

Germany's Wine Regions

Germany's wine regions are concentrated in the south-western part of the country, which is parallel in latitude (50°) to Labrador. This northerly location provides a moderate climate without intense heat, so that it takes grapes longer to ripen than in more southerly areas. The harvest takes place in October and November. This longer “hang time” leads to intense aromas and flavours.

Her vineyards are located on steep south-facing slopes, in a few valleys and almost always close to a river which tempers the climate, acting as a heat reflector, helping to maintain a constant temperature day and night. In autumn the mist and fog that rises from the river offers the grapes protection from early frost.

In addition to the general climate, it is important to consider the micro-climates of individual vineyards. The direction and inclination of a particular slope, the intensity of sunshine reflected from mirroring rivers, a protective ridge of hills or a forested mountain summit, which deflects the wind - all help the wine achieve its ultimate taste and quality.



All maps and text are courtesy of www.germanwine.de

Ahr - The red wine paradise

The red wine-region Ahr is one of the smallest of Germany's wine-growing regions, with vineyards extending along the steep hillsides that line the Ahr River as it flows into the Rhine south of Bonn.



Most of the vineyards grow red grapes - Spätburgunder (Pinot noir) and Portugieser - producing red wines of light charm and racy fruitiness. Lively, fresh Riesling and Müller-Thurgau are the white wines grown here. Nearly all of the region's wine is

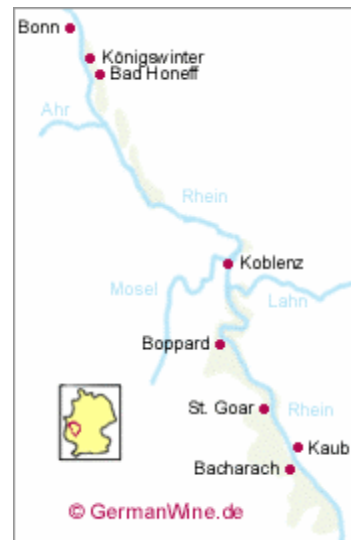
consumed locally.

Wine: velvety to fiery Spätburgunder; light, pleasant Portugieser; fresh white wines.

Mittelrhein - lot's of castles...

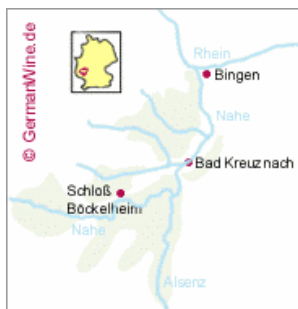
Beginning just below Bonn and extending about 60 miles south on both banks of the Rhine, the Mittelrhein is a beautiful region of steep, terraced vineyards crowned with medieval castles and ruins. Bacharach has been the most important wine village of this region since the Middle Ages. The clayish slate soil yields lively wines with a pronounced acidity. Riesling, Müller-Thurgau and Kerner grow best on these inhospitable slopes. Most of the production is consumed locally or sold to visitors.

Wine: fresh, fragrant, pithy, marked fruity acidity (sometimes austere).



Nahe

The Nahe region is set west of Rheinhessen, which it borders, and east of the Mosel. Bad Kreuznach is the region's most important town. The Nahe's



vineyards thrive in a variety of soils along the steep slopes of the Nahe River and its tributaries. The more northerly district with its loam and sandy soil produces wines that resemble neighbouring Rheinhessen, while the slaty soil further south yields wines which suggest the fine flowery bouquet of Mosel wines and the elegance of Rheingau wines. [Müller-Thurgau](#), [Riesling](#) and [Silvaner](#) are the predominant varieties planted in the Nahe region.

Wines: fragrant, subtly racy, fruity, full of flavour.

Mosel-Saar-Ruwer - lot's of wine-villages

From just south of the ancient Roman city of Trier, north to Koblenz, where it empties into the Rhine, the Mosel River snakes its way past dramatically steep, slaty slopes covered with some of Germany's most famous vineyards.



The wines of the Mosel and its tributaries, the Saar and the Ruwer, are richly fragrant, pale in colour, lightbodied with a lively, fruity acidity. The slaty soil imparts a distinctive taste to Mosel wines, ranging from fine-fruity to earthy, or "flinty". Often they have a hint to effervescence. Riesling wines of great elegance and breed grow best on the steep, southern-facing slopes, particularly around Wiltingen and Scharzhofberg in the Saar-Ruwer district and in the Middle Mosel district around Bernkastel, Piesport,

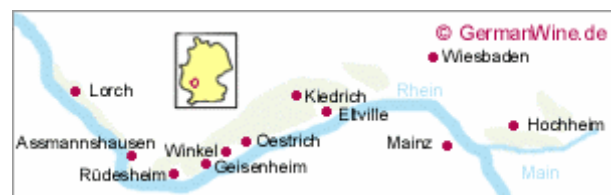
Wehlen, Brauneberg, Graach, Zeltingen and Erden. Müller-Thurgau and an old variety cultivated by the Romans, the Elbling, are also planted in this region.

Wine: richly fragrant, racy, piquant, elegantly fruity, delicate.

Rheingau - Riesling-World

The Rheingau is Germany's most central wine-growing region and the home of some of the world's oldest wine-growing families. It is located between Hochheim on the Main River and Lorch near the Mittelrhein. The whole of the Rheingau is one long hillside topped by the thick forests of the Taunus Hills to the north and bordered by the Rhine River to the south, forming one district, Bereich Johannisberg.

This is where the famous cloisters and estates cultivated and refined the noble Riesling. It was the Rheingauers who first recognized the value of Botrytis Cinerea (noble rot) and the Spätlese (late harvest). The term "Kabinett" is said to have originated here. In this favourable climate and ideal soil the Riesling develops to perfection, producing noble, elegant wines characterized by a refined and sometimes spicy fragrance; a fruity, pronounced acidity; and a rich ripeness in flavour. Full-bodied, distinctive red wine is made from the Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir), particularly from the steep vineyards around Assmannshausen.



Wines: refined fragrance, lively racy acidity, great character and elegance

Rheinhessen

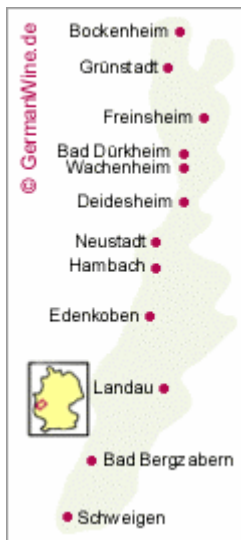
Rheinhessen lies in a valley of rolling hills, bordered on the west by the Nahe River and on the north and east by the Rhine. This 20 by 30 mile area between the wine-growing communities of Worms, Alzey, Mainz and Bingen is the largest of the German winegrowing regions and its production is second only to that of the Pfalz. Due to the varying soil types and microclimates, many grape varieties are planted, including the three traditional white varieties - [Müller-Thurgau](#), [Silvaner](#), [Riesling](#) - as well as new crossings. The Portugieser grape is the most important red variety, and the area around Ingelheim is known for its noble full-bodied [Spätburgunder](#) (Pinot noir) wine. The Rheinfront or Rheinterrasse are names given to the vineyards on gentle slopes directly facing the Rhein near the town of Nierstein. Here some of the finest wines in Germany are produced, especially from the Riesling grape. There were already admirers of Rheinhessen's mild, agreeable, fragrant wines during the Carolingian period. Charlemagne, who had a fortress at Ingelheim, was one of the earliest promoters of these wines.



Wine: delicately fragrant, mild, soft, medium-bodied.

Pfalz - biggest wine producer of Germany

Bordered by Rheinhessen on the north and France on the south and west, the Pfalz's vineyards sweep across this pretty, peaceful land for nearly 50 uninterrupted miles and produce more wine than any other region in Germany. The northern half of this region is home to some of the best vineyard sites. The villages of Wachenheim, Forst, Deidesheim and Ruppertsberg are well-known for [Riesling](#) wines which combine substance and finesse. Pleasant, mild wines rich in bouquet and full of body from [Müller-Thurgau](#), [Kerner](#), [Silvaner](#) and Morio-Muskat grapes are also grown in the clay and marl soils of this district. Chalk, clay and loess soils yield mild, fresh, often intense wines in the southern half of the Pfalz. In addition to its white wine, the Pfalz is also known for smooth, fruity red wine made primarily from the Portugieser grape. The word Pfalz which names the region is a derivation of Palast, or palace, and comes from the Latin word "palatium". The English equivalent, Palatinate, is often used when speaking about the Pfalz.



Wines: aromatic, mild, round and fullbodied, expressive.

Württemberg

Württemberg's vineyards line the slopes of the Neckar River and its tributaries. Stuttgart is its major city. With nearly half of its vineyards planted in red varieties, it is the largest red wine region in Germany. Trollinger, Müllerrebe (Pinot meunier), [Spätburgunder](#) (Pinot noir), Portugieser and Lemberger make very fruity red wines. Württemberg's white wines - [Riesling](#), [MüllerThurgau](#), [Kerner](#) and [Silvaner](#) - have a vigorous, hearty taste. Württemberg wines can rarely be found outside this region, as the majority are consumed by the indigenous population.



Wines: strikingly fruity, hearty, powerful, distinctive earthy finish

Baden - kissed by the sun

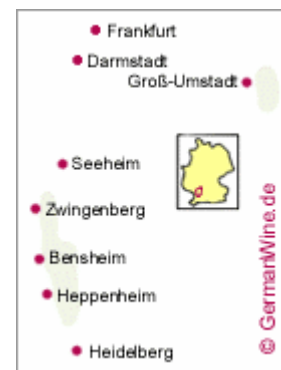
Baden is the southernmost of Germany's wine regions, a long, slim strip that extends from near Heidelberg in the north to Lake Constance (Bodensee) in the south. This is the famed "Black Forest" area. Germany's third largest wine region, Baden, is also its most diverse. It contains soils that range from gravel, limestone and clay to loess, volcanic stone and shell-lime. Its grapes are also varied, and include the flowery [Müller-Thurgau](#); full-bodied [Ruländer](#) (Pinot gris); light, mild [Gutedel](#); spicy [Gewürztraminer](#); and the noble [Riesling](#). About 23% of the vineyards are planted in [Spätburgunder \(Pinot noir\)](#), a red variety, which is full-bodied and fiery when grown in the volcanic soils of the Kaiserstuhl. Spätburgunder Weißherbst, a rosé wine, is a popular wine made here.



Wines: vigorous, earthy, robust, dry, often full-bodied.

Hessische Bergstrasse

The wine-growing region Hessische Bergstraße is located north of Heidelberg, bordered by the Rhine on the west and the Odenwald (forest) on the east. The wines tend to be fragrant and rich, with more body and a little less acidity and finesse than those of the [Rheingau](#). The [Riesling](#) is the main grape variety, followed by the fragrant [MüllerThurgau](#) and delicate [Silvaner](#). The wines from the Bergstrasse are scarce and almost without exception consumed locally - a good reason to attend one of the local wine festivals in the medieval town of Heppenheim (late June) or Bensheim (early September).



Wines: fragrant, refreshing fruity acidity, hearty.

Franken

Before the reunification in Germany, Franken was the easternmost of Germany's wine-growing regions, with most of its vineyards planted on hilly slopes of the Main River and its tributaries.



Würzburg is the principal city of Franken and home of the famed vineyard, Stein, which gave rise to the generic term "Steinwein", formerly used to denote all Franken wines. Traditionally, most Franken wines are bottled in a squat, green flagon called a Bocksbeutel. Franken wine is the most masculine of Germany's wines, often drier

and earthier than wines from other regions. [Müller-Thurgau](#) and [Silvaner](#) are the main varieties planted, as well as new crossings.

Saale-Unstrut

The small wine-growing region Saale-Unstrut is the northernmost of Germany's wine-growing regions, with a long tradition of grape-growing and wine making. The first American rootstocks in Germany were planted in the region in 1887 after the Phylloxera disease affected vineyards there. Vines are

planted at the beginning of the romantic Saale River valley and on the hills near the town of Freyburg. In the warm valley of the rivers Saale and Unstrut [Müller-Thurgau](#), [Silvaner](#) and

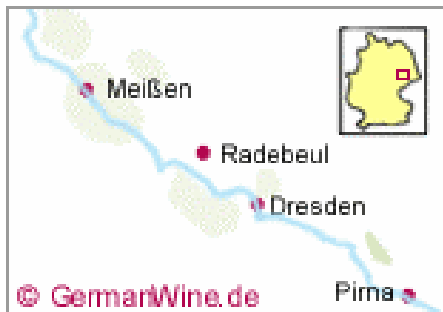
[Weißburgunder](#) (Pinot blanc) grapes are grown and made into a soft, dry white wine. Due to climatic conditions Spätlese and Auslese wines are very rare, but QbA and Kabinett wines are excellent when they are young.

Wines: soft and dry white wines, few Spätlese and Auslese wines, mediumbodied.



Sachsen

Sachsen is the easternmost of Germany's wine-growing regions, with most of its vineyards located on the hilly slopes of the Elbe River. The region



stretches for about 30 miles from Pillnitz in the south to Dresden, Radebeul and Meissen. The cultural and historical centers of Dresden and Meissen attract many visitors each year. Most of the wines from the region are consumed locally. Wines made from [Müller-Thurgau](#) (Rivaner), [Weissburgunder](#) (Pinot Blanc) and Traminer grapes are dry, full of character with a fruity acidity. Some soft red

wines and some "Elbtal-Sekt" (sparkling wine) are specialties of the region.

Wines: dry, refreshing fruity acidity, special regional character.