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Wine regions of Australia

While Australia has about 60 wine regions, the following 10 are among its most famous and diverse. From the rugged and isolated beauty of Margaret River in Western Australia, to the historical home of Australian wine, the Hunter Valley in New South Wales, a journey across Australia’s wine regions is filled with a diversity of climates, soils, elevation and – ultimately – wine styles.

This information is sourced from www.wineaustralia.com

Barossa Valley, South Australia

Renowned for its Shiraz production, the Barossa Valley is home to some of the country’s most iconic wines. Just one-hour north east of Adelaide, the region consists of gentle rolling hills and fertile valleys that combine with South Australia’s Mediterranean climate to produce full-bodied red wines and delicate whites. They include Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache, Mourvedre and Merlot, while major whites include Riesling, Semillon and Chardonnay.

The Barossa was originally settled by Sicilian Lutheran farmers in the 1830s and there are now more than 50 wineries and cellar doors in the region, ranging from small family enterprises to international companies.

Clare Valley, South Australia

The Clare Valley is considered to be among South Australia’s most picturesque regions. It is also known as the home of Australian Riesling and with good reason – Clare’s consistency in making Rieslings of exceptional quality and style has won loyal consumers internationally.

Clare is not only famous for Riesling; it also produces award-winning Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz that vary dramatically in style throughout the region, depending on vineyard location, soils and elevation.

Settlers from England, Ireland and Poland arrived in the region in the 1840s and wasted no time planting vines. Today visitors to the region can enjoy the popular Riesling trail, a 27km long sealed track that links the many small towns along the valley.

Coonawarra, South Australia

The hidden treasure of the Coonawarra wine region is its precious layer of limestone beneath rich terra rossa soil. The two combine to produce Cabernet Sauvignon grapes that are the envy of wine regions all over the world.

Founded by Scottish settler John Riddoch more than 150 years ago, Coonawarra offers wines of intense and classic fruit flavours that have won the heart of consumers the world over.

Most Coonawarra Cabernets will effortlessly cellar for at least 10 years, but that’s not the only variety the region is famous for. Other award winning varieties are Shiraz, Merlot and Chardonnay.

Heathcote, Victoria

Rapidly raising the bar in terms of elegance and complexity, particularly with Shiraz, the climate and soils of this Victorian region are strongly influenced by the Mt Camel Range that creates a cooler weather pattern in the grape growing period from October to March, resulting in wines of finesse and longevity.



More recently, Heathcote winemakers have planted Viognier, small proportions of which are blended with Shiraz to provide an extra dimension to the flavour spectrum. Heathcote Cabernet Sauvignon is another signature style of the region. Italian varieties Sangiovese and Nebbiolo are also taking to their new home and provide added treasures to the region's reputation.

Aromatic white wine varieties such as Riesling, Viognier and Pinto Grigio display the underlying elegance and fine fruit structure that is characteristic of the region.

Hunter Valley, New South Wales

The Hunter Valley is Australia's oldest wine region, with the earliest vines planted in 1825. Since those pioneering days, the Hunter's wine industry has flourished and now more than 801 wineries and cellar doors are open to tourist traffic en route from Sydney.

Winemakers in the Hunter have found success with varieties such as Shiraz, Verdelho and Chardonnay, but no other region has developed such an affinity with Semillon.

Semillons from the Hunter Valley have great capacity for graceful ageing, particularly in the years when the region defies its sub-tropical climate and turns on summer weather to bring on lime and citrus flavours.

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Australian WINE FACTS...

- Australia has approximately 2000 wine companies and the sector employs an estimated 31,000 people. There are 169,000 hectares under vine. The total grape crush in 2006 was 1.901 million tonnes.
- Wine sales within Australia have grown steadily over the past decade by up to 4 per cent a year. In 2005/06 Australians consumed about 430 million litres of wine with a wholesale value of \$A1.9 billion.
- Average wine consumption in Australia has increased over the past decade to 22.5 litres per person a year, while beer consumption per person is declining.
- Wine is third on the list of Australian agricultural exports after meat and wheat. As an export earner, wine is more valuable than wool, milk and cream, and barley.
- Australia is the world's sixth largest wine producer, as at 2006 (behind France, Italy, Spain, US and Argentina) and the fourth largest exporter. Australian wine is enjoyed in more than 100 countries.
- Exports reached a record A\$3.02 billion in July 2007.
- In 2006 Australia was the number one supplier of imported wine in the UK, Ireland, Singapore and New Zealand and second in the US and Canada. The UK and US markets are worth nearly a billion dollars each to Australia.
- Australia is the leading supplier of the UK off-premise market, holding a 20 per cent share in 2005/06 by volume, with multiple grocers continuing to dominate.
- Australia remains the largest supplier of the Irish market with 26 per cent market share by volume in 2005/06. Volume and value growth have closely matched each other, evidenced by the fact that Australia is the largest supplying country at all price points above €7.50.
- Australian wine sales in the US topped 24.5 million cases in 2006. The US accounted for 27.6 per cent of Australia's wine shipments by volume and just over 32 per cent by value in 2006-07.
- Australia was the third largest supplier of the Canadian market in 2005/06 with about 13.8 per cent of the market, behind France (17.1 per cent) and Italy (14.9 per cent).
- Continental Europe is Australia's third biggest market after the UK and the US. Australian exports to Continental Europe rose 15 per cent by volume in 2006-07, to 134 million litres, and 15 per cent by value to \$343 million.
- Australian exports to Japan have reached new heights in the past three years, with sales just exceeding one million cases in 2006 and volume growth of 23 per cent in the first half of 2007.
- In the last 12 months, Australian bottled wine shipments to China have increased 5 per cent in value per litre to \$5.51/L, and bottled wine now represents 38 per cent of total exports to China.

McLaren Vale, South Australia

A battle over the title of Australia's best Shiraz maker is fought each year between the Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale. Set among pastures and orchards and located to the south of Adelaide, McLaren Vale's rich soils and proximity to the gulf waters of St Vincent provide the perfect ingredients for intensely flavoured red wines and powerful but well balanced whites. There are now more than 50 wineries and cellar doors in the region. McLaren Vale's leading reds are Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache and Merlot, while whites include Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling.

Margaret River, Western Australia

Margaret River has quietly built a reputation for wines of outstanding quality in the past decade. While the region covers all the classic varieties, Margaret River winemakers have worked hard to develop a signature style of Cabernet Sauvignons.

The region has added tourism drawcards of breathtaking coastal scenery and culinary delights to match its extensive range of wine styles, including Shiraz, Verdelho and the wonderfully herbaceous Sauvignon Blanc.

Mudgee, New South Wales

Nestled deep in the western slopes of New South Wales' Blue Mountains, Mudgee is another historical player in Australia's wine industry. Commercial planting occurred in the 1860s led by German immigrants, but the modern era of grape production really began in the late 1970s.

A number of large wine companies have set up shop in the region, complimenting the array of boutique wineries that offer a diverse range of wine styles.

Powerful Cabernet Sauvignon, with complex flavours and ageing potential, is a regional highlight. Chardonnay is Mudgee's most popular and highly regarded white.

Tasmania

The history of viticulture in Tasmania is quite recent when compared with the rest of Australia. While some planting occurred in the 19th century, it wasn't until the 1970s that true winegrape planting began with the establishment of Pipers Brook.

Tasmania, known for its spectacular beauty, now has more than 60 vineyards and wineries, many of them just a few hectares in size.

Tasmania's cool maritime climate produces elegant wines with excellent natural acid. Specialist varieties include Pinot Noir for sparkling and still wine, Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Grigio, Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc.

Yarra Valley, Victoria

Victoria's oldest wine region, the Yarra Valley is considered one of the world's finest cool climate wine producers. Specialising in Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, the key varieties for sparkling wines, the Yarra also impresses wine judges with its more subtle Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon styles.

Chardonnay is the Yarra Valley's most widely planted white grape variety due to its flexibility of style – from complex, oaked wines to elegant restrained styles, Chardonnay is often made using traditional winemaking techniques.

Other white wines produced in the Yarra include Gewurztraminer, Marsanne and Sauvignon Blanc, which is often blended with Semillon.



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Matching wine with food

Transplanted from Europe, blended over 200 years from other imported stocks and more recently spiced with the flavours of Asia, Australia is the last great food frontier.

It is a metaphor for a nation whose people shy from ruled formality and are excited by challenge. Post World War II refugees from Europe brought with them a love of music, theatre and literature – and a passion for food and wine and an attitude of creativity that had been handed down to them over the centuries.

Of course, there were earlier migrants that had maintained their traditions in tight communities; the exotic Chinatowns of Melbourne and Sydney that sprang up after the 1860s Gold Rush, while Germans fleeing religious persecution found sanctuary in South Australia's Barossa Valley. Some 150 years later, their descendents are still making mettwurst (sausage) and kuchen (cake) like their forebears.

The food revolution of the 1950s was different, broad based and pervasive. Italians brought pizza and spaghetti, Greeks brought coffee and moussaka, the Spanish introduced olive oil, Lithuanians became pastry cooks and Yugoslavs knew about coffee. By the 1960s, Chinese cuisine was flourishing and the arrival of significant numbers of Lebanese migrants added a new dimension to the flavours available in Australia. Suddenly there were cafés and restaurants to challenge hotel counter meals. Fish and chip shops, transplanted from old London, were pushed aside by pizza.



The food revolution in Australia was the inspiration for the modern Australian wine industry, leading Aussies to embrace table wine instead of beer. Winemakers celebrated and produced sparkling copies of Champagne, lively hocks and robust clarets.

During the 1970s, Australia's food culture received another infusion, this time from the Vietnamese and Cambodian migrants. Aromatic coriander, fish sauce, noodles, rice, bok choy and hundreds of other exotic and spicy ingredients found their way into inner city markets and speciality stores, and finally to supermarkets. Australians threw down their forks and chopsticked their way into a whole new cultural revolution, which has flowed over to a harmonious appreciation of Asian religion, art and travel.

The blend continues as Afghans and Iranians, Indians, Malaysians, Pakistanis and Indonesians join our cities, start restaurants and integrate their foods and families.

Wine has continued to be the follower and beneficiary of this boom. As tastes become lighter, more fragrant and subtle, so do wine styles. Rosé, once only found in Spanish restaurants, is now the vibrant salmon-coloured drink on fashionable al-fresco tables everywhere. Crisp varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc now jostle with Riesling and Chardonnay as the after work drink with tapas.

Australian food is certainly fusion food – European, Asian and Middle Eastern influences – ground together with an English and Irish underpinning.

But it is a fusion of more than tastes. It's about absolute freshness and lifestyle. It is also a coming together of passionate people, working with the cleanest, healthiest produce on earth in a climate that demands innovation, relaxation and gastronomic freedom.



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Wines to accompany a meal

Pre-dinner (aperitif)

- Botrytis Riesling
- Fortifieds
- Rosé
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Semi-dry and dry white
- Sparkling wines

First course

- Chenin Blanc
- Dry Muscat Blanc
- Pinot Noir
- Riesling
- Rosé
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Semillon
- Semillon blends
- Verdelho

Fish

- Oaked and unoaked Chardonnay
- Rosé
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Semillon
- Viognier
- Strongly flavoured fish such as tuna and barramundi can partner well with lighter Cabernets, Merlots and Pinot Noir

Red meat

- Barbera
- Cabernet Sauvignon
- Grenache
- Grenache/Shiraz
- Mourvedre blends
- Merlot and Merlot blends
- Nebbiolo
- Pinot Noir
- Sangiovese
- Shiraz
- Tempranillo

White meat & poultry

- Aged Semillon
- Chardonnay
- Marsanne
- Riesling
- Tarrango
- Strongly flavoured poultry, particularly wild birds such as pheasant, pigeon or quail marry well with lighter cabernets, merlots and pinot noir. If you are having duck try a sparkling red.

Cheese (soft)

- Chardonnay
- Merlot
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Semi-dry or dry white fortifieds

Cheese (hard/blue)

- Botrytis Semillon/Riesling
- Cabernet Sauvignon
- Grenache
- Petit Verdot
- Shiraz
- Zinfandel

Dessert

Late picked or Botrytis styles of:

- Riesling
- Semillon
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Sweet white fortifieds

With coffee

- Fortified white (Tokay style)
- Liqueur Muscat
- Tawny wine styles

Varietals and their best food matches

Barbera

- Red meat
- Strongly flavoured poultry, pheasant, pigeon, quail
- Meaty fish e.g. tuna or barramundi (with tomato based sauces)
- Strong Cheeses (blues, vintage cheddar) and strongly flavoured creamy styles
- Main courses in French, Italian, Greek, Indian cuisines

Cabernet Sauvignon

- Red meats
- Lighter styles may be teamed with strongly flavoured poultry, pheasant, pigeon, quail
- Meaty fish e.g. tuna or barramundi
- Strong Cheeses (blues, vintage cheddar)
- Strongly flavoured legume-based vegetarian dishes featuring chickpeas or faba beans
- Main courses in French, Italian, Greek, Indian cuisines

Chardonnay

- Fish
- White meat and poultry
- Main courses in Chinese, French, Italian and Greek cuisines

Gewürztraminer

- White meats and poultry
- Main courses in Indian and Thai cuisines

Grenache

- Red meat
- Strong cheeses (blues, vintage cheddar)

- Main courses in French, Italian, Greek and Spanish cuisines

Merlot

- Red meat
- Strongly flavoured poultry, pheasant, pigeon, quail
- Meaty fish e.g. tuna or barramundi (with tomato based sauces)
- Strong cheeses (blues, vintage cheddar) and strongly flavoured creamy styles
- Main courses in French, Italian, Greek, Indian cuisines

Nebbiolo

- Red meat
- Strongly flavoured poultry, pheasant, pigeon, quail
- Meaty fish e.g. tuna or barramundi
- Strong cheeses (blues, vintage cheddar) and strongly flavoured creamy styles
- Main courses in French, Italian, Greek, Indian cuisines

Pinot Noir

- Red meat
- Strongly flavoured poultry, pheasant, pigeon, quail
- Meaty fish e.g. tuna or barramundi (with tomato-based sauces)
- Strong cheeses (blues, vintage cheddar)
- Main courses in French, Italian, Greek, Indian & Chinese cuisines

Riesling

- Pre-dinner (botrytis styles)
- First courses
- White meat and poultry
- Chinese, French, Greek, Indian, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Thai and Vegetarian cuisines

Rosé

- Whiter meats such as veal
- Poultry

Sangiovese

- Red meat
- Strongly flavoured poultry, pheasant, pigeon, quail
- Meaty fish e.g. tuna or barramundi
- Strong cheeses (blues, vintage cheddar) and strongly flavoured creamy styles
- Main courses in French, Italian, Greek or Indian cuisines

Sauvignon Blanc

- First courses
- Soft cheeses
- Chinese, French, Greek, Japanese, Spanish, Thai & Vegetarian cuisines

Semillon

- First courses
- Fish
- White meat & poultry (aged styles)
- Hard or blue cheese (botrytis styles)
- Desserts
- Chinese, French, Greek, Spanish, Thai and Vegetarian cuisines

Shiraz

- Red meat
- Strongly flavoured poultry, pheasant, pigeon, quail
- Meaty fish e.g. tuna or barramundi
- Strong cheeses (blues, vintage cheddar)
- Main courses in French, Italian, Malaysian, Thai and Spanish

Sparkling White

- Any occasion! Pre-dinner or with first courses from Chinese, French, Italian and Thai cuisines

Sparkling red

- Game meat
- Strongly flavoured poultry, duck, goose, pheasant, pigeon, quail
- Meaty fish e.g. tuna or barramundi
- A sparkling red can replace a sparkling white at any time - pre-dinner or with first courses in French, Italian, Chinese, Thai or Greek cuisines

Tempranillo

- Red meat
- Strongly flavoured poultry, pheasant, pigeon, quail
- Meaty fish e.g. tuna or barramundi
- Strong cheeses (blues, vintage cheddar) and strongly flavoured creamy styles
- Main courses in French, Spanish, Italian or Greek cuisines

Tawny fortifieds

- Pre dinner
- With strong or creamy cheeses

White fortifieds

(sweet, semi-sweet & dry)

- Pre dinner
- With strong or creamy cheeses

Verdelho

- First courses
- Poultry

Viognier

- Fish
- With Chinese, French & Japanese

Check out www.wineaustralia.com for more information.