

ROMANIAN WINES



Romania numbers among the few countries in the world that benefits of such favourable conditions for vine growing and winemaking, excepting perhaps only France, which can produce such a great variety of wines.” Prof. Viorel Stoian¹

Basic characteristic of Romanian viticulture. The Romanian viticulture is almost at the Northern limit of vine growing and as such, it must use the most favourable places. Therefore, Romanian viticulture is mostly done on the hills, on well drained slopes and with the best sun exposure, or in the valleys that are well protected against the cold winter winds and the late spring frosts, in other words, it is a viticulture of the most favourable microclimates.

Red wines of excellent quality can be obtained at Dealu Mare, Dealurile Buzaului, a part of Cotesti, some of the wine growing centres of Galati, Vaslui, Tulcea and Constantza counties, as well as at Minis Vineyard, the wine growing centres in Banat (Recas, Moldova Noua, Dealurile Tirolului) and the hill areas in Mehedinti and Dolj (Orevita, Vanjulet-Vanju Mare, Golul Drancei, Banu Maracine). The paradox is that the areas best fit for red wines production produce mainly white wines, primarily because the domestic market requires these sorts of wines. The situation is going to change as the international market requires mostly red wines.

An area where white wines are produced almost exclusively, is located in Transylvania (Tarnave, Alba, Sebes-Apold, Aiud-Ciumbud, Lechinta-Teaca vineyards), in Crisana and Maramures (Diosig, Biharia, Tileagd, Silvania), as well as in the central and Northern part of Moldavia (Husi, Vaslui, Zeletin, Racaciuni, Iasi-Bucium). In this area red wines cannot be produced because the vine does not get enough warmth to synthesize their anthocyanins. In exchange, the white wines made here are excellent, being more acid and lively and having an unequalled freshness and richness. It is the case of Traminer and Muscat Ottonel of Tarnave or of Lechinta, as well as of Feteasca Regala produced in Blaj or Jidvei. The explanation is that the moderate temperatures during the ripening and maturation of grapes are not favourable for a violent combustion of the flavour compounds, as it happens in the Southern area.

Finally, there are three special “climate islands”, that is, some places having long, warm and dry autumns that are favourable for the advanced over-maturation of grapes. Here semi-sweet and natural sweet wines can be obtained quite constantly. These places are the famous Murfatlar (together with Medgidia and Cernavoda) and Cotnari vineyards, as well as Pietroasa wine growing centre – belonging to Dealu Mare vineyard.

The wide range of Romanian wines. As mentioned above, there is great variety of climate and soil conditions in the vineyards and wine growing centres. Light wines can be obtained on the Southern Oltenia sands, white and acid wines (quite fit for good quality distillates) in Diosig, Apold and the Vaslui region, excellent wines meant for champagne made in Simleul Silvaniei, Panciu and the county of Alba, white wines with a long run from Odobesti, Husi, Teremia, soft and velvety red wines in Dealu Mare, strong red wines (vigorous and corpulent) in the vineyards of Oltenia and Samburesti, slender red wines in Cotesti, Nicoresti and in the vineyards of Galati, and finally the sweet wine areas from Murfatlar, Pietroasa and Cotnari.

Very few countries can produce such a wide range of wines. Unfortunately, this God-given variety of microclimates, which is presently not enough put in value, will be better used in future once Romania will become an EU Member State. This is the challenge for the next generations of wine growers and oenologists, who need to be more inventive and persevering.

Characterization of Romanian wines. Apart from a few traditional wines as, for example, the wines of Cotnari, fine Romanian wine are subject to the process of vinification as “pure sorts. Chart no.1 below presents a list of the sorts cultivated for the production of wines in Romania. Some are cultivated on important areas, as it is the case of Feteasca Regala, Feteasca Alba, Riesling Italian, while others are cultivated on relatively limited areas (i.e. Cadarca, Furmint or Francusa). There are some sorts that have good chances of spreading, such as Columna, Blauerzweigelt or Ezerfurtu, but also some extinct sorts that are not cultivated anymore, such as Cabernet Franc, Riesling de Rhin, Silvaner, Neuburger and maybe even Malbec.

As one can see, the sorts were enlisted according to their potential of making top quality wines, fine wines or wines for current consumption. Obviously, this breakdown is conventional and is made according to the normal potential of the sort to produce a certain quality wine. This potential is influenced by the favourable conditions of certain areas, including the climatic conditions of the vintage year. For example, the sorts of Feteasca Regala or Babeasca Neagra can be turned into quality wines in favourable years and into everyday consumption wines in less favourable years.

¹ Prof. Dr. Eng. Viorel Stoian, *The Gold of the Hills*

Chart 1 – Sorts used for wine production in Romania

Sorts		Category		
		High Quality Wines	Quality Wines	Current consumption
White wines	<i>Largely cultivated</i>	Chardonnay Sauvignon Pinot Gris Grasa de Cotnari Feteasca Alba Traminer rose	Riesling Italian Feteasca Regala Francusa Aligote Furmint	Galbena de Odobesti Zghihara de Husi Plavaie Mustoasa de Maderat Iordana Creată Majarca Alba Steinschiller rose Rkatiteli Saint Emillion
	<i>More recently introduced</i>		Sarba Cramposie selected Columna Aromat de Iasi Ozana Alidor Donaris Furmint de Minis Ezerfurtu	Babeasca gri Miorita Brumariu
Red wines	<i>Largely cultivated</i>	Feteasca neagra Cabernet Sauvignon Pinot Noir Merlot	Burgund mare Cardaca Babeasca Neagra	Oporto Alicante Bouschet Rosioara Sangiovese Aramon
	<i>More recently introduced</i>	-	Blauerzweigelt	Codana Pandur Haiduc Purpuriu Novac
Flavoured wines	<i>Largely cultivated</i>	Tamaioasa Romaneasca Muscat Ottonel Busuioaca de Bohotin	-	-
	<i>More recently introduced</i>	-	-	-