

GERMAN WINE REGIONS



AN EBOOK PRESENTED BY
VINHILL FINE WINE (SHANGHAI)



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Introduction

German wine is primarily produced in the west of Germany, along the river Rhine and its tributaries, with the oldest plantations going back to the Roman era. Approximately 60 percent of the German wine production is situated in the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate, where 6 of the 13 regions for quality wine are situated. Germany has about 102,000 hectares (1,020 square kilometers) of vineyard, which is around one tenth of the vineyard surface in Spain, France or Italy. The total wine production is usually around 9 million hectoliters annually, corresponding to 1.2 billion bottles, which places Germany as the eighth largest wine-producing country in the world. White wine accounts for almost two thirds of the total production.

The wine regions in Germany usually referred to are the 13 defined regions for quality wine. The German wine industry has organised itself around these regions and their division into districts. However, there are also a number of regions for the seldom-exported table wine (Tafelwein) and country wine (Landwein) categories. Those regions with a few exceptions overlap with the quality wine regions. In order to make a clear distinction between the quality levels, the regions and subregions for different quality level have different names on purpose, even when they are allowed to be produced in the same geographical area.

German wine regions are classified according to the quality category that the wine falls into - Tafelwein, Landwein, Qualitätswein bestimmter Anbaugebiete (QbA) and Prädikatswein. The wine regions allowed to produce QbA and Prädikatswein are further subdivided into four categories, in descending order of size - Anbaugebiet (a major wine region), Bereich (a district within the wine region), Großlage (a collection of vineyards within a district) and Einzellage (a single vineyard). A small number Einzellagen do not belong to a Großlage and are called "großlagenfrei", but all belong to a Bereich and Anbaugebiet.

The 13 major wine regions (Anbaugebiete) for quality wine are Ahr, Baden, Franconia, Hessische Bergstraße, Mittelrhein, Mosel, Nahe, Palatinate, Rheingau, Rheinhessen, Saale-Unstrut, Saxony, and Württemberg. As you can see on the map on page 3, with the exceptions of Saxony and Saale-Unstrut, most of Germany's major wine regions are located in the western part of the country.

On the following pages we introduce the most important German wine regions, the grape varieties that are cultivated and the geographical and historical background of these regions.



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Map of German Wine Regions, University of Bath Students' Union

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Rheinhessen Wine Region

The German wine region Rheinhessen (in English often Rhine-Hesse or Rhenish Hesse) is located in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate. With 26,440 hectares of growing area it is the largest of the 13 wine regions of Germany.

More than 20% of Rheinhessen's area is used for growing wine. Over 6000 vintners produce more than 2.5 million hectoliters of wine from nearly 120 million vines. Rheinhessen is also one of the most traditional areas of cultivation. Wine is produced in this area of Germany since 20 BC. The oldest German vineyard, evidenced by documents from the year 742, is located in Nierstein, called the Niersteiner Glöck.

Rheinhessen - The location in Germany

Despite its historic name, Rheinhessen is currently no longer part of the federal-state of Hesse and belongs to Rhineland-Palatinate, this being the case since the end of WWII.

The Rheinhessen wine region is bounded by the river Rhein in the north and the east. The Nahe River in the west and the Haardt Mountains in the south represent the two remaining boundaries.



The Pfalz (Palatinate) wine region lies to the south, the Rheingau (Rhine District) lies across the Rhine to the north, and the Nahe wine region to the west. Known as the "land of the thousand hills", the terrain is undulating with vineyards mixed with orchards and other forms of farming. Its larger towns include: Mainz, Worms, Bingen, Alzey, Nieder-

Olm and Ingelheim.

Generally, the wines growing near the river Rhine have the best quality, because the soils impart more complex flavours. The best known area for



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white wines is the Rheinterasse (Rhine Terrace) between Oppenheim and Nackenheim, which by itself is bigger than the whole Rheingau wine region. A special part of the Rhine Terrace, between Nackenheim and Nierstein is known as the Roter Hang (Red Slope) because of the presence of red slate.

Grape Varieties in Rheinhessen

69% of the vineyards in Rheinhessen are planted with white grape varieties. Red wine is cultivated extensively in the area around Ingelheim, in the north of the region opposite the Rheingau.

After a period of increasing plantations of red grape varieties the balance between red and white varieties has been more stable in the last few years.

[Müller-Thurgau](#), also called Rivaner in the German speaking countries, is still the most grown with 16.5% of the area, although it has decreased significantly.

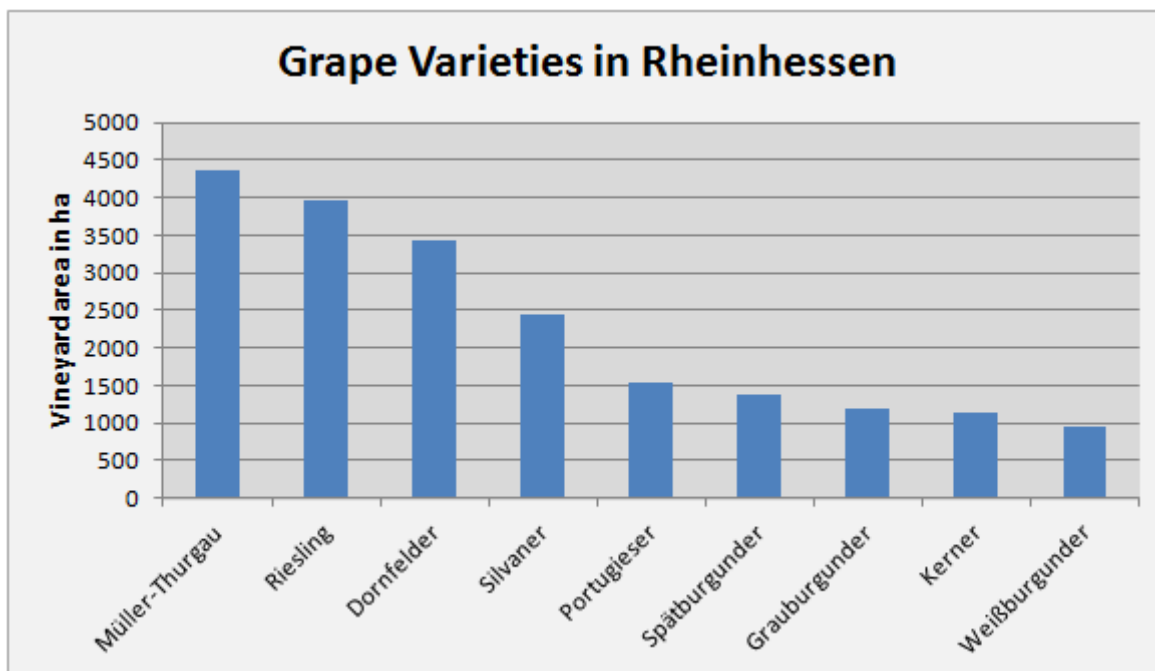


The area around the cities of Nackenheim, Nierstein and Oppenheim focuses on the growing of [Riesling](#). The cultivation is favored by mild temperatures, plenty of sunshine and low rainfall. Riesling wine, currently at 14.8% of the total vineyard area, has been increasing in the last few years.

Among the red varieties, Dornfelder is the most planted at 12.8%, and it was Rheinhessen's second-most planted variety for a few years before being overtaken by Riesling in 2008. The chart below shows the most cultivated grape varieties, by area in 2011.

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(Data: German Federal Statistics Office - Destatis, 2011)

Characteristics of Rheinhessen Wine

In the past, Rheinhessen's most known wine was [Liebfraumilch](#), a cheap semi-sweet white wine, which is produced mainly for export and is associated with low quality.

With the end of the 20th century winemakers in Rheinhessen began to rethink. Thanks to a new generation of vinters, Rheinhessen's wines have gained a very good reputation again. Rheinhessen's vineyards are among the best vineyards of the world and well-known wine critics and wine guides highlight the quality of the wines every year.

Vinters from Rheinhessen focus progressively on quality (e.g. harvest limitation and controlled fermentation). They are able to use the geological diversity of the region and generate top wines.



Pfalz Wine Region

The German wine region Pfalz (engl. Palatinate) lies within the same-named area in the state of Rhineland-Palatinate. Quality wines which are produced in this region are called Pfalzwein.

After Rheinhessen, the Pfalz region is with over 230 sq km area under cultivation the second largest German wine region. There are about 6.800 vintners producing around 2.5 million hectoliters of wine annually. The ratio of white and red grape varieties being cultivated in the Pfalz is about 60:40. The cultivation of red varieties rose in recent decades, but is now slightly decreasing again.

Climate and Geography



The Pfalz wine region is located in southwest of Germany in the southern part of the state of Rhineland-Palatinate. Its climate is the sunniest and driest of all German wine regions. Over 1800 hours of sunshine annually cause an almost Mediterranean climate. Within the EU the area is assigned as a zone A [wine growing zone](#).

The average annual temperature is 11 °C with an average temperature of 20 °C in summer and about 0 °C in winter. In addition, the wine region is protected very well from cold surges by the enclosing mountains. The vineyards in the Pfalz wine region are planted on a mixture of sandstone, marl and clay.



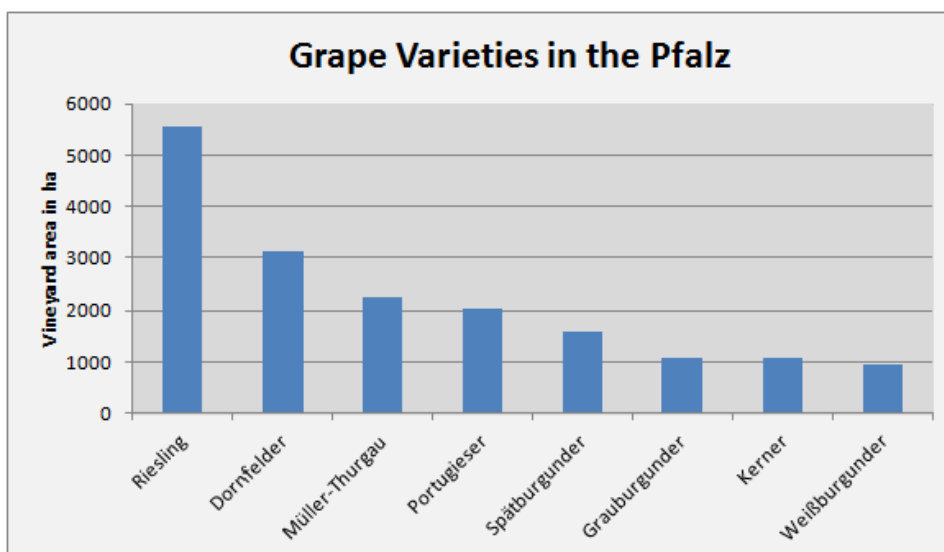
Grape Varieties in the Pfalz

There are 45 white and 22 red grape varieties permitted to be cultivated in the Pfalz. Overall the production is split between 61% white wine and 39% red wine. Leading white grape variety in the Pfalz is the [Riesling](#) (5541 ha = 23.6% of the area) that produces durable and wholesome wines with a pronounced acidity.

The Riesling is followed by [Müller-Thurgau](#) with 2275 ha (= 9.7%) of total growing area in the Pfalz. Most common red grape variety in the Pfalz has long been the Portugieser. Today, the Portugieser is with 2042 ha (=8.7%) the second most planted red grape variety in the Pfalz, overtaken by the Dornfelder with 3112 ha (=13.3%).



As part of the quality improvement the [Spätburgunder](#) (Pinot Noir) is getting more and more popular and reached the 3rd rank with 1588 ha (= 6.8%) of growing area. The chart below shows the most cultivated grape varieties, by area in 2011.



(Data: German Federal Statistics Office - Destatis, 2011)



Characteristics of Pfalz Wine

The wines of the Pfalz are traditionally trocken (dry) with a full body, though some examples of sweet Portugieser still exist. The red wines often reach alcohol levels of 13% and go through [malolactic fermentation](#) and spend some time in oak. Since the 1990s there has been increased production in [Sekt \(sparkling wine\)](#) made from Riesling.

Over a long period in the second half of the 20th Century vintners in the Pfalz focused on volume. This goal proved to be a dead end, lower quality and price declines were the result. Therefore, since the early 1990s the quality of the wine is given priority: The minimum numbers at [Oechsle degrees](#) were raised and more than half of the wines are now vinified dry or at least semi-dry.

Deutsche Weinstraße (German Wine Route)



The German Wine Route is one of the oldest tourist routes in Germany and runs through the vineyards of the Pfalz. It stretches over about 85 kilometers from south to north.

The German Wine Route is marked by numerous open-air wine festivals, held annually from March to October, that make it a major tourist attraction. The largest wine festival

worldwide with more than 600,000 visitors each year is the Wurstmart in front of the world's largest wine barrel in Bad Dürkheim in September.

Other important wine festivals are the German Wine Harvesting Festival (Deutsches Weinlesefest) in Neustadt an der Weinstraße where the German Wine Queen is selected in October, the festival in Freinsheim (Stadtmauerfest in July), and in Deidesheim (Deidesheimer Weinkerwe in August)



Baden Wine Region

The wine region Baden is the most southern and with around 15,906 hectares and an average must yield of 1.1 million hectoliters the third largest wine region in Germany. It is situated in the historic area of Baden in southwest Germany, which is nowadays a part of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg. Baden and Württemberg are separated wine regions under German wine law.

Baden is the only German wine region that belongs to the zone B of the wine-growing zones of the European Union. Viticulture cooperatives are really popular in Baden. They are accountable for 85 per cent of the total output.

Geography of the wine region Baden



The Baden wine region extends in north-south direction over a length of about 400 kilometers from the river Tauber in the north to the Bodensee (Lake Constance) in the very south of Germany. Because of its really large size, Baden is separated into nine districts, which is more than any other German

wine area.

These districts are scenically and climatically very different and that is the reason why so many different types of wines are made in Baden. In the north of the wine region, near the Badische Bergstraße (Baden mountain road) Müller-Thurgau, Riesling and Schwarzriesling dominate. The middle of Baden, the area around [Ortenau](#) just south of the city Offenburg is well known for its Riesling and Spätburgunder (Pinot Noir). In the southern regions, near Breisgau, Kaiserstuhl (Emperor's chair) and Tuniberg red and white Burgunder are planted predominantly.

Baden is located in the warmest area in Germany with the most hours of sunlight per year. That is why its wines are usually more full-bodied and contain a higher level of alcohol than most of the other German wines.



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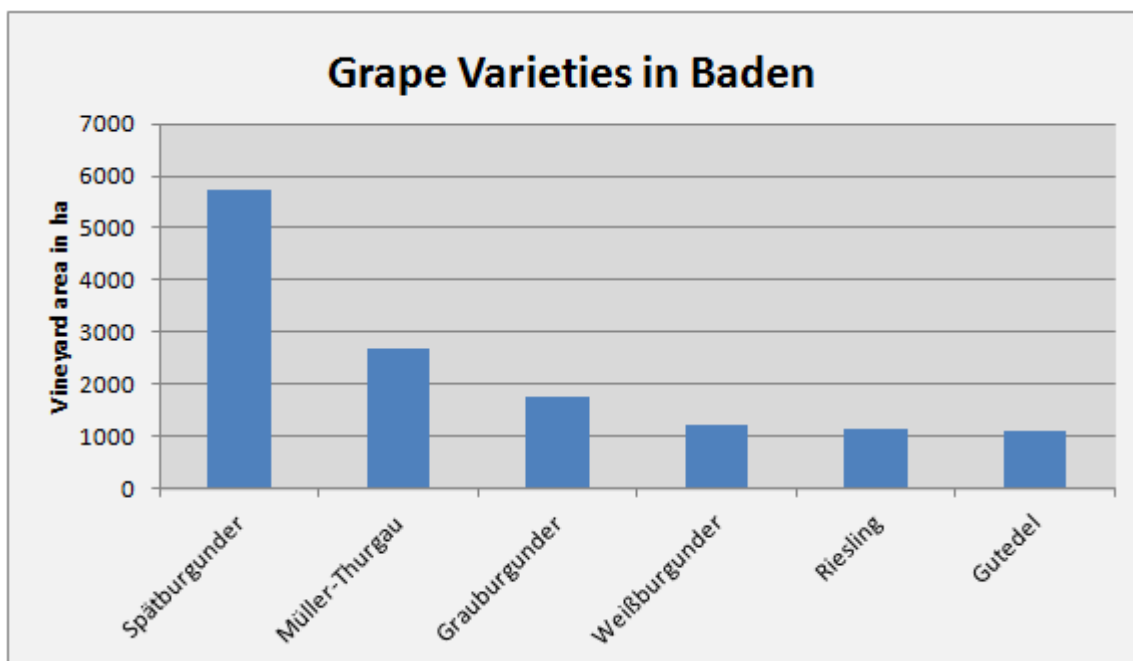


Grape Varieties in Baden

Pinot grapes are very popular in Baden. They are responsible for over half of the wine output in Baden, with [Spätburgunder](#) (Pinot Noir) covering 36.3% (5,743 ha) of Baden's vineyards, Grauburgunder (Pinot Gris) 11% (1,747 ha) and [Weißburgunder](#) (Pinot Blanc) 7.8% (1,228 ha). The production of Pinot wines is larger than in any other German wine region.



Beside the pinot grapes, [Müller-Thurgau](#) plays an important role with 16.8% (2,668 ha) of the total plantation, but plantings have decreased substantially in the last years and were substituted by Spätburgunder and other red grape varieties. The chart below shows the most cultivated grape varieties, by area in 2011.



(Data: German Federal Statistics Office - Destatis, 2011)

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Tourism in Baden

Not only the mild climate, the beautiful wine villages and scenic diversity of Baden attract many visitors, for example, the slopes of the Odenwald and Black Forest or the lakeside of the Bodensee (Lake Constance). Also the tourist towns such as Heidelberg, Konstanz, Baden-Baden, Karlsruhe and Freiburg are very popular for a visit. There are many leisure activities offered to tourists such as cycling along the river Tauber or hiking on one of the wine trails.

Over 100 wine festivals invite you to try wines from the region and often take place in historic surroundings with medieval traditions. Also more than 50 winegrowers regularly organize open days in their wine cellars for tourists.



Württemberg Wine Region

Württemberg is located in the southwestern part of Germany. With 11,421 hectares of wine growing area in 2010, Württemberg is Germany's fourth largest wine region. Unlike most of the other German wine regions, Württemberg has a long history in growing red wines. The most common grape variety is the red wine grape [Trollinger](#).

Württemberg in Germany



The Württemberg wine region is located in the south west of Germany. It stretches between the northern Kocher-Jagst-Tauber area, which connects to Franken, and along the Neckar valley to Stuttgart, Heilbronn and Tübingen.

Also small areas on the sides of the Bodensee (Lake Constance) near the cities of Kressbronn and Lindau belong

to the Württemberg wine region.

The favorable climate along the river Neckar and the limestone and marl soils are perfect for expressive red wines. Warm summers and sunny autumn days ensure good yields and provide high quality wines.

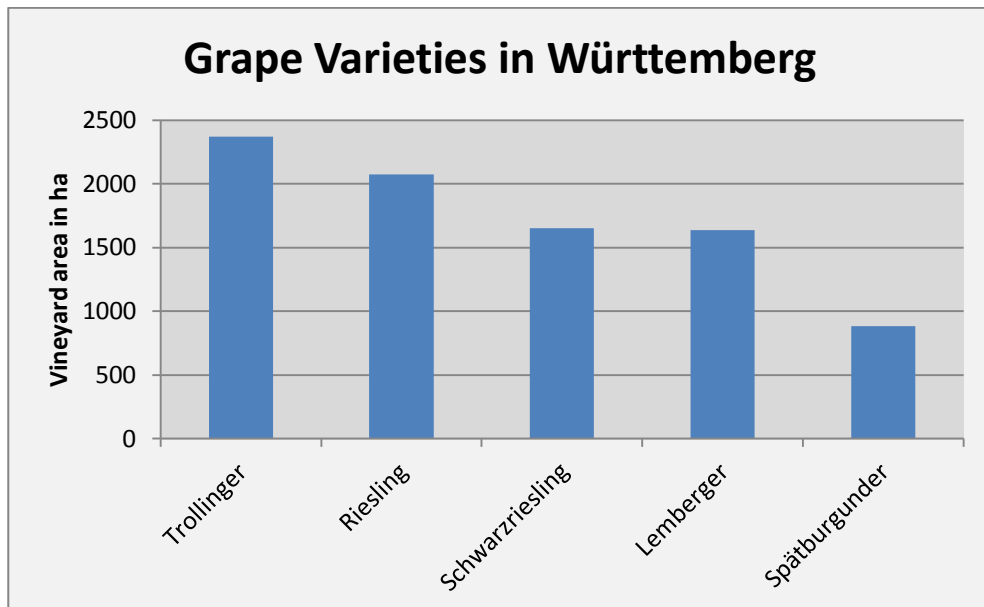
Grape Varieties in Württemberg

The most common variety in the Württemberg wine region is the red wine grape Trollinger. It occupies about 20.8% of the acreage (2,370 hectares). Riesling follows close behind with 18.2%. Also, Schwarzriesling, Lemberger and Spätburgunder play an important role in Württemberg. Due to the excellent conditions the quality of the wines is very high. The chart below shows the most cultivated grape varieties, by area in 2011.



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(Data: German Federal Statistics Office - Destatis, 2011)

Characteristics of Württemberg Wine

Wines from the Württemberg wine region can be described as strikingly fruity, powerful and hearty with a distinctive earthy finish. The Trollinger wines match perfectly with light foods like salads or pizza and pasta.



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Mosel Wine Region

Mosel (engl. Moselle) is one of the most popular of the 13 German wine regions. The Region produced 8,787 ha Wine in 2011 and is therefore the fifth largest wine-growing region in Germany.

But when it comes to international prestige, the Mosel wines definitely take the lead. Around 90% of the vineyards are dedicated to white wine grape varieties, first of all Riesling.



Location and Regional Distinctions

The wine region is located at the bank of the Mosel River between Koblenz (Coblenz) in the north, Trier in the south and Luxembourg along the Rhine River. The Mosel River originates in the French Vosges, flows along the border of Luxembourg and further northeast for more than 500 km before it empties in the Rhine near Koblenz.

It is divided into four sub-regions, namely the Lower Mosel, Middle Mosel, Saar and Ruhr (Ruwer). Last two mentioned are tributaries of the Mosel in the south of the wine region, which are also referred to as the Upper Mosel.

The Mosel River makes its way through dramatically steep and slaty slopes, which are covered with excellent vineyards. Most of the vineyards are extremely steep and can only be harvested by hand. The grapes are planted in an altitude up to 300m above the sea level and therefore rather cool, still facing south along the Mosel River. The cool climate is accompanied by the reflected sun from the Mosel River, which maximizes the ripening of the grapes and creates unique growing conditions.

The soil is dominated by broken slate which offers ideal drainage for the heavy rain falls in the region. Enemies of the Wine Grapes, such as Phylloxera, have difficulties to survive in the slate soils, allowing the vines



to reach extraordinary ages. Undrafted rootstocks and reduced yields result in a very concentrated and distinctive flavor, special for the Mosel region.

Historical Insight in the Mosel Region

Most likely, it were the Romans who brought the viticulture into the region in the 2nd century in order to have a local source for wine. The Wine Production was flourishing in the 4th century and first "Winzerdörfer" (Wine-grower Villages) were established along the Mosel River. The Mosel region identified more and more with the Riesling in the end of the 17th century and the popularity of the grape variety still remains.



Characteristics of Mosel Wine

Particularly the climate and the soil on the sites help the region to produce outstanding wines. The taste of a Mosel wine is very distinctive due to the slaty soil around the Mosel River. The thin topsoil over slate and shale results in wines with high mineral content since the vine roots go deep in the soil to search for nutrients.

Wines are usually pale colored with a rich fragrance of spring blossoms and a fruity, lively acidity. Most display their finest charms in youth, whereby the late- and selectively-harvested wines merit aging.

The Mosel region is well-known for its [Riesling](#), but Grapes from the Elbling and [Müller-Thurgau](#) (Rivaner) also contribute to the production. Because of

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