

Vineyard Havens

an introduction to the world of wine

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California's Sierra Nevada Foothills

if
 some *ancient*
gardener planted
 some *vines*, he (or
 she) would have found
 that some *plants* bore
 no *fruit*, others only
 sparsely and still
 others were loaded
 with *berries*.

We also know that the first wine was made 8000 years ago somewhere in Africa. Later on as the grape vine spread to other countries to the north and east, especially to what today is known as Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, viticulture began in earnest.

Today the grape vines have spread to just about every corner of the earth and as wine is made in numerous countries, each region has taken on its own identity and created wines that are of distinct flavour and character. For the sake of simplicity, we categorize those regions as the wines of the Old World and those of the New World. Most of the wines produced today are drinkable regardless of the region, yet there are a few wines that stand out as being superior; it will be these varieties or styles of wine that are covered in our trip through the wine regions.

Before I start with the Old World, I would like to mention that until recently, the main difference between the regions was perceived as one of elegance (old) versus fruit and power (new.)

However even wine has entered the age of globalization and it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between the two.

Old world wines

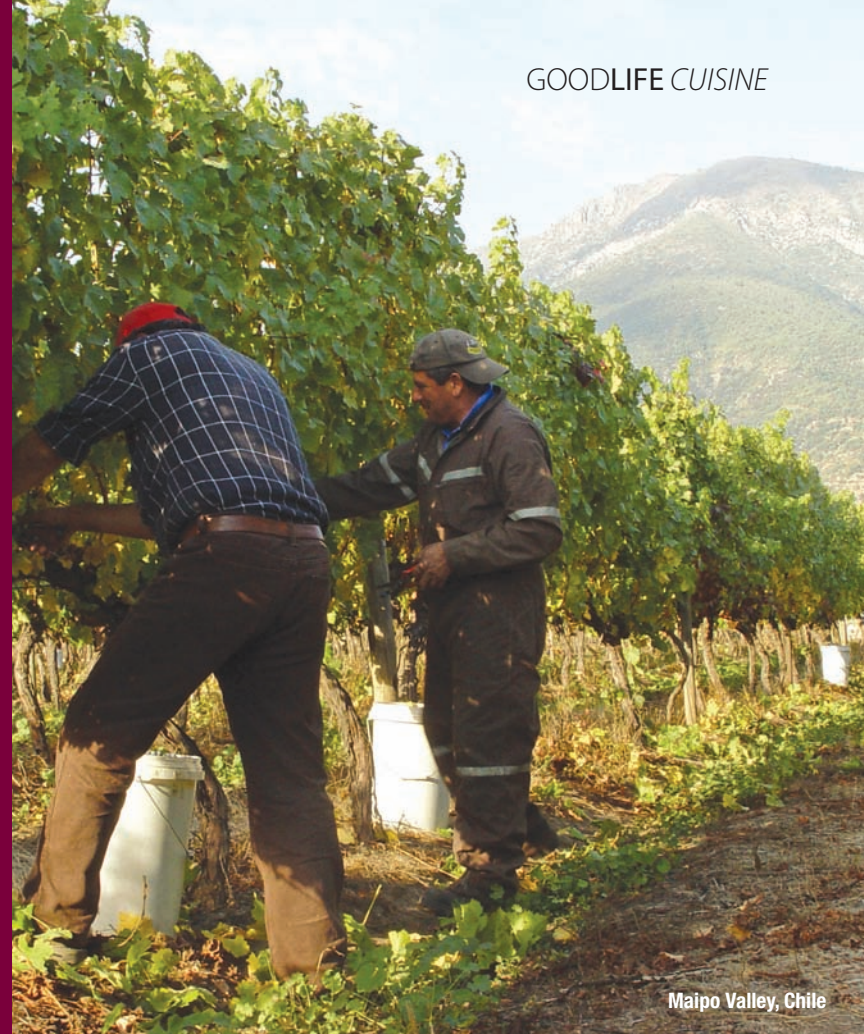
AUSTRIA produces a vast amount of different varieties, both red and white. The foremost white wine is the exclusive Gruner Veltliner. The somewhat crisp and fruity white wine is a suitable companion to food. In red wine look for a Zweigelt.

FRANCE is probably the most difficult to describe. Over the past ten years the sales of French wines have declined worldwide. The problem in my opinion is that you can find the worst and the best. The Alsace region produces the legendary dry Gewürztraminer and Riesling, my own favourite white wine.

Nearby in Burgundy we find some of the greatest reds. However a good red Burgundy (Pinot Noir) is pricey but often superb. Burgundy also produces good clean Chardonnay.



Southern Italy



Maipo Valley, Chile



Hunter Valley, Australia



Austria, Gruener Veltliner

New World Wines

ARGENTINA is the country that produces the legendary Malbec. I have never tasted a bad Malbec wine so you can't go wrong.

AUSTRALIA's wines are well on their way to becoming more elegant and palatable although they were at one time too heavy, too fruity and too complex. We have just returned after spending the winter there. Overproduction, not quality, is a huge problem and most stores are selling wines at half price. While there are some good Rieslings and Semillons, the flagship would be Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon or a blend of the two. Don't worry about the area.

CHILE produces some outstanding Cabernet Sauvignon and some very nice Chardonnay and what Malbec is to Argentina, the red Carmenera wines are to Chile. There are some outstanding Carmenera wines produced in the Maipo Valley.

NEW ZEALAND is where the best and very distinctive white Sauvignon Blanc's are produced. The wines from the Marlborough Region are the most distinctive and if you can lay your hands on a Pinot Noir from New Zealand you will not be disappointed.

USA has at least one winery in every state, although some are fruit wineries. Most of the wines are from California. Super Cabernets are produced in the Sonoma and Napa area as well as in the Sierra Foothill region. For value-priced wine, try anything from the Lodi region. The further north you go in California, the more elegance (European style) you will encounter. Zinfandel is the speciality of California. As excellent as they are, they are not native to the US; a Zinfandel is the same as the Primitivo from Southern Italy.

CANADA's best wines are as good as the best from anywhere in the world. Canada will be covered separately in the near future, in the meantime, if you would like to have some more details on what wine you could serve with your food, look it up on my websitewinecop.com. GL



Portugal is famous for its Port and Vinho Verde

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