

Wine Advice: IF YOU LIKE THIS, YOU MAY LIKE THAT

Are you a wine consumer? How many grape varieties have you tasted? Most consumers are familiar with the so-called international varieties, grape varieties widely planted around the world, popular, familiar, and widely available. Also known as classic varieties, these grapes usually produce quality wine wherever the wine is produced.

You found a wine you enjoy and stick to it, purchasing that wine or wine made from that grape variety. Nothing wrong with that. Nothing wrong with experimentation either. Maybe you have tired of drinking the same thing as everyone else.

Both myself and like-minded wine loving friends enjoy the opportunity to introduce others to new grape varieties, wines, and wine-making styles. Most people enjoy trying something new and if wine is thoughtfully selected, with consideration of current preferences, it is more likely your guests and you embrace the choice. Now is the time. No time like the present. We are spending time at home, by ourselves, with family or select friends in a small bubble. Explore the wine world from the comfort of your home.

Keep an open mind. Remember, grapes are different, they share similarities with others, structure, aroma, flavour, but they have their own distinct personality and deserve to be explored. Some grape varieties are given different names depending on where they grow, Primitivo of Italy, Zinfandel of California are good examples. Primitivo and Zinfandel are the same grape. Another consideration is wine style. Wine style is reflected in the grape name, as



we see with Shiraz and Syrah, the same grape made in different styles.



Fortunately for us and the environment, there is a trend among wine consumers and producers to hunt for grape varieties not commonly known, some on the verge of extinction. Climate change is affecting vineyards the world over, wine laws banning the use of certain varieties have been and are being re-examined and revised to allow for the planting of varieties known to thrive in certain environmental conditions. Grapes less prone to disease, more adaptable to climate change, lessening the need for fertilizers and fungicides.

The most common wine grape variety is Cabernet Sauvignon, grown world-wide, the most famous of the international varieties. International varieties are very popular with growers and producers and there is a very good reason to stick with these varieties. The best reason? It is easier to sell the wine. There are approximately 10,000 wine grape varieties, but the internationally famous varieties have become increasingly dominant.

Countries with the greatest reliance on classic varieties are France, Chile, Australia and the U.S.A. Those with the highest percentage of indigenous varieties are Georgia, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Croatia, and Cyprus.

For those of you wishing to broaden your wine experience the following suggestions will aide you with wine selections. Start with a grape varietal you enjoy and evolve from there. It helps if you can articulate what you like and why. Staff are happy to assist with wine selections, they are knowledgeable and familiar with products. If you are fortunate enough to identify someone who shares your preferences, they are a fabulous and reliable resource.

Full-bodied Spanish and Portuguese red wines, Zinfandel or Primitivo are excellent alternatives to Cabernet Sauvignon. A word in support of Spanish and Portuguese wines. Such wines are great value, and often exceed expectations. Certain popular red wines are slightly sweet. If this is a style that attracts you, select wine from warm-climate New World areas (southern Australia, California).

Chardonnay is a chameleon, the styles many and varied, your search for an alternative is dictated by the type of chardonnay you prefer. Do oaked wines appeal to you? If so, look to wines with descriptors such as buttery, toast, and vanilla on the label as these are surely oaked. Full-bodied, and ripe? Try Chenin Blanc and Viognier. Lighter-bodied, sleek, minerally, high acid and lean examples such as Chablis, more to your taste? Reach for Fiano, Verdicchio or Muscadet.

Shiraz/Syrah more to your liking? Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Nero d'Avola, Mourvèdre (Monastrell) and wines from Jumilla, Toro or Priorat are excellent alternatives. As are Malbec or Petit Verdot.

Enjoy Riesling? Although offered in a broad range of styles ranging from dry to very sweet, much of what we have locally available is off-dry (slightly sweet). Grapes similar in profile to Riesling - aromatic, delicately flavoured, often made in slightly sweet styles, are Muscat/Moscato, Torrontes and Gewürztraminer. Prefer something dry? Try Moschofilero, a fresh, floral, aromatic white wine from Greece.

Favour Merlot? Carménère was mis-identified as Merlot for some time so there is no denying the similarity, Zinfandel and Nero d'Avola, also share similarities.



Sauvignon Blanc fan? Grüner Veltliner, Albariño are good alternatives. Certain wines carry the name of the geographic area where the grapes are grown and the wine made, Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé are two examples, wines made from Sauvignon Blanc, in a different style from that of many New World wines, New Zealand for example, wine reflective of the climate, history, tradition of France's Loire Valley.

Pinot Noir fan? Reach for Grenache (aka Garnacha), Tempranillo, Sangiovese, or Pinotage, not to mention red Burgundy which is, in fact, Pinot Noir

The more consumers purchase unique wines and those made with less common grape varietals the more the wine market evolves. A win-win as I see it.

As I write this, I'm sipping on Vazisubani Estate Saperavi, 2017, an unfiltered dry red wine from Georgia, the 'cradle of wine', where winemaking dates back to 6,000BC.

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