

White Wines

Pinot Blanc



Even back in the days when Alto Adige was still very much red wine country, Pinot Blanc was the “alpha white,” so to speak. Nowadays it occupies a cultivation area of 580 hectares, which equals a little over 10 % of the total area of cultivation in Alto Adige. That is hardly surprising, however, seeing as Pinot Blanc, with its elegant scent of apples, pears, and lemons, its invigorating acidity, and fruity finesse, is the ideal wine for any occasion. It is served at a temperature of 10–12 °C (50–54 °F) to come into its full flavor.

RECOMMENDED FOR: aperitif, light appetizers, fish, traditional Alto Adige dishes

Sauvignon Blanc



While the first Sauvignon vines were already planted in the Terlano area in the 19th century, this variety did not really gain traction in Alto Adige until a few years ago. Nowadays, 460 hectares of cultivation area, mostly in western and eastern locations, are dedicated to Sauvignon vines, equaling roughly eight percent of the total area of cultivation. Served at a temperature of 10–12 °C (50–54 °F), this white wine will unfold its typical “green” aromas: fresh-cut grass, elderberry flower, and gooseberry.

RECOMMENDED FOR: aperitif, fish and seafood, vegetable dishes, goat cheese

Gewürztraminer



Gewürztraminer began its triumphal march from the wine village of Termeno in Alto Adige’s Bassa Atesina region. It is named after the settlement (Tramin in German), evidenced by the fact that the local wine already had a wide-ranging reputation in the Middle Ages and that the vineyards in and around Termeno have been home to this wine since time immemorial. Nowadays, it is one of the most widespread white wines in Alto Adige, with a cultivation area of 617 hectares. Served at a temperature of 10–12 °C (50–54 °F), it unfolds a plethora of notes that range from rose petals to cloves and even tropical fruit. Gewürztraminer is considered a lush wine with intense coloring and a relatively high alcohol content.

RECOMMENDED FOR: aperitif, fish and seafood, vegetable dishes, blue cheese and dessert

Chardonnay



Chardonnay likes it warm, which is why it can tap into its full potential in the favorable locations of Alto Adige. Its elegant aromas are a combination of pineapple, banana, apple, pear, citrus fruit, vanilla, and butter, with subtle acidity added to the mix. These days, Chardonnay is grown on almost 600 hectares of land – in other words, more than every tenth hectare is used for it – and matured in a number of ways, from lively and fruity to complex barrel-fermented varieties. It is ideally served at a temperature of 10–14 °C (50–57° F).

RECOMMENDED FOR: white meat, fish and seafood, Mediterranean and traditional Alto Adige dishes

Pinot Grigio



Also known in German as Grauburgunder or Ruländer, this variety has many names. It feels most at home on sunny slopes and hills. With a cultivation area of almost 670 hectares, Pinot Grigio is the most cultivated white wine variety in Alto Adige, and it comes in many forms: delicate and fresh from Val Venosta, rich in minerals from Valle dell’Adige, and corpulent and fiery from the south of the country. Pinot Grigio is best served at 10–12 °C (50–54 °F). It is full-bodied and extra rich with aromas ranging from ripe apple, pear, and quince to lime blossom.

RECOMMENDED FOR: savory fish dishes and seafood, traditional Alto Adige dishes, Italian dishes

Riesling



Riesling is considered to be a sensitive grape variety, which is why there is only a very limited choice of ideal locations in Alto Adige. Archduke John of Austria first introduced Riesling vines in Germany back in the mid-19th century. Nowadays it is cultivated on an area of approx. 100 hectares mainly in elevated locations (such as Valle Isarco). Matured with next to no residual sweetness, Riesling grapes produce exceptionally fresh and fruity wines with invigorating acidity. A fine scent of elegant peach and citrus notes tickles the nose. Riesling is served at a temperature of 10–12 °C (50–54 °F).

RECOMMENDED FOR: aperitif, fish and seafood, vegetable dishes, Asian dishes

White Wines

Sylvaner



Derived from Traminer, Sylvaner requires a somewhat cooler region but as much sunlight as possible. In Alto Adige, it is therefore cultivated under optimum conditions in Valle Isarco, spanning a cultivation area of 68 hectares – a little over one percent of the total area of cultivation in Alto Adige. That is where the foundations are laid for mineral-rich and fresh wines with a crispy body and crisp acidity and a scent of apple, peach, and mint, but also fresh hay. Sylvaner is best enjoyed at a temperature of 10–12 °C (50–54 °F).

RECOMMENDED FOR: fish and seafood, vegetable dishes, speck and cold cuts, Italian dishes

Veltliner



Originally made popular at an international level by Austrian winemakers, Grüner Veltliner feels most at home in Valle Isarco these days. Covering a cultivation area of only 27 hectares – a mere 0.5 percent of the total cultivation area in Alto Adige –, these grapes, when matured with the appropriate care, expert knowledge, and experience, produce pleasantly spicy, fruity, and fresh wines with subtle aromas (green apple, grapefruit). Grüner Veltliner is served chilled, ideally at a temperature of 8–10 °C (46–50 °F).

RECOMMENDED FOR: appetizers, fried fish, speck and cold cuts, traditional Alto Adige dishes

Kerner



It should come as no surprise to anyone who enjoys a glass of Kerner (best served at a temperature of 10–12 °C (50–54 °F) that this cross between Schiava (Trollinger) and Riesling is named after a poet: Justinus Kerner from Germany. Kerner (the wine!) is generally regarded as racy and spicy, with its subtle tone of nutmeg and its fine, fruity bouquet. In Alto Adige, Kerner is now being cultivated on an area of 115 hectares. Frost-resistant grape variety that it is, it thrives especially in the cooler parts of Valle Isarco and Val Venosta.

RECOMMENDED FOR: aperitif, appetizers, grilled fish, vegetable dishes

Müller-Thurgau



Created in the 1880s by enologist and grape breeder Hermann Müller from the Swiss canton of Thurgau, this grape variety is derived from Riesling and has also found a home in Alto Adige these days: on an area of almost 180 hectares. Müller Thurgau wines are lively and aromatic whites with a characteristic tone of nutmeg. The other aromas, which best unfold at 10–12 °C (50–54 °F), depend on location. They range from mineral-rich to floral aromas, from citrus fruit, elderflower, lilac, and geranium to blackcurrant.

RECOMMENDED FOR: light appetizers, fried sweet water fish, cream cheese

Moscato Giallo



Moscato Giallo is not only considered a very old but also a very robust grape variety. That may be part of the reason why it has been cultivated in Alto Adige (among other places) for centuries, preferably in warm Valle dell'Adige. In total, Moscato Giallo vineyards cover an area of approx. 100 hectares in Alto Adige. They supply the raw material for distinctly sweet wines with a pleasant scent of nutmeg. In addition, Moscato Giallo grapes are also used to make dessert wines and dry wines. Moscato Giallo is best served chilled (8–12 °C (46–54 °F)).

RECOMMENDED FOR: aperitif, dessert, aged blue cheese

Red Wines

Pinot Noir



Considered the king of all Burgundy grapes, Pinot Noir has been at home in Alto Adige since the mid-19th century, and its star has constantly been on the rise since the 2000s. Nowadays, almost ten percent of the total cultivation area in Alto Adige is covered in Pinot Noir vines, especially on the slopes in Mazon, Glen, and Pinzon in Bassa Atesina or in Val Venosta. That is where you will find the grapes for the best Pinot Noir south of the Alps, for wines with a soft, elegant body and an intense scent of red and dark berries. The full potential of Pinot Noir best unfolds when served at a temperature of 14–16 °C (57–61 °F).

RECOMMENDED FOR: game, spring lamb, rabbit, hard cheese

Schiava



Schiava (also referred to as Vernatsch or Trollinger in German) is a real Alto Adige local, an indigenous grape variety which dominated the winegrowing business in Alto Adige from the early modern period to the 1980s. While connoisseurs may have turned up their noses at Schiava back in the days, this variety is now going through a renaissance on 572 hectares of cultivation area thanks to a strict quality policy. Schiava is a light wine with low tannin content, flowery notes, and a versatile character: it can be full-bodied (Santa Maddalena), soft (Lago di Caldaro), or spicy (Merano).

RECOMMENDED FOR: aperitif, appetizers, speck and cold cuts, cheese, veal, traditional Alto Adige dishes, Italian dishes

Lagrein



Like Schiava, Lagrein is originally from Alto Adige, i.e., an indigenous variety. In contrast to its more successful cousin, Lagrein had almost become extinct in Alto Adige before it went through a major popularity boost around the turn of the millennium. These days, Lagrein is cultivated on 508 hectares of land, which equals almost ten percent of the total cultivation area in Alto Adige. The wines it produces are full of character, with a velvety body and soft acidity. Its aroma is reminiscent of berries, cherries, and violets, with additional spicy notes that emerge when barrel-aged. By the way: there is also a rosé version of Lagrein (known as Lagrein Rosato or Lagrein Kretzer).

RECOMMENDED FOR: game, beef, hard cheese

Cabernet



The designation of origin under wine regulations for Alto Adige makes it possible to use only the designation “Cabernet”, but there are two varieties: Cabernet Franc, the older of the two varieties, and Cabernet Sauvignon which came into existence as a cross between Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc. Cabernet varieties have been grown in Alto Adige for more than one and a half centuries. They occupy an ever-growing cultivation area, also because they like it warm (i.e., in the southern part of Alto Adige), and therefore benefit from rising temperatures. Approx. three percent of the total cultivation area in Alto Adige are currently used to grow Cabernet vines. The grapes thus grown are used to make peppery, spicy wines with soft tones (blackcurrant and blackberry). Cabernet must mature properly in order to unfold its full potential (when served at 16–18 °C (61–64 °F)). The name of the game is: the more peace and quiet, the better.

RECOMMENDED FOR: game, lamb, classic meat dishes, hard cheese

Merlot



Like many other Burgundy grapes, Merlot was also first grown in Alto Adige in the late 19th century. And that was quite obviously a success: since then, the cultivation area has grown to 192 hectares. Merlot prefers warm places at low altitudes (i.e., in the southern part of Alto Adige), making it a profiteer of climate change. Served at a temperature of 14–16 °C (57–61 °F), Merlot is widely regarded as a full-bodied, fruity, corpulent, yet soft wine (thanks to mature tannins) which teases the nose with notes reminiscent of blackberries, blackcurrants, and spices.

RECOMMENDED FOR: veal, game, beef, cheese

Moscato Rosa



Moscato Rosa is originally from Sicily, and it shows: that grape likes it warm. That is one of the reasons why it found a second, if somewhat confined, home in Alto Adige in the mid-19th century. Only seven hectares of vineyard are occupied by Moscato Rosa vines, making Moscato Rosa from Alto Adige a rare and exclusive treat. By the way, Moscato Rosa is known in German as “Rosenmuskateller,” and it is clear why: this full-bodied, aromatic, and complex sweet wine really gives forth a distinct scent of roses.

RECOMMENDED FOR: strawberry and chocolate desserts, crêpes, poppy seed strudel