
Chapter 38

South Africa



Climate and Grape Growing

- 27°-34° - south of the Equator
 - Should be a hot climate, but moderated
- **Benguela Current** (through Southern Ocean, up from Antarctic) = cools coastal areas
- **Cape Doctor** - SE summer winds = cools areas further inland
- Mountain ranges = range of different altitudes, aspects, soil (valley floor warmer)
 - Mountains can cause shadow over vineyards to cool them
 - Also helps channel wind through the vineyards

Grape Varieties and Wine Styles

Black grapes

Syrah

- (Hot area) **rich/full-bodied/red + black fruits/meat/game** - or - (cooler area) **more peppery**

Pinot Noir

- A small amount - coastal areas

Pinotage (PN x Cinsault)

- Blended with international varieties ('Cape Blend')

Light/fruity/red berry → (old bush vine) full-bodied/rich/spiced red berry

- **Chocolate/coffee (oak or oak stave contact)**

White grapes

Chenin Blanc

- Most widely planted grape
- **(Basic) easy-drinking/stone fruit** → **(complex) old bush vines/concentrated fruit**

Colombard

- Brandy grape

Sauvignon Blanc

- Picked early to retain acidity - coolest coastal regions
- **Pure varietal characteristics/citrus/green fruits/herbaceous**

Muscat of Alexandria (Hanepoot)

- Sweet wine, late-harvest

Viognier

- **Rich, perfumed/hint of toasty oak**

Blends = Chenin Blanc + Rhone varieties (Marsanne/Roussanne/Grenache Blanc/Viognier)

Regions and Wines

90% prod = Western Cape (remainder from Orange River, Northern Cape - expensive whites)

Coastal Region

Stellenbosch

- Climate: Moderate-Warm
 - Sufficient rainfall in winter/summers not too hot (cooled by winds from False Bay funnelled by mountains)
- Premium/fine wine region
- Different variety, aspect, altitude soils
- **Top-quality reds: Cab Sauv/Merlot/Syrah/Cape Blends**
- **Whites: SB/Chard**

Paarl

- N of Stellenbosch - less moderating influences - inland (warmer), but can have cool night time temp
- Mountains = variety of aspect/altitude/soil
- *CB/Syrah/Pinotage*
- *Chenin Blanc/Chard*

Constantia

- Eastern flank of Table Mountain - v. old vines
 - Cooled by Cape Doctor
- Sauvignon Blanc = high rep
- Sweet wine - Vin de Constance - late-harvest Muscat
- S of Table Mountain - close to Cape Point - **high qual SB/Semillon** (cooling ocean)
- Warmer sites = Syrah/CB

Swartland

- Was high-vol/inexpensive → moving towards premium
- **Old vine Chenin Blanc** + **Syrah** - grown with no irrigation = lower yields/more concentrated fruit flavour
- SW - Darling district - coastal sea breezes
 - **High rep SB** (also old vines)

Durbanville

- Tygerberg district
 - Hillside sites (N of Cape Town)
 - Cooled = sea breezes
 - SB
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Coastal Region

Worcester

- Climate: Hot + dry
 - Irrigation from rivers necessary
- Fertile soil = high-vol, inexpensive branded wines
- Chenin Blanc + Colombard (latter for distillation)

Robertson

- Cooler climate - SE winds are drawn into valley
 - High vol or better qual (in less fertile area)
 - *Syrah*/**full-bodied Chard**
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Cape South Coast

Walker Bay

- Famous **Hemel-en-Aarde** ward
- *Chard/PN/SB/Merlot/Syrah*

Elgin

- Altitude = cooling influence
- **SB (high qual)**/PN/Chard/Syrah

Cape Agulhas

- Famous **Elim** ward
 - Herbaceous SB (potential for Syrah)
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South African Wine Laws

- **Wine of Origin (W.O.)** = seal on every bottle
Geographical unit (ie, Western Cape - allows prods to blend fruit from different areas) → *Regions* (ie, Coastal Region/Breede River Valley) → *Districts* → *Wards*
 - Estate wines = all grapes grown and bottles on single estate (top estates also release W.O. brand)
 - Voluntary sustainable agricultural scheme = Integrated Production of Wine (ITW on label)
 - Can display as part of W.O. seals.
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Multiple Choice Practice Questions

- 1) In what region would you find the sweet wine, Vin de Constance?
 - a) Elgin
 - b) Constantia
 - c) Swartland
 - d) Stellenbosch
- 2) What is the primary cooling influence for the vineyards in the coastal regions of South Africa?
 - a) Benguela Current
 - b) Drakensberg Mountains
 - c) Atlantic Ocean
 - d) Indian Ocean
- 3) Which grape variety is most associated with the region of Constantia in South Africa?
 - a) Pinotage
 - b) Sauvignon Blanc
 - c) Merlot
 - d) Syrah
- 4) The Hemel-en-Aarde Valley is a sub-region of which larger wine region in South Africa?
 - a) Stellenbosch
 - b) Paarl
 - c) Robertson
 - d) Walker Bay
- 5) Which of these grapes is used brandy production grown in South Africa?
 - a) Pinotage
 - b) Cabernet Sauvignon
 - c) Colombard
 - d) Syrah

Answers

1. **b) Constantia**
2. **a) Benguela Current**
3. **b) Sauvignon Blanc**
4. **d) Walker Bay**
5. **c) Colombard**