

## Blind Tasting Crib Sheets: Red Wines

### Gamay

#### *France, Burgundy, Beaujolais*

Beaujolais is typically pale in colour with a blue tinge, light in body, high in acidity, and low in tannins. Most Beaujolais is made by semi-carbonic maceration, which contributes estery notes of bananas and bubblegum to the red fruits of the Gamay grape. In contrast, Cru wines tend to be made by traditional vinification and can also be oaked, rendering them more tannic and difficult to recognize as Beaujolais.

### Pinot Noir

#### *France, Burgundy, Côte de Nuits*

Pinot Noir is typically aromatic with a light to medium body and silky tannins. The wines are often noted for their savoury fleshiness and farm-yard aromas, even if the current vogue is for a lighter, cleaner, and more fruit-driven style. For many people, Côte de Nuits is quintessential Pinot Noir. The character varies from commune to commune although there is a high degree of overlap. For instance, Gevrey-Chambertin is noted for its deep colour, power, and structure: full, rich, but also silky and delicately perfumed. Compared to Gevrey-Chambertin, Chambolle-Musigny is ‘feminine’, that is, lighter, brighter, more delicate, more elegant, and more seductive. Nuits-Saint-George in contrast is quite masculine, full, firm, and dominated by black rather than red fruits.

#### *France, Burgundy, Côte de Beaune*

Compared to Côte de Nuits, Côte de Beaune is lighter, suppler, more fruit-driven, and quicker to mature. That having been said, red Corton (which is the only red wine Grand Cru in the Côte de Beaune) and Pommard tend to be more muscular and tannic, and more akin to Côte de Nuits. While the soils of Pommard are rich in marl, those of nearby Volnay are rich in limestone. As a result, Volnay is especially soft and fragrant, similar to (but lighter than) Chambolle-Musigny in the Côte de Nuits.

***New Zealand, Martinborough or Marlborough or Central Otago***

Ultra-clean fruit and high acidity are the hallmarks of New Zealand Pinot Noir. Central Otago Pinot Noir is deep violet in colour with notes of black fruit and cherry and, often, a hint of greenness. On the palate, the wine is full-bodied for Pinot Noir, often with a high alcohol and firm, round tannins. Marlborough Pinot Noir is lighter, both in weight and colour, and dominated by red fruit such as cranberry and raspberry with finely etched, peppery tannins. Martinborough Pinot Noir is often from older vines and most similar to Burgundy. It is weightier than Marlborough Pinot Noir and more complete and complex than Central Otago Pinot Noir. Notes of cherry and plum mingle with game, spice, and chocolate.

***Australia, e.g. Victoria, Yarra Valley***

Australian Pinot Noir is typically very clean and fruit-driven with good acidity. Unfortunately, it is sometimes marred by high alcohol or, at least, alcohol that is too high in relation to its light body. The best examples avoid jammy fruit and tend to more earthy notes, often with marked eucalyptus or herbal mint. Much Australian Pinot Noir hails from the cooler regions of the Port Phillip zone in Victoria.

***USA, Oregon, e.g. Willamette Valley***

Oregon Pinot Noir is characterized by purity of fruit, floral aromatics, and, often, an herbaceous pine needle note. Maturation in new French oak is more common than in Burgundy. As with Burgundy, acidity is very high but tannin structure is generally softer. Even so, very fine Oregon Pinot Noir requires several years of cellaring if it is to develop *sous-bois* and other appealing tertiary notes.

***USA, California, Sonoma***

Sonoma Pinot Noir is the benchmark style for California. In particular, Russian River Valley Pinot Noir is classically vibrant in colour with cherry and berry fruit flavours and notes of earthy mushroom. Compared to Burgundy, Sonoma Pinot Noir is fuller in body and richer in fruit; compared to Oregon Pinot Noir it lacks the crisp green notes; and compared to New Zealand Pinot Noir, it is often lower in acidity.

## Cabernet Franc

### *France, Loire, Chinon or Bourgueil or Saumur*

Loire Cabernet Franc is light purple to purple in colour with a nose of raspberries and pencil shavings. With age, it develops earthy, spicy, and animally notes. Unripe vintages may be marked by a certain greenness or herbaceousness. On the palate, the wine is light- to medium-bodied with high acidity, medium alcohol, and fine and powdery tannins. Chinon and Bourgueil tend to be more structured than Saumur.

## Cabernet Sauvignon

### *France, Bordeaux, Left Bank, Pauillac*

This Cabernet Sauvignon blend is bluish purple in its childhood, ruby in its adolescence, and further brickens with age. On the nose, it is complex and dominated by notes of cassis, appealing green/bell pepper, cedar, chocolate, cigar box, and vanilla from new French oak. On the palate, it is powerful yet elegant, with a medium body, fairly high acidity, medium alcohol, fine, structured tannins, and a long finish. The other premium Left Bank appellations overlap in style and can be very difficult to distinguish from Pauillac. At its best Margaux is floral and feminine, exuding a refined perfume of acacia and violets. Saint-Julien is a seductive compromise between the power of Pauillac and the magic of Margaux, with a silkier texture and drier finish. Compared to Pauillac, Saint-Julien, and Margaux, Saint-Estèphe tends to be deeper in colour, fuller or coarser in texture, with coarser, more rustic tannins, a touch more acidity, and a touch less perfume. Saint-Estèphe also tends to have a higher proportion of Merlot. Compared to those of the Médoc, the wines of Graves tend to be lighter in colour, body, and tannins, with more fragrance, more Merlot character, and hints of smoke, minerals, and red bricks.

### *Australia, South Australia, Coonawarra*

Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon tends to fairly high levels of alcohol although the grape variety's characteristic acidity is retained. The fruit

profile is ripe, with notes of concentrated blackcurrant and plum, verging on prune in hot vintages, coupled with a classic cedar note and eucalyptus rather than green pepper. Tannins are structured and fine-grained but less austere or chalky than in Bordeaux. In some cases, Shiraz is used to round out the wine in the same way that Merlot is used in Bordeaux.

***Australia, Western Australia, Margaret River***

Compared to Coonawarra, Margaret River is more like Left Bank Bordeaux and more likely to be blended with Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Alcohol levels can still be high but the fruit is less likely to be stewed. Fresh green pepper replaces eucalyptus, tannins are firmer, and the use of French oak is much more likely.

***USA, California, Napa Valley***

Napa is comparatively hot and sunny, leading to wines with a darker colour, fuller body, higher alcohol, and lower acidity than their French counterparts. The fashion is for highly concentrated, full-bodied wines with significant French or American oak influence. Inspired by Left Bank Bordeaux, Napa Cabernet Sauvignon aims at structure and elegance. It is typically deep in colour with a flavour profile of concentrated ripe or jammy dark berry fruit overlaid by a fresh greenness often manifest as menthol. Merlot can contribute plum and milk chocolate notes, Cabernet Franc flint and herbal notes, and Petit Verdot floral notes. Alcohol can be very high, but, even so, need not be out of balance.

***Chile, Central Valley or Aconcagua***

Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon is deep purple with aromas of fresh cassis and, often, a signature smoky, herbaceous note. Top examples are aged in French oak, adding notes of cedar, vanilla, and toast. Cool nights result in crisp acidity, and warm days in high alcohol and ripe, softer tannins than Bordeaux.

***South Africa, Western Cape, e.g. Stellenbosch***

South African Cabernet Sauvignon can be made as a varietal wine, or blended with other Bordeaux grape varieties, or blended with Pinotage

and other Bordeaux grape varieties. Compared to Bordeaux, the wines are deeper in colour, fuller in body, softer in acidity, and with riper or jammier fruit flavours. On the nose and palate, there are intense notes of black-currant, some of the green capsicum character of Bordeaux, and a certain earthy or smoky character particular to South Africa. French oak is commonly used.

## **Merlot**

### ***France, Bordeaux, Right Bank, Pomerol***

This Merlot blend is deep ruby in colour with notes of fresh black and red fruit, especially plums, spice, truffles, and vanilla from new French oak. On the palate, it is rich, often opulent, with less acidity and softer tannins than Left Bank Bordeaux. Alcohol ranges from medium to high in hotter years. Compared to Pomerol, Saint-Emilion is drier and more tannic and less obviously from the Right Bank.

### ***Chile, Central Valley***

Compared to Merlot-dominated Bordeaux blends, Chilean Merlot is deeper in colour with notes of ripe plum, cherry, currants, chocolate, and mint (the latter note similar to the herbaceous quality in Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon and Carménère). On the palate, it is full-bodied with high alcohol, balanced acidity, and soft and silky tannins that are however not without grip.

## **Malbec**

### ***France, Southwest France, Cahors***

Cahors can be reminiscent of Bordeaux, but is darker in colour with more plum, chocolate, and minerals and heavier tannins that can make it austere and unapproachable in its youth. With age, it develops aromas of earth, forest floor, and animal. Acidity is high and body and alcohol only medium. The best examples are aged in oak.

### ***Argentina, Mendoza***

Argentine Malbec is very deep in colour, perhaps even inky black. All Malbec is characterized by a plummy fruit profile; however, whereas Malbec from Cahors tends to earthy mineral notes of ink and iron, that from Argentina is generally riper (almost jammy) with spicy notes of cinnamon and nutmeg. On the palate, the wine is full-bodied with soft, velvety tannins, high alcohol, and, in many cases, moderate or low acidity. French oak ageing is common, contributing notes of vanilla, coffee, and chocolate.

### **Carménère**

#### ***Chile, Rapel Valley, Colchagua***

The best examples of Chilean Carmenère are deep ruby in colour with notes of cherry, blueberry, spice, black pepper, bell pepper, and tobacco. On the palate, acidity is low, alcohol high, and tannins soft and silky. Cabernet Sauvignon is often co-opted for extra acidity and tannin structure, and field blends with Merlot are still common.

### **Syrah/Shiraz**

#### ***France, Northern Rhône, Hermitage***

Hermitage is dark, full-bodied, and tannic, with intense aromas of soft black fruits accompanied by red fruits, smoke, black pepper and spice, leather, cocoa, and coffee. After about ten years, the wine develops a certain sweetness of fruit and gamey complexity. Significant new oak ageing is more the exception than the rule. Hermitage and other Rhône reds are often confused with Bordeaux, which tends to be higher in acidity with drier and grippier tannins and green or leafy Cabernet notes. Other appellations in the Northern Rhône can be difficult to distinguish from Hermitage and one another. Crozes-Hermitage, though similar to Hermitage, is typically softer and fruitier. Saint-Joseph is lighter than Hermitage and dominated by notes of black fruit and pepper. Traditional Cornas is fuller and richer than Crozes-Hermitage or Saint-Joseph, but more rustic than Hermitage. Cornas can be made in

the traditional style or a fresher, more fruit-forward style. Côte-Rôtie marries power and finesse, with a complex nose of raspberry, blueberry, blackberry, plum, bacon, green olives, violets, and leather.

*Australia, South Australia, Barossa or McLaren Vale*

Barossa Shiraz is very dark in colour. On the nose, it typically exudes jammy or stewed black fruit, milk chocolate, sweet spice, black pepper, and eucalyptus. On the palate, it is high in alcohol with soft acidity and velvety tannins. The use of new American oak is traditional but there are also trends towards new French oak and old oak. Compared to Barossa Shiraz, McLaren Vale Shiraz is just as powerful, with a flavour profile of dark chocolate and spice that is more savoury than sweet.

*Australia, New South Wales, Hunter Valley*

Compared to McLaren Vale Shiraz, Hunter Valley Shiraz is still more savoury, with notes of jammy (but not stewed) black fruit, cured meat, black pepper, and liquorice. Alcohol is often lower, acidity higher, and tannins more marked and gripping.

*South Africa, Western Cape*

South African Shiraz is typically rich and ripe, with a sweetness of fruit reminiscent of Barossa Shiraz. Compared to their Australian counterparts, the wines are often smokier, with savoury notes of game, leather, and tar: like Northern Rhône, but ‘supercharged’. Both French oak and American oak are commonly used. Owing to higher alcohol and lower acidity, South African Shiraz is not as long-lived as Syrah from the Northern Rhône. It is often blended with Cabernet Sauvignon or Pinotage. Rhône blends with Grenache and Mourvèdre are increasingly common, as are cool climate expressions from areas such as Walker Bay.

## Grenache

*France, Southern Rhône, Châteauneuf-du-Pape or Gigondas*

Red Châteauneuf-du-Pape is typically Grenache blended with other grape varieties, most commonly Syrah, Mourvèdre, and Cinsault. It

is medium-to-deep ruby in colour, with notes of red and black fruit, game, tar, leather, and garrigue. On the palate, it is rich and spicy, with dusty or powdery tannins and a higher alcohol and lower acidity than Bordeaux and Northern Rhône. Significant new oak ageing is more the exception than the rule. Red Châteauneuf-du-Pape is rather tight in its youth but softens and opens up after about seven years. Gigondas is a Grenache blend that is typically rich and powerful, and more rustic and animally than Châteauneuf-du-Pape. If Gigondas can be thought of as junior Châteauneuf-du-Pape, then neighbouring Vacqueyras can be thought of as junior Gigondas. Vacqueyras often contains less Grenache than Gigondas.

### ***Spain, Catalonia, Priorat***

Priorat is very dark in colour with an intense aroma of ripe but savoury black and red fruits, minerals, earth, spice, liquorice, chocolate, and, in some cases, vanilla from new French oak. On the palate, it is full-bodied with high alcohol, crisp acidity, big and chewy tannins, and a long, dry, and structured finish.

### ***Australia, South Australia, Barossa or McLaren Vale***

Grenache thrives in the heat of South Australia, yielding varietal wines with notes of strawberry jam and ginger or white pepper, very high alcohol, and powdery, mouth-coating tannins. However, in most cases it is blended with Shiraz and Mourvèdre to produce full-bodied wines not unlike their inspirations in the Southern Rhône, with notes of ripe strawberry and plum fruit, game, pepper, cloves, liquorice, and herbs.

## **Mourvèdre**

### ***France, Provence, Bandol***

Red Bandol consists of at least 50% Mourvèdre, usually completed by Grenache and Cinsault. The wine is dark in colour with notes of black fruit, vanilla, spice, liquorice, leather, and red meat. On the palate, it is full-bodied, intense, and structured, with a high alcohol in the order of 14-15%. It is aged in old oak for at least 18 months prior to release.

## Dolcetto

### *Italy, Piedmont, Dolcetto d'Alba*

Dolcetto is deep ruby to purple in colour. It is soft, fruity, and uncomplicated, with notes of black cherry, soft spice, and liquorice, moderate acidity, high alcohol, and a characteristic dry, bitter almond finish. It is often thought of as Italy's best answer to Beaujolais.

## Barbera

### *Italy, Piedmont, Barbera d'Asti*

Barbera ranges in style from light and delicate to heavy and powerful. It is typically deep ruby in colour with an intense and mouth-filling fruitiness (often dominated by black cherries), very high acidity, low tannins, and a dry finish. Some modern examples are aged in oak, which imparts tannins and notes of vanilla and spice.

## Nebbiolo

### *Italy, Piedmont, Barolo*

Although full-bodied, Barolo is light in colour, typically with a brick or rust red tinge that can make it seem older, sometimes much older, than it really is. The nose is potentially very complex and often shorthanded as 'tar and roses'. Other notes include damsons, mulberries, dried fruit, violets, herbs, dark chocolate, liquorice, and, with increasing age, leather, camphor, tobacco, forest floor, mushrooms, and truffles. The palate is marked by high acidity and alcohol, and, above all, very high tannins, which, in the best of cases, are experienced as a silky or velvety texture. There is also a more modern, earlier drinking style of Barolo that is fruitier and less austere, often with obvious new French oak influence.

### *Italy, Piedmont, Barbaresco*

Barbaresco is similar to Barolo, if often more feminine, that is, more aromatic, elegant, and refined, with softer fruit and suppler, riper

tannins. Although tight and tannic in its youth, it requires less cellaring time and is less long-lived.

## **Corvina**

### *Italy, Veneto, Amarone della Valpolicella*

Amarone is deep ruby in colour. The wine is rich, full-bodied, and concentrated with high alcohol, crisp acidity, velvety tannins, and a long, bitter finish. Its complex flavour profile is often compared to that of Port, with notes of raisins, stewed cherries, dark chocolate, and liquorice. If matured in oak, there are accents of vanilla and spice. A more modern style of Amarone is also made, lighter and purer in fruit. Other styles of Valpolicella include Classico, Ripasso, and Recioto.

## **Sangiovese**

### *Italy, Tuscany, Chianti Classico*

Chianti is typically medium ruby in colour with notes of cherries, strawberries, raspberries, plums, soft spice, and herbs—and, with increasing age, tea leaves, tobacco, and leather. Top examples may display additional notes of French oak. On the palate, body is medium, acidity high, alcohol medium to high, and tannins firm. The finish is agreeably dry and accompanied by a note of bitter almonds.

### *Italy, Tuscany, Brunello di Montalcino*

Compared to Chianti, Brunello is darker and richer, more full-bodied, tannic, and alcoholic, and also more complex.

## **Tempranillo**

### *Spain, Rioja*

Rioja is often pale in colour, brick red or garnet with a bronzing rim. On the nose, it is dusty with notes of cooked strawberries and raspberries, tobacco leaf, game, nuts, leather, soft spice, and vanilla and

coconut from American oak. On the palate, body is medium, acidity is medium to low, alcohol is medium, and tannins are ripe and silky. Compared to traditional Rioja, international style Rioja generally spends less time in oak and is denser in colour and fruit, with more plum and blackberry.

***Spain, Ribera del Duero or Toro***

The Tempranillo of Ribera del Duero has thicker, darker skins than that of Rioja, and is also higher in acidity. Compared to most Rioja, the wines are dark and brooding: more full-bodied, concentrated, alcoholic, and tannic, and dominated by black fruits and plums rather than red fruits. Toro is similar in style to Ribera del Duero, but more exuberant and (often) more rustic, with a signature spicy note.

***Spain, Navarra***

Navarra is often similar to Rioja, if perhaps more New World in style, with a deeper colour, darker blackberry fruit from the use of international grape varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot and, in many cases, French rather than American oak.

**Zweigelt**

***Austria, e.g. Burgenland, Neusiedlersee***

Zweigelt is fresh and fruit-driven. It is often deep ruby in colour, with notes of red cherries and soft spice such as cinnamon and nutmeg. On the palate, it is light-to-medium bodied with a supple acidity reminiscent of Barbera, medium alcohol, and soft and subtle tannins. Oak is usually absent.

**Blafränkisch**

***Austria, e.g. Burgenland, Mittelburgenland***

Blafränkisch is usually dark purple in colour with notes of red currants or cherries, blackberry, pepper and spice, and liquorice. On the palate,

body is medium, acidity high, alcohol medium, and tannins firm and grippy. New French oak may be evident in some examples.

## **Pinotage**

### *South Africa, Western Cape, e.g. Paarl*

Pinotage is deep ruby in colour. The best examples bring out the grape variety's character and complexity, with remarkable notes of banana, coffee bean, clove, and boiled sweet emerging with increasing bottle age. Pinotage has a tendency to retain volatile esters during vinification, which can result in unpleasant paint-like aromas. Critics often deride it as pungent and alcoholic with coarse tannins. However, the pungency and coarse tannins can be tamed by skillful winemaking.

## **Zinfandel**

### *USA, California, Sonoma*

Zinfandel is deep ruby in colour with notes of strawberries or rich brambly fruit, fresh cream, black tea, thyme or other herbs, and, sometimes, coconut from new American oak. On the palate, it is full-bodied with high alcohol, moderate acidity, and heavy, fairly coarse tannins. At its best, it is lengthy with a mineral core and savoury finish. Early-harvested or cool-climate examples are paler and tend to herbal green notes and angular tannins. Zinfandel is a clonal variation of Primitivo from Puglia in Italy. Compared to Zinfandel, Primitivo typically exhibits a more savoury, dried-fruit profile with, on the palate, a drier entry and more notable tannins.

## Blind Tasting Crib Sheets: White Wines

### Riesling

#### *Germany, Mosel*

Riesling is invariably high in acidity and unoaked. Mosel Riesling is pale in colour, sometimes with a touch of effervescence. On the nose, it is intensely fragrant, more floral than fruity with notes of stony rainwater and sherbet. On the palate, it is filigree and delicate, with a mineral or salty finish. Alcohol is very low and acidity very high, but balanced by sugar and extract. Sweeter examples may be botrytized. Rieslings from the Saar and Ruwer valleys are steelier than those from the Middle Mosel.

#### *Germany, Rheingau*

Compared to Riesling from the Middle Mosel, Riesling from the Rheingau is more masculine: deeper in colour with a firmer structure and texture, riper fruit, and higher alcohol. It is commonly made in an austere, completely dry style.

#### *France, Alsace*

Alsatian Riesling tends to be drier, richer, and higher in alcohol than Riesling from across the Rhine. It is often steely and inexpressive in its youth, with aromas of mineral, apple, citrus fruits, stone fruits, jasmine, and honey. With age, it develops a complex bouquet dominated by pure fruit flavours and appealing petrol or kerosene notes, typically with a long, dry finish that rides home on a backbone of high acidity.

#### *Austria, Wachau or Kremstal or Kamptal*

Like Alsatian Riesling, which it resembles most closely, Austrian Riesling is dry with high acidity, medium-to-high alcohol, and pronounced minerality. However, it is typically less austere and dominated by riper stone fruit. 'Hints of lime' is another common tasting note. Riesling from Kremstal and Kamptal is often fuller than that from Wachau.

***Australia, South Australia, Clare Valley or Eden Valley***

Riesling from Clare Valley or Eden Valley is pale lemon and lime green in colour. Spritz in the glass is evidence of fermentation in stainless steel, which is commonly practised in Australia. The wines are marked by mineral austerity and high acidity, but unlike, say, Rheingau Riesling, their fruit profile leans very strongly towards lime, whether this be, depending on ripeness, lime zest, fresh lime juice, or lime cordial. Some examples exhibit a mineral pungency derided by critics as ‘fly spray’. The best wines are complex enough to overlay the ‘limeyness’ with floral, appley, and waxy notes, and are further distinguished by a certain talcum or chalky texture from lees ageing and a long, dry, acidic finish. Riesling from Clare Valley is generally considered to be drier and leaner than that from Eden Valley, although the two styles are difficult to tell apart.

***New Zealand, e.g. South Island, Nelson***

When it comes to Riesling, New Zealand looks more to Europe than to Australia, with generally lighter and more delicate styles. The wines are typically crisp and clean with a fresh lime character, as opposed to the pungent lime cordial note of many Australian Rieslings. There are however a range of styles, including delicate, Mosel-like styles and late harvest dessert styles. The climate preserves Riesling’s natural searing acidity. With some age, the best examples can develop appealing petrochemical notes.

## **Gewurztraminer**

***France, Alsace***

Alsatian Gewurztraminer is gold in colour, sometimes with a pink tinge. The nose is intense, with notes of spice, rose petals, lychee, grapefruit, peach kernel, and smoky bacon. On the palate, it is opulent with high alcohol, but, especially in hot vintages, can be flabby and lacking in acidity. It ranges in sweetness from dry to sweet and is never oaked.

## **Pinot Gris/Pinot Grigio**

### *France, Alsace*

Alsatian Pinot Gris is deep lemon in colour, often with a pink tinge. The nose is fairly aromatic, with notes of spice and pear or stone fruit, hints of honey and smoke, and a certain earthy minerality. The palate combines the spiciness and alcohol of Gewurztraminer with some of the structure and acidity of Riesling. The wines often have a distinct oily texture. Sweetness ranges from dry to sweet.

### *Italy, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia*

Compared to Pinot Gris, Pinot Grigio is lighter in colour with less ripe fruit on the nose. On the palate, it is leaner with a tighter structure and higher acidity. It is invariably dry and unoaked, with notes of pear, citrus fruits, white fruits, and flowers, and, often, a mineral finish.

### *New Zealand, South Island*

New Zealand Pinot Gris is much closer to Alsatian Pinot Gris than to Italian Pinot Grigio. It is usually dry or off-dry with notes of fresh pear, apple, honeysuckle, and white pepper. The palate bears the oiliness of an Alsatian Pinot Gris, although often with leaner acidity. There may also be suggestions of lees stirring or barrel ageing.

## **Melon de Bourgogne**

### *France, Loire, Muscadet*

Muscadet is pale, sometimes almost watery, in colour with a slight effervescence that can prickle on the tongue. On the nose, the wine is distinctly unaromatic. On the palate, it is dry and light-bodied with high acidity and a touch of minerality or saltiness. Lees ageing contributes yeasty or nutty aromas and a rounder texture.

## **Chenin Blanc**

### *France, Loire, Vouvray or Coteaux du Layon*

Vouvray is made in a range of styles. In the sweeter styles, the high acidity may be masked by sugar. With increasing age, aromas of green apples, quince, and acacia blossom surrender to complex tertiary aromas dominated by honeysuckle, figs, and lanolin. Botrytis is less common than with Coteaux du Layon, which tends to be fuller in body, sweeter, and lower in acidity. Compared to Sauternes, which is typically associated with peach and honey, the sweet wines of the Loire are more often associated with apple, apricot, and quince, together with a much higher natural acidity and rather less sugar and alcohol.

### *France, Loire, Savennières*

Savennières is golden in colour with intense and concentrated notes of apple, chamomile, warm straw, and beeswax. On the palate, it is dry and unoaked with high acidity and alcohol and a long mineral finish. Compared to dry Vouvray, it is more austere with a fuller body and higher alcohol.

### *South Africa, Western Cape, e.g. Stellenbosch*

A lot of South African Chenin is rather generic, but some producers focus on quality expressions similar to those from the Loire, including rich, bone dry wines reminiscent of Savennières and sweet, botrytized wines reminiscent of Coteaux-du-Layon. Owing to the warmer climate, the emphasis is more on tropical fruits than on apples. Classic notes of honey and nuts can come through in the best examples, but the musty lanolin or 'wet dog' character typical of the Loire is mostly absent. In general, acidity, although still high, is lower, and, conversely, alcohol is higher.

## **Sauvignon Blanc**

### *France, Loire, Sancerre or Pouilly-Fumé*

Sancerre is pale lemon in colour, possibly with a green tinge. Notes of gooseberry and grapefruit are typically accompanied by hints of

blackcurrant leaf, nettles, cut grass, and smoke. The nose is sometimes encapsulated as ‘cat’s pee on a gooseberry bush’. The wines are dry, high in acidity, and unoaked, with a mineral finish. In practice, it is very difficult to distinguish Sancerre from Pouilly-Fumé, although the latter does tend to be smokier. Compared to, say, Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé are less fruit-driven with a cooler fruit profile and greater smokiness and minerality.

*France, Bordeaux, Graves*

White Graves combines the opulence of Sémillon with the verve of Sauvignon Blanc. The wine can be complex with intense aromas of citrus fruit, peach, acacia, beeswax, and hazelnut. On the palate, it is medium in body, acidity, and alcohol, and often oaked. Compared to Loire Sauvignon Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc from Bordeaux is generally more expressive of tropical fruits and less so of grass and minerals.

*New Zealand, South Island, Marlborough*

Compared to Sauvignon Blanc from the Loire, Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand is typically riper, higher in alcohol, and less chalky or mineral. It has a clean, pungent aroma with notes of gooseberry, passion fruit, asparagus, fresh grass, and blackcurrant leaf. Acidity is high but somewhat disguised by a smooth texture and, often, a touch of residual sugar that contributes roundness rather than sweetness. The finest examples can boast a more ‘serious’ austerity, and, as in Bordeaux, may be fermented and matured in oak. Sauvignon Blanc from the North Island is often lighter in style and driven more by tropical fruit.

*South Africa, Western Cape, e.g. Walker Bay*

If Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc is ripe and punchy and Loire Sauvignon Blanc is light and lean, then South African Sauvignon Blanc falls somewhere in between. While the gooseberry and nettle is unmistakable, the wine is less overt than Marlborough and fuller in body than Loire. Quality examples with complexity and minerality hail from cooler regions, in particular Walker Bay, Cape Agulhas, and Cape Point. Oaked Sauvignon Blanc, so-called Fumé Blanc or Blanc Fumé, is produced throughout South Africa.

### ***Chile, Aconcagua***

Most Chilean Sauvignon Blanc is vinified in stainless steel. It neither matches New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc for punchiness nor Sancerre for restraint, but is instead distinguished by grapefruit and a nettle or smoky herbal note. Wines from warmer sites are often dominated by tropical fruit aromas and can be rather flabby.

### ***USA, California***

Californian Sauvignon Blanc is high in alcohol with medium to low acidity. Tropical fruits such as guava, mango, and pineapple overlie the nettle and gooseberry character of Sauvignon Blanc. The oaked 'Fumé Blanc' style is very popular.

## **Sémillon**

### ***France, Bordeaux, Graves***

See above.

### ***France, Bordeaux, Sauternes or Barsac***

Sauternes is intense, complex, and long, with notes of apricot, peach, passion fruit, orange marmalade, honey, honeysuckle, acacia, hazelnut, and vanilla. In time, the colour transmutes from golden to amber and copper, with notes such as old books, caramel, and crème brûlée not uncommon. On the palate, crisp acidity balances the intense sweetness, rich creaminess, and high alcohol. Barsac is difficult to distinguish from Sauternes but is often drier and lighter in body with higher acidity. Note that Sauternes and Barsac are blends of mostly Sémillon with Sauvignon Blanc and sometimes Muscadelle.

### ***Australia, New South Wales, Hunter Valley***

The Hunter Valley produces a unique style of Semillon that is very pale in colour with vaguely floral, citrus, fennel, and fresh grass notes, high acidity, and low alcohol. The wines are dry and often quite textural on the palate and the best examples are extraordinarily lengthy. Though austere and

flinty in their youth, with age they develop a complex bouquet of toast, nuts, beeswax, and tarragon. Owing to this toast, aged Hunter Valley Semillon can seem to have been oaked, but this is almost never the case.

*Australia, South Australia, Barossa*

Semillon from the Barossa is entirely different from that from the Hunter Valley. The hot climate favours the development of rich wines with low acidity, medium-to-high alcohol, and notes of peach jam, mangoes, and coconut or vanilla from new, often American, oak.

*Australia, Western Australia, Margaret River*

In Margaret River, Semillon is typically blended with Sauvignon Blanc and aged in new French oak. The wines are full-bodied with medium-to-high alcohol, crisp acidity, and intense flavours of peaches and honey from the Semillon and herbs and gooseberry from the Sauvignon Blanc. Compared to Graves, they are made in a much 'cleaner' style with more intense, finely etched flavours, and may also be fuller in body and higher in alcohol.

## Chardonnay

*France, Burgundy, Chablis*

Chablis is pale lemon in colour with or without a greenish tinge. On the nose, there are green apples, citrus fruits, honeysuckle, cream, and a characteristic stony or smoky minerality. The palate is lean, dry, and austere with pronounced acidity, which is a key distinguishing feature. New oak is usually absent. Top examples are weightier and can be difficult to distinguish from their counterparts in Beaune.

*France, Burgundy, Beaune*

Beaune is lemon in colour with a nose dominated by ripe apples and citrus fruit. French oak is common, contributing notes of butter, toast, and vanilla. On the palate, the wine is full-bodied, with crisp acidity and medium-to-high alcohol. It is potentially very intense, complex, and lengthy, evolving notes such as minerals, spice, tropical fruits, lemon

tart, and toffee. Puligny-Montrachet is tight and structured, and can be difficult to distinguish from Chassagne-Montrachet, which is often nuttier. In contrast, Meursault is broad and buttery and rather extravagant, although some producers favour leaner styles.

***France, Burgundy, Mâcon***

As with Chablis, much Mâcon is unoaked. However, Mâcon is much less acidic than Chablis. Compared to Beaune and especially to Chablis, it is deeper in colour, with riper aromas and a fuller and softer or richer body. The Pouilly wines, which are often oaked, tend to be richer and riper on the one hand, and finer and more complex on the other

***Australia e.g. New South Wales, Hunter Valley***

Australian Chardonnay is often made in a very clean style. Oak, when used, can seem almost clinical in its application. Wines from cooler regions are likely to reveal citrus, fresh apple, and floral aromas, often with ripe stone fruit on the palate, whereas wines from warmer regions tend to be dominated by notes of fig, melon, and tropical fruit. Australian Chardonnay tends to lack the yoghurt or 'dairy' note often found in New Zealand expressions. Less ambitious wines may betray added tartaric acid or the crude use of oak staves or chips. Overall, the best sites for Chardonnay are in the Hunter Valley, the regions around Port Phillip Bay, Tasmania, Adelaide Hills, and Margaret River.

***New Zealand, e.g. South Island, Marlborough***

New Zealand Chardonnays typically exhibit ripe (although not tropical) fruit and high acidity. Typical notes are ripe apple and stone fruit, sometimes accompanied by a distinct yoghurt note. The finest examples betray Burgundian winemaking techniques, especially oak ageing, with American oak less common than it used to be. Chardonnay from the North Island is often riper, but it is hard to generalize.

***USA, California, Napa Valley***

Napa is comparatively hot and sunny leading to a darker colour, fuller body, higher alcohol, and lower acidity compared to French

counterparts. The fashion is for highly concentrated, glossy wines with significant French or American oak influence. Napa Chardonnay typically exhibits notes of baked apple and tropical fruits with butter, toast, or coconut from oak ageing. Cool climate Chardonnay reminiscent of Chablis is made in certain sites in Sonoma, Mendocino, and Monterey.

*Chile, e.g. Coquimbo, Limarí*

The cool climate expression of Chardonnay from Limarí, Casablanca, and San Antonio (especially Leyda) is fast becoming Chile's signature style of Chardonnay. The wines are lean, restrained, and elegant with notes of both citrus and tropical fruits. Ambitious producers employ Burgundian techniques, with the current fashion being for less overt oak. The best examples, while not on par with top flight Burgundy, are often hard to distinguish from well-made Mâcon. However, the bulk of Chilean Chardonnay comes from warmer sites in the Central Valley, and is marked by lower acidity, higher alcohol, and more overt tropical fruit.

## **Viognier**

*France, Northern Rhône, Condrieu or Château-Grillet*

Condrieu is golden in colour. It is characterized by a full, almost oily, body and high alcohol balanced by an intense perfume of peach blossom, apricots, white flowers, and violets. Although dry, the richness and high alcohol can produce an impression of sweetness. Acidity is not as high as for Chardonnay and can be distinctly low. Many examples remain unoaked. Château-Grillet is more Burgundian than Condrieu: drier, lighter, more delicate, less perfumed, and oaked.

## **Petit Manseng**

*France, Southwest France, Jurançon*

Jurançon is golden in colour, often with a greenish tinge. The nose delivers tropical fruits such as mango, pineapple, and guava together with flowers and sweet spice, and perhaps even beeswax, banana, and

coconut. Acidity is high but sweetness can vary quite considerably depending on vintage conditions and time of harvest. Sweet Jurançon is more akin to Vouvray than to nearby Sauternes, both in terms of acid structure and aroma profile. Dry Jurançon is often mistaken for New World Sauvignon Blanc, although Petit Manseng is less herbaceous than Sauvignon Blanc.

## **Albariño**

### *Spain, Galicia, Rías Baixas*

Albariño is pale to medium in colour with hints of gold and green. On the nose, it is aromatic, with notes of white peach, apricot, almonds, honeysuckle, and jasmine. On the palate, it is medium in body with high citrusy acidity, medium alcohol, and a dry or pithy mineral finish. Oak is usually absent. Compared to Riesling, it is fuller in body and lacks the tartness and petrol or fusel oil notes; compared to Pinot Gris, it is drier and higher in acidity; compared to Viognier, it is lighter in body and much higher in acidity; and compared to Grüner Veltliner, it is less acidic and austere and lacks the white pepper note.

## **Garganega**

### *Italy, Veneto, Soave Classico*

Quality Soave is typically straw in colour, with notes of citrus fruits and almonds and hints of flowers and spice, a body ranging from light to fairly full, crisp acidity, medium alcohol, no or little residual sugar, and a mineral or creamy finish with a slightly bitter edge. The best examples can be quite long and complex. Oak is usually absent.

## **Grüner Veltliner**

### *Austria, Wachau or Kremstal or Kamptal*

Grüner Veltliner from Wachau is often pale gold with hints of green. It is typically dry with notes of celery, white pepper, spice, and minerals.

Depending on ripeness, fruit can range across the spectrum from apple and grapefruit to distinctly tropical fruit. Body is medium to full, acidity is high, alcohol is medium-high or high, body is medium to full, and oak is absent. The best examples can develop honeyed and toasty aromas with age. Grüner Veltiner from Kremstal and Kamptal is often fuller than that from Wachau.

## **Furmint**

### *Hungary, Tokaj-Hegyalja*

Compared to Sauternes, with which it is often confused, Tokaji Aszú is a darker, copper colour with higher acidity and notes of apricot, orange zest, barley sugar, spice, and tea.

### *Hungary, Tokaj-Hegyalja*

Dry Furmint is lemony in colour, with notes of smoke, pear, and lime, together with hints of mandarin, apricot, honey, and spice. On the palate, it is light and crisp, with high acidity, medium-high or high alcohol, and a mineral backbone. The finish can be quite long.

## **Torrontés**

### *Argentina, e.g. Salta*

Torrontés is often pale gold in colour. On the nose, the wine presents a floral Muscat-like bouquet with notes of rose, jasmine, peach, and citrus fruits. On the palate, it is typically full-bodied and dry to off-dry depending on style. The best examples preserve a fresh acidity. Torrontés is sometimes confused with Muscat or Gewurztraminer, but is less grapey than Muscat and lacks the distinctive lychee note of Gewurztraminer. The palate is also less oily and more mineral.

