

THE GLASSHOUSE

WINE APPRECIATION SOCIETY

MODULE 1

SOME BASIC WINE INFORMATION

So extensive is the study of the world of wine that it would easily be possible to spend years acquiring fresh knowledge about minute aspects of this amazing topic. **This is not our intention here.** We are also not going to try to set any new standards or discover new areas. On the contrary we will try to bring together some of the well established knowledge and study from some of the world's best wine writers. These are my favourites – it says something about wine that so many people can write so well but still manage to find new and interesting things to say. The principal sources for these courses will be Jancis Robinson, Hugh Johnson and Andrew Jefford. They just happen to be those writers who touch me with the greatest frequency and excite me the most.



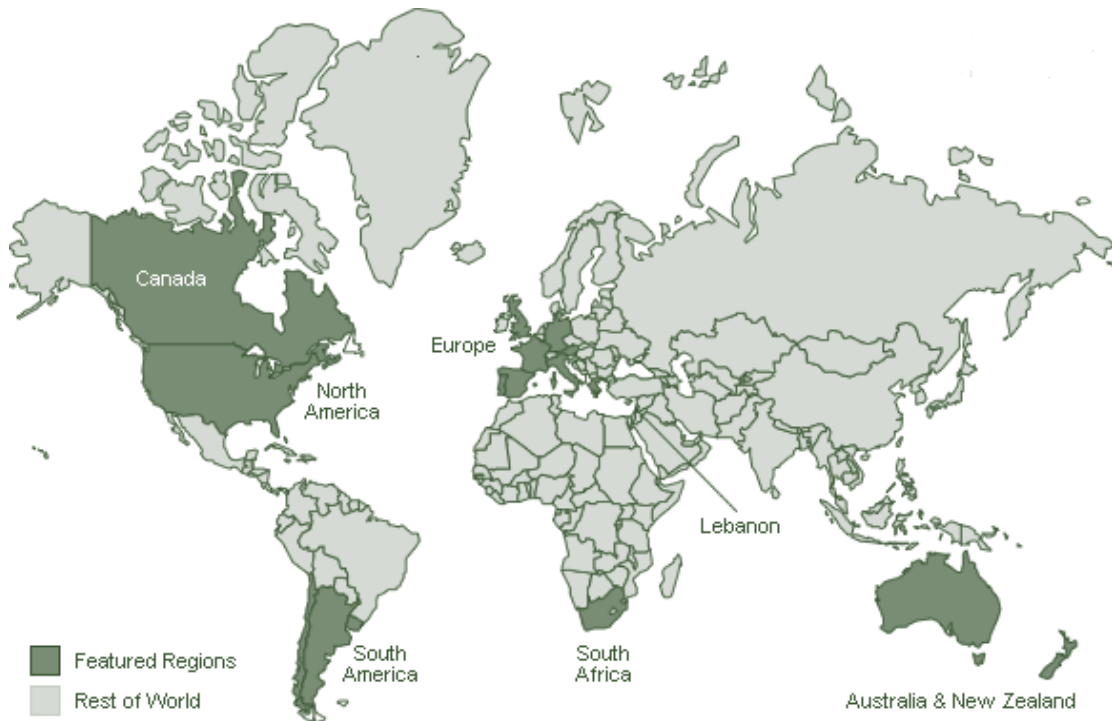
We are lucky also to have Daniel O'Keefe from Hallgarten Wines who will co-host many of the courses. We have travelled the world together over many years and his knowledge is encyclopaedic and his interests very broad. He has a background in agriculture so is also very helpful on the very technical bits – if we stray into those areas.

Our goal though is mainly to have fun. We are lucky to know some brilliant wine makers in many different countries who will come and present their wines to us on a regular basis. Some of our own prejudices and tastes have been formed by standing in their vineyards or winery and getting a real flavour of what they try to achieve.

It makes sense that right at the outset we explore some real basics – but only so that we might extend our enjoyment of this wonderful invention.



THE WORLD OF WINE



HOW MUCH WINE IS PRODUCED IN THE WORLD IN BOTTLES?

1 hectolitre produces 133 bottles
 275 million hectolitres produces 37 billion bottles

WHICH IS THE BIGGEST PRODUCER IN THE WORLD?

France produces 57 million hectolitres about 20% of all wine

By way of comparison New Zealand produces about 2 m hectolitres a year ie about 1% of world wine production

Wine has an overwhelmingly European, and mainly Mediterranean, dominance, with France, Italy and Spain accounting for almost 55% of the world's production.

THE WORLD WINE REGIONS

	A	B		A	B
FRANCE	57,541	917	S AFRICA	6,949	117
ITALY	51,620	908	PORTUGAL	6,694	261
SPAIN	41,692	1,174	CHILE	6,419	174
US	23,300	413	CHINA	5,750	260
ARGENTINA	12,538	209	ROMANIA	5,456	2,487
GERMANY	9,852	105	GREECE	3,558	129
AUSTRALIA	8,064	140	AUSTRIA	2,338	51

A: Annual wine production '000hl

B: area under vine' 000ha

Source: Jancis Robinson

Figures relate to early 2000s

TWO MAJOR FACTORS COMPETE WITH EACH OTHER GRAPE AND LOCATION

GRAPE VARIETIES

This is so good, precise and helpful I have lifted it verbatim from Hugh Johnson.

'In the past two decades a radical change has come about in all except the most long established wine countries; the names of a handful of grape varieties have become the ready reference to wine. In senior wine countries, above all France and Italy (between them producing nearly half the world's wine), more complex traditions prevail. All wine of old prestige is known by its origin, more or less narrowly defined, not just the particular fruit-juice that fermented there.

For the present the two notions are in rivalry. Eventually the primacy of place over fruit will become obvious, at least for wines of quality. But for now, for most people, grapes tastes are the easy reference point – despite the fact that they are often confused by the added taste of oak. If grape flavours were really all that mattered this (and all wine books) would be a very short book.



But of course they do matter and knowledge of both place and grape will guide you to flavours you enjoy and help comparisons between regions.

We all tend to have different palates. One man's meat etc..... But wine can be mystifying because there can be so much information that can cause confusion. But in the main it is obvious that a wine is likely to appeal because of the grape or grapes from which it is made'.

There are roughly 40 major white wine varieties and 50 red wine varieties, but we will spend our time looking and tasting the major wines.

SO A LITTLE QUIZ.

Name the major white varieties: Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris, Reisling, Semillon, Albarino, Viognier

Name the major red grape varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Grenache, Syrah, Malbec

See descriptors below.

THE SOIL AND CLIMATE – OR TERROIR AS THE FRENCH CALL IT.

It is amazing how much discussion – and even spleen – exists on this matter. Despite all the research there is an element of mystery. In France – in particular – a matter of meters can separate some of the most expensive wine land from the run of the mill agricultural land and can be seen most extraordinarily in Champagne and Burgundy.



In the New World grapes have been grown – at times – on a reasonably indeterminate basis because the grape and the wine grower have been seen to be the most important factors. In France – due especially to the way in which wines are graded, by reference overwhelmingly to the land on which the wine is grown it is the complete opposite. The Appellation Controlee system – established in 1935 - remains at the heart of how wine is defined and priced. This system comes in for some opprobrium – mainly by non French critics. But as Andrew Jefford writes in his *The New France*, there is no great demand in France for change.

The Oxford Companion to

Wine gives the following definition:

‘A much discussed term for the total natural environment of any viticultural site. Discussion of terroir is central to philosophical and commercial differences between the Old and New World approaches to wine..... The extent to which terroir effects are unique is, however, debatable and of course commercially important, which makes the subject controversial.’

But as Hugh Johnson admits in his 2009 *Pocket Wine Book* .. ‘What makes wine authentic? How wines reflect their terroir is something we do not yet understand.’

TASTING

This evening we will taste the six grape types from different parts of the world to see if we can identify any difference. More importantly we want to see what your preferences are – because this will act as your own benchmark for your own taste.

We will taste different varieties – on a blind tasting basis – and will reveal what the wines are and where they are from.... but only after you have had your tastings!

To help you please also find below some descriptions of wine, style and location..

	WINE TYPE	LOCATION	YOUR NOTES
WINE 1			
WINE 2			
WINE 3			
WINE 4			
WINE 5			
WINE 6			

WHITE WINE GRAPE VARIETIES

Variety	Locations	Typical Aromas and Flowers	Structure and Texture
Sauvignon blanc	Loire Valley, Bordeaux in France, New Zealand, South Africa and South America	Minerals, nettles, asparagus, green pea, grassy, gooseberry, passionfruit	crisp, acid
Chardonnay	Burgundy, everywhere else	Variable, ranging from citrus and minerals to ripe fruit, buttery and toasty from any oak	soft, rounded, full
Riesling	Germany, Italy and New Zealand	Scented, lemon, lime peach minerals, petrol (with age)	High acidity, mouthwatering
Semillon	Bordeaux, California and Australia	Grapefruit, grassy, citrus, honey and nuts (with age) can be quite neutral	oily, low acid, fat
Viognier	Northern Rhone, Australia and California	Aromatic, apricots, peaches, honeysuckle, bitter almond, often high in alcohol	full and luscious

RED WINE GRAPE VARIETIES

Variety	Locations	Typical Aromas and Flowers	Structure and Texture
Cabernet Sauvignon	Bordeaux, Tuscany, Australia, South Africa and South America	Blackcurrant, black cherry, green pepper, mint, eucalyptus, cedar and cigarbox (when oaked)	Firm tannins
Merlot	Bordeaux, California and Australia	Plums, damsons, black cherry, chocolate, spice, leather	supple, soft and velvety
Syrah/Shiraz	Northern Rhone, Australia and South Africa	Pepper, black cherry, black olives, baked rubber, leather	firm tannins
Pinot Noir	Burgundy, California, South Africa and New Zealand	Strawberries, cherries, earthy farmyard, gamey	smooth, silky tannins, fresh acidity
Grenache/Garnacha	Southern Rhone and Spain	Open and fruity, black fruits, spices, black olives, leather, often high alcohol	juicy, low in tannin