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# Chapter 38

## South Africa



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## 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

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## 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)*

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# Regions and Wines

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

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## 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.

## 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**