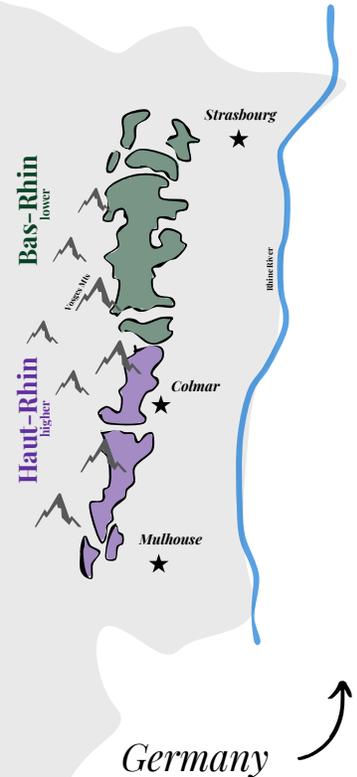
## PINOT BLANC

- not one of the Noble Grapes, but the most widely planted
- more low intensity (simpler/neutral) and lower acidity
- this grape is blended with Auxerrois and both can be labeled Pinot Blanc
- most is grown on the flat/fertile plains, and 60% of this is used for Cremant wines

## SIGNATURE VARIETIES:

*Alsace is around 90% white wines*

- ★ RIESLING (one of 4 'Noble' varieties)
- ★ GEWURZTRAMINER (one of 4 'Noble' varieties)
- ★ PINOT GRIS (one of 4 'Noble' varieties)
- ★ MUSCAT (one of 4 'Noble' varieties)
- ★ PINOT BLANC (most grown)
- ★ PINOT NOIR (red)



## GEWURZTRAMINER

- ripens quickly, but must be picked later so skins can fully ripen and the wine is balanced (this leads to wines with higher sugar levels and more alcohol, with generally lower acidity)
- can be made sweet or dry (off-dry is most common)
- wines are bigger, riper, and more opulent than anywhere else with pronounced (perfumed) intensity, and emphasized lychee + tropical fruits, alongside rose and spice notes
- thick skins lead to a more phenolic (bitter) grip, which is good for texture and offsetting low acidity and richness

## MUSCAT

- less widely planted than the other Noble Grapes, because more sensitive to frost and disease
- unlike some Muscat styles around the world (which are sweet), Alsace Muscat is usually dry, but still extremely floral and 'grapey'
  - Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains: higher quality, intense perfume, delicate
  - Muscat Ottonel: softer, lighter aromatics; easier to ripen, more commonly planted

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RIESLING

PINOT GRIS

PINOT BLANC

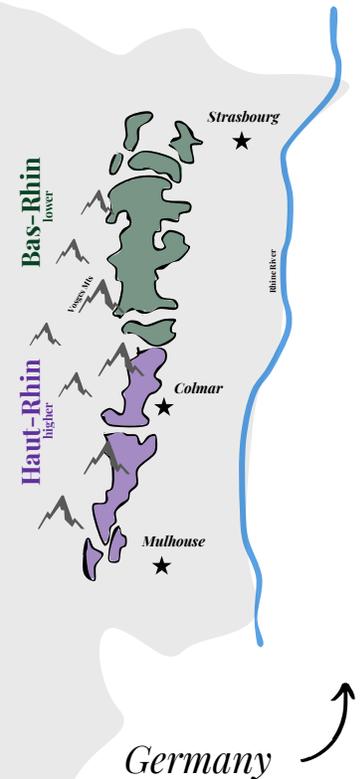
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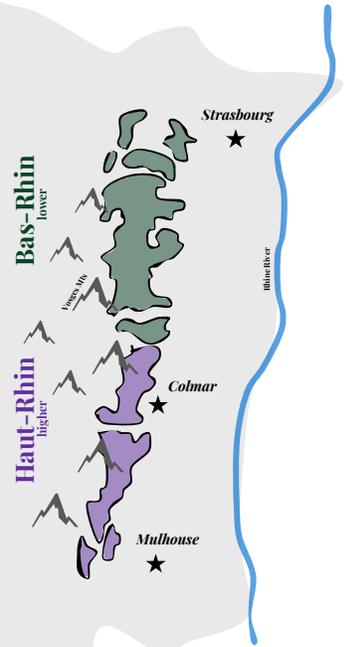
GEWURZTRAMINER

MUSCAT



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