Pennsylvania is home to more than two dozen grape varieties that flourish throughout the state’s diverse climate and soil conditions.

Get to know the wine grapes grown throughout Pennsylvania, explore the six regions of PA Wine Land, and keep tasting!

Native Grapes

Native grapes are primarily grown in the **NorthWest** region, but few vineyards are distributed across Pennsylvania, including in the backyards of many home growers. These grapes are adapted to Pennsylvania’s climate, and are typically picked at a lower sugar concentration compared to hybrid or European (V. vinifera) varieties.

**CATAWBA**
This variety has true “grapey” flavors and can be pinkish in color. It is used to produce white to rosé wines.

**CONCORD**
A dark skinned variety with familiar red grape juice flavors

**DELAWARE**
It is a pink variety (as opposed to Concord’s dark colored skin). Similar to Concord, but typically less intense aromatically and flavor-wise. It is sometimes used as a table grape.

**NIAGARA**
This white variety has the familiar white grape juice flavors.

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Produced with help from PennState Extension
Hybrid Grapes

Hybrid varieties are the babies of the grape growing community. While a few have been around for decades, some are just being released! Hybrid grapes appear to be less defined by terroir, with a relative consistent flavor profile regardless of where they are grown. They grow well in all Pennsylvania grape-growing regions, given their resilience in harsher climates and higher resistance to disease compared to V. vinifera varieties.

White wines produced from hybrid grapes generally contain vibrant, citrus flavors while red wines are typically nuanced with red berry aromas/flavors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BACO NOIR</td>
<td>A dark skinned variety with berry flavors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAYUGA</td>
<td>A neutral (citrusy) white wine variety that can be made into many styles of wine (dry, sweet, sparkling)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHAMBOURCIN</td>
<td>A dark skinned variety with sour cherry or pie cherry flavor</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHANCELLOR DECHAUNAC</td>
<td>(more commonly referred to as “Chancellor”) A dark skinned variety, with a neutral red wine flavor</td>
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<tr>
<td>MARECHEL FOCH (also referred to as “Foch”)</td>
<td>A dark skinned variety with a relative neutral red wine flavor, sometimes witha smoky or herbaceous nuance</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOIRET</td>
<td>A dark skinned variety with black pepper aroma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEYVAL BLANC</td>
<td>A neutral (citrusy) white wine variety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEUBEN</td>
<td>A dark skinned variety with strawberry flavors with a hint of fresh grapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAMINETTE</td>
<td>An aromatic white variety with intense rose flavors</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIDAL BLANC</td>
<td>This grape, while resilient, appears more affected by regional terroir. For example, in the NorthWest region, Vidal Blanc tends to have bright crispness and pineapple or peach notes, whereas Vidal Blanc grown in SouthCentral Pennsylvania tends to exude more tropical, floral flavors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIGNOLES</td>
<td>An aromatic white variety with tropical fruit characters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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European Grapes

Vitis vinifera (V. vinifera or vinifera), European, wine grape varieties are found all over the world and throughout Pennsylvania. Many white vinifera varieties are grown throughout the state, while many of the red varieties are commonly grown in the southeastern part of the state due to the general longer growing season. Vineyard site selection is very important for wine grape production, and vinifera varieties are no exception in terms of where they are planted and thrive.

Some of the most important climatic conditions that dictate the ability of a variety to produce high quality wine includes the length of the growing season, the amount of heat accumulated through the growing season, winter conditions (especially typical winter low temperatures), and frost incidences.

**ALBARIÑO**

A white grape variety typically grown in Portugal and Spain. Quite aromatic with intense floral and fruity aromas like: orange blooms, honeysuckle, lemongrass, grapefruit, peach, and green apple. Typically not aged long with little to no oak influence.

**CABERNET FRANC**

In Pennsylvania the dark skinned Cabernet Franc takes on more of a traditional French-style: freshly herbal, with hints of balsamic and, occasionally, nuances of dried tobacco leaves. It ripens consistently across years in the mid-Atlantic region, and has become a base variety for a lot of dryer red wine blends.

**CABERNET SAUVIGNON**

Pennsylvania Cabernet Sauvignons tend to be closer to a European Cabernet Sauvignon wine with ripe red berry flavors, nuances of savory herbs, and black cassis (currants). These dark skinned grapes can be used in classic red wine blends.

**CHARDONNAY**

Pennsylvania Chardonnays tend to be produced in a more traditional European style with retention of acidity that separates it from those produced in California. Vibrantly full of citrus zest and floral aromas, Chardonnay can take on many styles: dry, unoaked, fruity white wine that exudes fresh apple and floral aromas, or an oaky, vanilla, caramel classic. Chardonnay may also be the base for many traditional sparkling wines.
GEWÜRZTRAMINER
A white variety that is typically produced with some sweetness, although the degree of sweetness will vary by wine producer. Aromatically intense with strong aromas of wildflowers, roses, tropical fruit, passion fruit and, of course, lychee fruits. Lychees tend to smell aromatically floral and contain similar aromas to that of Gewürztraminer.

GRÜNER VELTLINER
An aromatic white grape variety that has been well established in the Lehigh Valley in the SouthEast region, but growing in production throughout the state. Some Grüner wines may have a grassy, green bean, or dill flavor with hints of tropical fruits like passion fruit or peach flavors. This style is very similar to a Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand, but typically less aromatically intense. More traditional Grüners exude a stronger citrus, green bean, or white pepper flavor with a full-bodied and minerality essence in the mouth.

LEMBERGER (also known as Blaufränkisch)
A popular dark skinned variety grown across Pennsylvania. Lemberger has a tannic structure that creates a very masculine wine. The profile has dried herb, woody flavors that integrate well with its red fruit nature. This wine does well with some oak influence and aging.

MERLOT
Merlot tends to retain a softer mouthfeel than its Cabernet cousins. Typical profiles include savory, earthy, and, sometimes, hints of fresh mushroom flavors. Merlot takes on a red jam, black cherry, and pomegranate flavor in warmer, drier or better ripening years.

PINOT GRIGIO/PINOT GRIS
A neutral white variety that produces a gray color berry when ripe. Provides citrus fruit flavors and is typically made in a dry, non-oaky wine style.

PINOT NOIR
A delicate dark skinned variety that makes a great introductory red wine or an ideal variety for connoisseurs. Pinot Noir is one of the trickiest wines to make, but when made well, the results can be magical. This variety is also one of the traditional base varieties for rosé sparkling wine.

RIESLING
This white variety is very terroir-driven so the flavor profiles vary across the Pennsylvania regions and is very reflective in terms of where it is grown. The terroir will affect the acidity and flavor profile of the Riesling. For example, Riesling picked and produced in the NorthWest region tends to have more of a peach or peach-candy flavor, with crisper sourness. Riesling from South Central Pennsylvania tends to have more citrus and floral flavors. In the hottest of growing regions, like the SouthEast region, Riesling can be intensely aromatic with floral or tropical flavors, and occasionally, petrol, a unique flavor associated primarily with Rieslings.

SYRAH
Depending on the vintage year, this dark skinned variety has many different flavor profiles. With warmer growing seasons, Syrah is jammy with lots of red fruit flavors. With cooler growing seasons, Syrah has more chocolate, coffee, and earthy flavors. Softer in mouthfeel compared to the Cabernets.

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Pennsylvania’s diverse regional climate allows for the wide variety of grapes that are grown throughout PA Wine Land. With the right earth, slope, elevation and direction, Pennsylvania has the perfect formula for high-quality wines. The soil, climate, grape variety selection and viticultural management techniques combine to produce wines that are unique to their surroundings. Get to know the growing conditions of PA’s six regions and then get out there to explore PA Wine Land.
NORTHWEST  A 20-mile long and 5-mile wide sea of native grapes like Concord, Niagara and other hybrid and European varieties hug the Lake Erie shoreline. Because of the lake the surrounding climate is cooler, with adequate air movement and relative consistency in year-to-year weather conditions compared to some other regions. Several wine grape varieties thrive in vineyard sites with silt loam and sandy soils. Inland and south from the shore, elevation rises into hills, the climate cools, and more cold-tolerant varieties thrive. Explore wineries in the NorthWest Region for varieties like Concord, Niagara, Riesling, and Cabernet Franc, along with hybrids like Vidal and Vignoles.

NORTHCENTRAL  This area is especially diverse with its variation in elevation along the Appalachian Mountain range, diverse soil characteristics, and pockets of microclimates where grapes grow successfully. Cool-climate V. vinifera varieties grow well amongst various producers while some sites require more cold-hardy hybrid varieties. The region is known to produce fine wines including aromatic white wines, dry reds and various sweet selections with great freshness, fruit-driven flavors, and vibrant acidity. Pinot Grigio, Traminette, Chambourcin, Lemberger, and Cabernet Franc prosper. Explore wineries in the NorthCentral Region for aromatic wines of great character.

NORTHEAST  This region is home to the Endless Mountains, which lacks any mediation of ocean temperatures as the area is primarily landlocked. Here, cold-hardy hybrid and cool-climate vinifera varieties produce wines of exceptional aroma and fruit flavors. Many growers focus on traditional vinifera varieties like Riesling, Grüner Veltliner, and Cabernet Franc to make both red and rosé wines. However, an emergence and popularity of new cold-hardy hybrid varieties like Marquette and La Crescent are tickling the taste buds of local consumers. Explore wineries in the NorthEast Region for vibrant wines with delicious fruit flavors and found in a variety of wine styles fit for any wine lover.

SOUTHWEST  In the hills around Pittsburgh and the Laurel Highlands, the cooler climate and higher elevations help cold-hardy hybrids, native grapes, and some cool-climate V. vinifera varieties to thrive in the shale-based soils. For vintners, choosing the proper site and grape variety are keys to successful wine making is this area. In this region in particular, it’s also important for wine growers to control grape diseases and keep deer from using their vineyards as a buffet. Explore wineries in the SouthWest Region for varieties like Cabernet Franc, Vidal, Traminette, Seyval Blanc, Noiret, and Chambourcin.

SOUTHCENTRAL  Below the mountains is the fruit belt of Adams County where apples and peaches thrive. With a longer growing season and higher heat accumulation, several growers opt to produce traditional Bordeaux varieties both white and red in color. Explore wineries in the SouthCentral Region for mature, rich, complex red wines like Meritage blends, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Chambourcin, as well as white varieties like Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

SOUTHEAST  The SouthEast generally experiences a longer growing season and higher temperatures, similar to the SouthCentral region of Pennsylvania. This is the heart of many classic European varieties. The generally hilly terrain of the region offers opportunities for vineyards with south-facing slopes that aid in draining water and maintaining air flow that encourages grapevines to flourish. Explore wineries in the SouthEast’s Lehigh Valley AVA for hybrids like Traminette and Chambourcin, aromatic white vinifera varieties like Gewürztraminer, Riesling, and Grüner Veltliner, as well as the red variety, Pinot Noir. In the southern counties you’ll find a greater abundance of bold, red wines like Meritage blends, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Chambourcin, and white wines like Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc.