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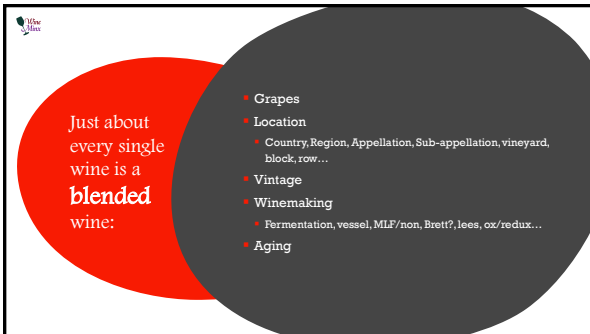
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**Recent wave of "red blends"...**

**Massive category**  
 Started around 2010s (?)  
 Attempt to draw Millennials to wine – graphic packaging, branding, style  
 Stylistically: Labeled "dry" but with RS, tend to be very fruity and bold but soft on acid/tannic structure  
 Tim Atkin MW, "undrinkable." > DEBATE  
 Top 3 most popular are...

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**Why Millennials?**

- Baby Boomers still control 70% of discretionary income and 50% of U.S. net worth; along with Gen X, are still increasing purchases of wine over \$9, but aging
- Millennials are now ~33 YO, lagging in wine consumption vs. older generations
- They have student debt, dealing with unemployment/ recessions, their wealth is more slowly accumulated, and they prefer craft beer and spirits...
- BUT when they DO buy wine, they spend most per bottle vs. other ages, and while only drinking ~ 17% of premium wines (vs. 35% Gen X & 40% Boomers,) they are responsible for almost ALL growth of luxury market
  - 1/3 of Millennials consume other luxury goods... OPPORTUNITY

*US State of the Wine Industry 2020*

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**DEBATE!**

**PRO: THERE IS A PLACE FOR THESE RED BLENDS IN THE MARKET**

- Encouraging more entry-level consumers
- Industry growth trickles to all
- Not so dissimilar to classic red blends, what's the big deal?
- Stop being so snobby

**CON: THESE ARE POORLY-MADE, OVERLY-CONFECTED BOTTLES OF JUNK**

- Doing a disservice to burgeoning wine drinkers
- Not encouraging them to trade up > quality
- Giving other red blends a "bad name"

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

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## Apothic

- VAGUE INFO!
- LCBO: 13.5% & 15 g/L RS
- "A blend of" Zinfandel, Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon
- \$8-10




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## The Prisoner

- VAGUE INFO!
- Inspired by "mixed blacks" planted in Italian immigrants' vineyards in Napa Valley
- Based on Zinfandel, plus an "unlikely mix" of Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Sirah, Syrah, Charbono
- Matured in a combination of French and American oak, 30% new
- \$50
- LCBO: 15.2% & 5 g/L RS




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## 19 Crimes

- Guess what... VAGUE INFO!
- Red Blend: "Our red blend bears the same traits as those banished to Australia. Defiant by nature, bold in character. Always uncompromising. It's a taste you'll never forget."
- LCBO: 14% & 15 g/L RS
- \$8-10
- Snoop Cali Red: Petite Sirah, Zinfandel. "Darkly toasted oak" "Slightly sweet finish."
- LCBO: 14.1% & 23 g/L RS
- \$8-10




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## Present and future?

- Red blends still an important category but are showing a decline in growth over the past few years
- Customers becoming more interested in varietal wines
  - Low/no sugar trend
  - Premiumization trend (Covid a factor)
- Brands need to introduce wider range of products at different price points to keep customer engaged
- But red blends are a fixture in the marketplace and show stability over the long range; retailers should expect to devote ample shelf space

*Information from Drizly, Nielsen, IWSR*

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## The Classic RED BLENDS:

- Bordeaux
- Amarone
- Châteauneuf-du-Pape
- Portugal – Port and table wines
- “Bordeaux Blends” – US Meritage & Super Tuscans
- Dominated – Chianti & Rioja

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## Why blend?

- Tradition/History
  - “Field blend”
  - Insurance
- Style
- Marketing
  - *“I’m looking to make the best wine in each location, from high-volume to 2000 cases, and to make each as successful as possible; it’s a business.” Michel Rolland*



**Too Much?**  
 Dave Phinney’s (now Gallo) LOCATIONS series – can a wine blend reflect an entire country??

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- The classic
- Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, Côt/Malbec, Carmenere (now hardly used; Ch. Clerc Milon)
- July 2019: Marselan, Touriga Nacional, Castets, Arinarnoa approved
- LB: typically 70% CS, 15% Merlot, 15% CF
- RB: typically 70% Merlot, 15% CS, 15% CF

## Bordeaux



Maison, Port of Bordeaux

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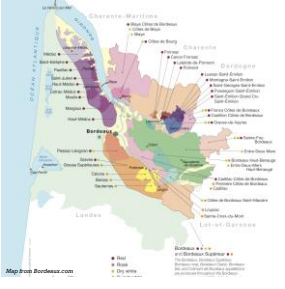
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### Gironde Estuary

**Left Bank:**

- Cabernet Sauvignon-dominant (50% min)
  - Late-budding, mid/late-ripening, small thick-skinned grapes
- Soil: Gentle hills/slopes; Gravel (drainage & retain heat) = muscular, tannic wines, high in extract

**Right Bank:**

- Merlot dominant (Cabernet Franc)
  - Larger, thinner-skinned, looser bunches vs. CS, early-budding, mid-ripening
- Soil: Flatter/even but sloping; Clay, limestone (water-holding yet good drainage, cooling)
  - CF loves limestone, as in Saumur-Champigny

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- Corvina, Corvinone, Rondinella, Molinara... (Oseleta)
- Valpolicella DOC, Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG, Recioto di Valpolicella DOCG, also novello style and Valpolicella Ripasso
- Historically, these grapes ripened to high sugar & were suited to drying = concentrated, sweet styles... then some fermented dry (yeast that handle high alcohol) = Amarone (1980s)

## Amarone



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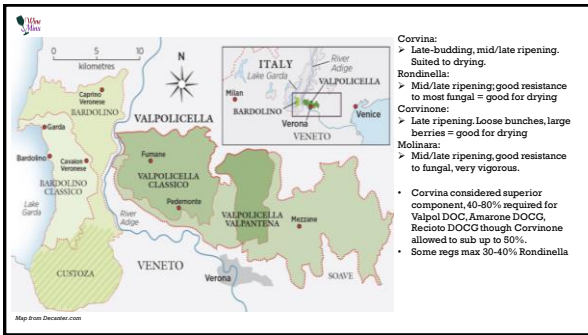
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- Corvina:
  - Late-budding, mid/late ripening.
  - Suited to drying.
- Rondinella:
  - Mid/late ripening; good resistance to most fungal = good for drying
- Corvinone:
  - Late ripening. Loose bunches, large berries = good for drying
- Molinara:
  - Mid/late ripening, good resistance to fungal, very vigorous.
- Corvina considered superior component, 40-80% required for Valpol DOC, Amarone D.O.C.G., Recioto D.O.C.G though Corvinone allowed to sub up to 50%.
- Some regs max 30-40% Rondinella

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- Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre, Cinsault, plus 14(?) others (including white grapes) ~75% Grenache
- Birthplace of GSM blend
- Mediterranean climate is very dry, yet irrigation mostly outlawed
- Famous galets "pudding stones" slow water evaporation and reflect sun up to the vine
- Mistral winds = bush/gobelet training
- France's first appellation 1936
- UFOs have been banned since 1950s

## Châteauneuf-du-Pape



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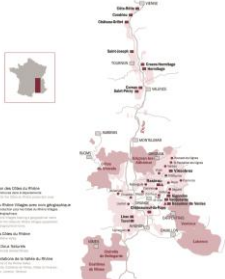
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**Grenache**

- Shines more in CdP vs anywhere else in FR.
- Juicy, bold red fruit, high potential alcohol, loves oak

**Syrah**

- More successful in cooler sites
- Adds structure, black fruits, spice, savory notes

**Mourvedre**

- Late-ripening so needs hottest, driest areas
- Contributes tannin, dark character, bitter chocolate, leather

**Cinsault**

- Helps balance Grenache's ripeness
- Not dynamic/structured/ageworthy on own

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**Port and Portuguese Table Wines**

- **Fortified**
  - Long history
  - Hot and humid Douro
- **Table**
  - Demarcation expanded so producers were able to make table/light wines, which started to be noticed in the 1950s
- Large range of red grapes, Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca, Tinta Roriz, also Baga, Trincadeira...

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**Touriga Nacional**

- Most famous; considered the finest
- Some feel too intense on own so better blended
- Deep color, concentrated, tannic, rich dark fruit/florals

**Touriga Franca**

- Potential as varietal though better blended for Port
- Intense red fruits, florals, herbs, firm yet fine tannins
- Great Port vintages often based on how well TF ripens

**Tinta Roriz**

- Aka Tempranillo, Aragonez
- Gaining in popularity blended or varietal

**Tinta Cão**

- Little more "feminine" vs. TN but full-bodied, can age

**Tinta Barroca**

- More color vs. structure, good all-around performer

All generally thrive in warm/hot conditions. Might be planted separately, but frequently harvested and vinified together.

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**Bordeaux Blends**

- Attempt to emulate Bordeaux yet reflect own terroir
- **SUPER TUSCAN**
  - 1970s producers wanting to make wines that didn't fit appellation regulations; 1992 IGT
  - Non-indigenous Merlot, CS, Syrah, CF...
  - Sassicaia, Ornellaia, Masseto
- **CALIFORNIA MERITAGE**
  - Usually traditional red Bordeaux grapes but zero regulation so anything goes
  - Pahlmeyer Proprietary Red ("All I wanted was to create my own 'California Mouton,'" - Jayson Pahlmeyer) Cain Five (single vvd)

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- **RIOJA**
  - Can be blended with small amounts of Garnacha, Graciano, Mazuelo, Maturana Tinta (added 2007)
- **CHIANTI**
  - Minimum 75% Sangiovese (Chianti, Chianti Classico) up to 10% Canaiolo, up to 20% any other approved (CS, Merlot, Syrah)
  - White grapes prohibited since 2006 – were originally required!

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- Find a reasonably-priced Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot from same producer, designation, vintage
- Taste each on their own
- 1 50%-50%
- 1 75%-25%
- 1 25%-75%
- Maybe make your own blend?!

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## AS IS:

**2018 RODNEY STRONG CABERNET SAUVIGNON**

- M+ garnet
- M intensity red cherry, graphite, cedar, smoke
- Dry, M tart acid, M+ fine-grained but brusque tannins, 14.5 %
- Good balance, intensity, complexity, very good length
- Tart fruit and earthy elements over long, dry finish, ~\$15

**2017 RODNEY STRONG MERLOT**

- M+ ruby-purple
- M intensity blueberry, floral, herbal, lavender
- Dry, M+ pinched acid, M- plush tannins, 14.5% (feels hotter)
- OK balance, length, good intensity and concentration ~\$12

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## Blends:

**50%-50% EVEN STEVEN**

- Loved the nose; cedar AND florals. Black fruit comes through (Merlot nose, CS palate?)
- Tannins dry out fruit quickly, leave alc exposed
- Bit muddy; forgettable, but probably crowd-pleaser, jammy

**75% CABERNET ~ 25% MERLOT**

- Red fruit shines on nose, though didn't feel much added aromatic complexity from Merlot
- But tannins did seem softened. Acid sticks out.

**75% MERLOT ~ 25% CABERNET**

- Smoke note seemed seemed higher, but still very purple-y, slightly higher tannin, felt more Syrah-like!

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## Conclusion?

- All blending seemed to dampen varietal identity
  - 50/50 "worst" offender
- Personally, I felt 75% Merlot 25% CS was the most successful in terms of creating an attractive blend
- But wished I had a dollop of Petit Verdot or Cabernet Franc to enhance/anchor
- > curious if 2018 Merlot would have been more ripe – a stronger component?
- Ultimately, reminded that these individual varietal offerings are well-made, well-valued wines
- \*Day 2 they both evolved nicely; the Merlot had a Rioja Reserva feel so THAT was a nice surprise!

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SO:  
Red blends...

- *"The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." – Aristotle*
- Blended wines are historic, and make sense from a viticultural, winemaking, and marketing position
- What they lack in varietal expression, they make up in many other ways
- **...Or do they?**

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Any  
Questions?

Thank you!

*Annie Edgerton, DipWSET, CSW, CSS, CS, MW Student*

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