

THE GLASSHOUSE

WINE APPRECIATION SOCIETY

MODULE 2

SAUVIGNON BLANC

If there is a grape which as much as any other divides the new world from the old world and which highlights the furore of 'terroir' –then it would be sauvignon blanc. Perhaps then it is also not surprising that the two worlds have a different title for the grape. In France it is sauvignon pure and simple, no appendages. Everywhere else it is sauvignon blanc.

In the new world they grow it to show off its very fresh characteristics – drink it as young as possible and glory in its grapeyness! In France generally and in Sancerre and Pouilly Fume in particular they grow it so as to disguise the grape and to bring out the characteristics of the land.

CHARACTER

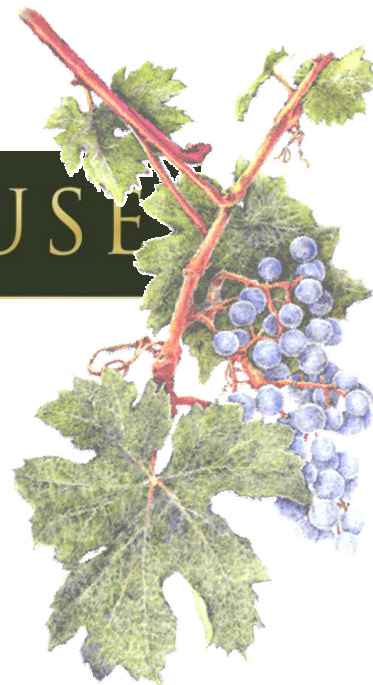
Sauvignon Blanc makes crisp, dry, aromatic and extremely distinctive wines all over the world. Most people immediately identify gooseberries, nettles, crushed blackcurrant leaves and even "cat's pee".

NEW ZEALAND



When I travelled around the north of the south island of NZ in the early 1980s there was hardly a grape to be seen. Now- not quite 30 years later the area around Marlborough has become the leading new world sauvignon blanc engine of growth. Perhaps the engine has got a bit too big as the world is now awash with the stuff.

We have been selling the wines from St Clair since the very first vintage in 1994 – when the wines won loads of prizes. Neal and Judy Ibbotson have become good friends and terrific ambassadors for New Zealand wine. Here we are tasting the cheaper end of their range – Faultine.



We are also tasting the new company Little Beauty – a rich and interesting first vintage from Fleur McRee. We are one of the few places on earth to have this wine available.

AUSTRALIA

Often considered to be too hot for sauvignon blanc but the Berton team set out to make a cooler climate wine and the result is very very impressive. Name after the fact that the Bob Berton team were 'Head over heels' with excitement about the first vintage – and the name stuck.
www.berthonvineyards.com.au



CHILE

The wines from Agostinos come from the fabulously named area, Bio Bio, 500km south of Santiago. They believe that this is an area so similar to Burgundy they actually call it 'The burgundy of the south'. So more obvious for chardonnays but their sauvignon blanc has become a real favourite since we started selling it.
www.agostinos.cl

SOUTH AFRICA

The sauvignon blanc from Anthony Hamilton Russell's other farm and named after the rare southern right whales which frequent the very cold waters of Walkers Bay is a delicious fresh wine from a country not renowned for its sauvignon blancs – its just too hot (we will taste his world famous pinot noir and chardonnay on another occasion). Southern Right is a delicious wine reflecting AHR's ability to select the right location for the particular grape. If anyone from the southern hemisphere talks about 'terroir' then Anthony is the man who puts it into practice.
www.hamiltonrussellvineyards.co.za



FRANCE

Sauvignon Blanc's French stronghold is in the upper Loire at Sancerre and Pouilly Fume. The best examples of these wines provide a deeper drier and denser qualities than anywhere in the new world – so says Jancis Robinson – and some of the best really do capture the very flinty aspect of the local soil.



We have had a close appreciation of the wines of Sancerre for many years and particularly with Alphonse Mellot. Sancerre is a wonderful hill town sitting atop a block of Cretaceous limestone and Aphonse is one of the leading wine growers. He maintains a tradition that began in his family in 1513.

Across the river in Pouilly – which is flatter and more geologically various than Sancerre and provides a superb wine growing environment. The two brothers (married to two sister) extended their Sancerre estate into Pouilly in 1988. You can taste the flinty flavour clearly in these wines.

Alphonse Mellot – La Mousiere
www.mellot.com

Domaine de Tabordet
www.domaine-tabordet.fr

Further downstream of The Loire the wines can become much better value for the average drinker with Menetou-Salon, Quincy and Reuilly and then passing onto the Sauvignon de Touraine – which can show some lovely wine at prices to make anyone from the New World blush.

There is actually more sauvignon blanc grown in Bordeaux than in the Loire but there it is more regularly blended with Semillon.



Other major sauvignon blanc growing areas are Italy (in Friuli) and California where when aged in oak it is sometimes referred to as fume blanc.



TASTING NOTES

	WINE TYPE	LOCATION	YOUR NOTES
WINE 1			
WINE 2			
WINE 3			
WINE 4			
WINE 5			
WINE 6			
WINE 7			
WINE 8			

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