

French-American Hybrids

Grapes and their wines
For wine-tasting

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History

French-American hybrids came about because of the invasion of Europe by pests and diseases brought over from the New World, such as:

- phylloxera (*Daktulosphaira vitifoliae*)
- powdery mildew (*Uncinula necator*)
- And other New World pests

French hybridizers responded by creating new strains from New World grapes resistant to these diseases.

History

- French-American hybrids first appeared in the mid- to late-1800's. (Phylloxera devastated European crops in 1860.)
- Most early crosses produced poor to mediocre wine (in part because the European stock used was not known for making quality wines either).
- Wild American grapes were typically used
- Further crosses with better grapes, and crosses with other hybrids were later tried.
- Research is done on French-American hybrids chiefly at Cornell University in the US today (more recently at the University of Minnesota as well).
- Many hybrids, it turns out, grow well in New York State.

Varieties of Grapes

“Red” Grapes

Dark-coloured grapes comes in colours that range from red to blue to purple to “black” in shade.



“White” Grapes

Usually appear green in colour, or occasionally, other pale colours such as pink.



Varieties of Grapes

Grapes are also divided into the type of use.

- Table grapes – for eating fresh

There are four main uses for all types of grapes.

- Wine grapes – for fermenting

Most French-American hybrids are used for pest-resistant rootstock for *vinifera* grapes, or for making wine.

- Sweet juice grapes – also for preserves and jams
- Raisin grapes

"Red" Grapes

- These are the grapes that produce red wines (or can be used to make rosés).
- These grapes include such varieties as:
 - Chancellor
 - Baco Noir
 - Frontenac
 - Landot Noir
 - Leon Millot
 - Norton
 - Marechal Foch
 - Chelois
 - Rougeon
 - De Chaunac
 - St. Croix
 - Vincent
 - Chambourcin
 - Villard Noir
 - Colobel
 - GR7
 - And other lesser well-known varieties

- Chancellor was one of the first French-American hybrids and was once the most widely grown hybrid in France for table wine (today, it seems to be banned).
- Chancellor is grown all over the Eastern US, from Maryland to Illinois, Ontario to Tennessee.
- The vines are relatively cold-hardy, but are susceptible to some diseases.
- The wine is typically fruity and can produce quality dry wines. I am aware of at least one winery that makes a Chancellor Blanc.
- It can also be used for blending
- Wine is tannic and has a rich, dark colour. Flavours include: plum, cedar, leather, berries.
- Works well with spicy foods.

Chancellor



Some wineries that produce a *varietal* Chancellor

- Johnson Estate, NY
- Montezuma Winery, NY
- Joseph Estate Wines, ON
- St. Julian, MI
- Cayuga Ridge, NY
- ***Shamrock Vineyards, OH***
- Buckingham Valley, PA
- Rose Bank Winery, PA
- Old Mill Race, PA
- Martin's Honey Farm & Meadery, NY
- Amalthea Cellars, NJ
- Kirkwood Winery, WV
- Alto Vineyards, IL
- Cove Point Winery, MD
- Little Hills Winery, MO
(they make the Chancellor Blanc)
- And this is hardly a complete list!

- Produced as a cross between Folle Blanche and an unknown variety of American grape (*Vitis riparia*).
- Also once grown in France but now restricted there by regulation, is now grown in cooler climates in US and Canada as the vines are cold resistant.
- Wines are highly pigmented and highly acidic. Flavours: smoky, wood, spice, red fruits, cedar, wildflowers
- Goes well with barbeque.
- Often blended with other wines, and sold under regional names in Ontario
- Should be cellared to control the acidity

Baco Noir



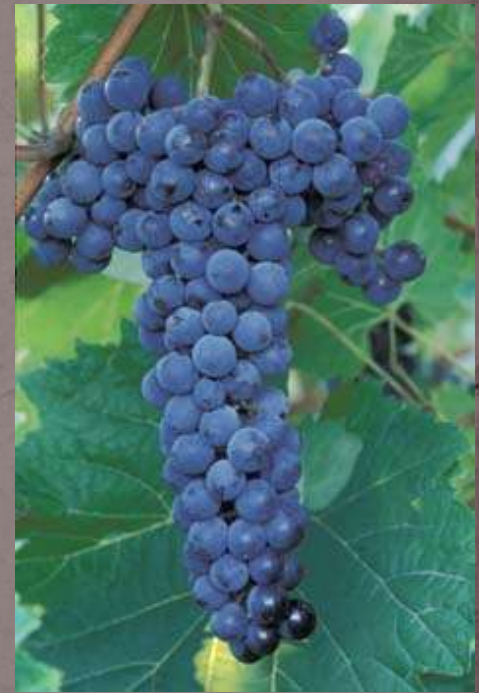
photo courtesy of Chris Hawes

Some wineries that produce *varietals* of Baco Noir

- Henry of Pelham Family Estate, ON
- Sorrenti Family Vineyard, PA
- Pelee Island Winery, PA
- Giradet Wine Cellars, OR
[2008 Greatest of Grape Award Winner](#)
- Torrey Ridge, NY
- Poplar Ridge, NY
- Caroline Cellars, NY
- Three Willows Vineyard, Northern Tasmania, Australia
- Blomidon Estate Winery, NS
- Colio Estate Wines, ON
- Barrington Cellars, NY
- *Buccia Vineyard, OH*
- Merritt Estate, NY

- A recently introduced variety, few wineries make varietal wines from it. Cold hearty, but many vintners still find it's long-term potential questionable. Grown mostly in Minnesota and surrounding states.
- Pairs well with strong cheeses and grilled meats.
- Good red colour. Flavours include: cherry, plum, floral, spice.
- Crown Valley Winery, MO
- St. Croix Vineyards, MO
- Crofut Family Winery, MN
- Silver Hills Winery, NE
- Prairie Crossing Vineyard, IA
- Otter Creek Winery, NY

Frontenac



- A parent of Frontenac, it is also made into a varietal in a few states along the East Coast. Moderately winter hearty with an early ripening date.
- Good aging potential. Wines made from Landot Noir have received as high as 96/100 points.
- Flavours: spice, licorice, leather, nut, mushroom, berries. Lightly tannic.
- Jewell Towne Vineyards, NH-MA
- Baldwin Vineyards, NY
- Cove Point Winery, MD
- Amwell Valley Vineyards, NJ

Landot Noir



- Once grown in France to deepen the colour of paler wines. Now basically illegal in France, but is still grown in a few places like Liechtenstein.

Leon Millot

- A hybrid of American grapes and Goldriesling, the same crossing as Marechal Foch.
- Now grown primarily in American Midwest, and as far north along the East Coast as Nova Scotia. Ripens early in the season.
- Rich in colour and mild tannins.
- Flavours include: chocolate, berries, blackberries



Some wineries that produce *varietal* Leon Millot

- Sorrenti's Cherry Valley Winery, PA
- Starr Hill Winery, PA
- Alexis Bailly Vineyard, MN
- China Bend Vineyard, OR
- Four Sisters Winery, NJ
- Boyden Valley Winery, VT
- Keuka Lake Vineyards, NY
- Gray Hare Inn Vineyard, MI
- The Forks of Cheat Winery, WV
- Domaine de Grande Pre, NS
- French Lick Winery, IN

- Produced from the same cross as Leon Millot (though this is somewhat in question).
- Formerly widely grown in Loire, now restricted by European Union regulation.
- Now more widely grown in Eastern US and Canada. Winter hearty.
- Produces anything from a light bodied wine, to one with dark, inky pigments and medium tannins. Sometimes even ports.
- Quality of wines better with younger vines.
- Flavours include: black fruits, coffee, chocolate, musk.
- Said to become more like Pinot Noir with age.

Marechal Foch



Some wineries that produce *varietal* Marechal Foch

- Merritt Estate Winery, NY
- *Stoney Ridge Winery, OH*
- Eola Hills Wine Cellars, OR
- Prejean Winery, NY
- Oswego Hills Vineyard, OR
- Purple Cow Vineyards, OR
- Jost Vineyards, NS
- Atwater Estates Vineyard, NY
- Recline Ridge Winery, BC
- Whiskey Run Creek, NE
- Adair Vineyards, NY
- Kittling Ridge Estate Wines & Spirits, ON
- Jewell Towne Vineyards, NH-MA

- The oldest hybrid grape in the US, originally cultivated in Virginia in the 18th century.
- Won “Best Red of All Nations” in 1873 at a wine competition in Vienna (made in Missouri).
- Historical origins a little mysterious, but believed to be a cross between two American grapes with a *vinifera* grape (including a *labrusca*, which is uncommon).
- Goes by two names: Norton more in the East, but goes by Cynthiana in the Plains.
- Flavours include: spice, raspberry, coffee, bittersweet chocolate, with good aging character. Mid-West grown Cynthiana is usually lighter and best drunk earlier.
- Known as the “Cabernet of the Ozarks.”
- Works well with chicken and pork.

Norton/ Cynthiana



photo courtesy of Stone Hill Winery

Some wineries that produce *varietal* Norton/Cynthiana

- Chrysalis Vineyards, VA
- Smith-Berry Winery, KY
- Augusta Winery, MO
- Crown Valley Winery, MO
- Indiana Creek Winery, MO
- OakGlenn Vineyards & Winery, MO
- St. Francois Winery, MO
- Summit Lake Winery, MO
- Stone Hill Winery, MO
- Horton Vineyards, VA
- Baxter's Vineyards, IL
- Three Sisters Vineyards, GA
- Michella's Vineyards, AR
- Cowie's Wine Cellars, AR

- Vines are late-budding & early-ripening. Susceptibility to winter damage limits northern use.

Chelois

- Acreage declined in 80's but has rebounded.
- Rarely made into varietal wine. Typically used for blending.
- Often made into light reds or rosés.
- Bear Pond Winery, NY
- Brotherhood Winery, NY
- Poplar Ridge Winery, NY
- Atwater Estate Vineyards, NY



- Pairs well with chocolate cake, pasta, red meat or strong cheese.
- Can be made dry or semi-sweet.
- Typically used for blending because of inconsistent yields.
- Fox Ridge Vineyard & Winery, NY
- Keuka Overlook Wines, NY
- Torrey Ridge Winery, NY
- St. James Winery, MO
- Penguin Bay Winery & Champagne House, NY

Rougeon



- At one time, the most widely planted wine in Canada. Cold tolerant.

De Chaunac

- Low to medium tannins.
- Lower in acid than Baco.
- Wagner Vineyards, NY
- Grand View Winery, VT
- Soaring Wings Vineyards, NE
- Cuthills Vineyards, NY
- Whiskey Run Creek, NE
- Giradet Winery, OR



- A newer hybrid grape.
- Flavours include: cherry, chocolate, currant, cedar, tobacco, spice
- Low tannins
- Cold hearty
- Priam Vineyards, CT
- Whiskey Run Creek, NE
- Soaring Wings Vineyard, NE
- Northern Vineyards Winery, MN
- Whispering Hills Vineyards, IA

St. Croix



- A dark red wine typically used for blending with lighter wines.
- Late ripening, cold hearty.
- Common in New York. May also be the same as the St. Vincent grape grown in the Missouri area, although this is debatable.
- Frequently grown just for juice.
- Fulkerson Winery, NY

Vincent



- Gained some acceptance in the Loire Valley. And in Australia's Hunter Valley.
- Flavours include: anise, berries, slightly herbaceous, earthy, complex
- Ruby-red, full-bodied wine, can have strong tannins.
- Goes well with barbeque, pork, grilled dishes.
- Extremely popular in Ohio.
- Exact lineage of this hybrid is unknown (its creator died suddenly and left no notes).
- Wintery hearty and disease resistant.

Chambourcin



Some wineries that produce *varietal* Chambourcin

- Augusta Winery, MO
- Crown Valley Winery, MO
- *Terra Cotta Winery, OH*
- *Chalet Debonne, OH*
- *Myrddin Winery, OH*
- St. James Winery, MO
- Creekbend Vineyards, IN
- Presque Isle Wine Cellars, PA
- Holyfield Winery, KS
- Oakencroft Vineyards, VA
- Goose Watch Cellars, NY
- Star View Vineyards, IL
- Woodhall Wine Cellars, MD
- Beans Creek Winery, TN
- Hernder Estate Wines, ON

- Hybrid of pinot noir, and related to Chancellor.
- Goes well with cheese or meat.
- Once planted in France for blending, good disease resistance and cold hearty.
- Flavours include: dark berries, soft finish. Can be drunk young.
- Tomasello Winery, NJ
- Forks of Cheat Winery, WV

Villard Noir



- A recently released hybrid of Baco noir.
- Makes dark red wines with better tannin structure than Baco.
- Best made as a light wine.
- Also known as Rubiana.
- Used as a blending grape primarily.
- An early to mid-season grape.
- *Caesar Creek Vineyards, OH*

GR7
(Geneva Red 7)/
Rubiana



- Marquette
- Sabrevois
- Colobel
- Corot noir
- Noiret
- Buffalo
- New York Muscat
- St. Vincent
- Swenson Red
- Cascade



Other Red Hybrids

"White" grapes

- While white wines *can* be made from some dark grapes (by fermenting the juice without the skin), these grapes only make white wines.
- White wine grapes are typically more cold hearty than red grapes.
- These grapes include such varieties as:
 - Aurore
 - Cayuga White
 - St. Pepin
 - Chardonel
 - Horizon
 - La Crescent
 - Melody
 - Ravat 34
 - Seyval (Seyval Blanc)
 - Traminette
 - Ventura
 - Vidal Blanc
 - Vignoles
 - Villard Blanc
 - Vivant
 - Esprit
 - LaCrosse

- Introduced in 1972, it is one of the most productive wine varieties in New York.
- Highly disease resistant.
- Can produce wines of high quality.
- Must be harvested early to avoid “hybrid overtones”.
- Can be made into a semi-sweet wine emphasizing fruitiness, or into a dry wine with oak aging.
- Good acidity and structure. But does not age well.
- Flavours include: apricots, melon, peach, tropical fruit.
- It is the product of a cross between Seyval and Schuyler.

Cayuga White



Some wineries that produce *varietal* Cayuga White

- Swedish Hill Vineyards, NY
- Hosmer Winery, NY
- Miles Wine Cellars, NY
- Leonard Oaks Estate, NY
- Clover Hill Winery, PA
- Oak Spring Winery, PA
- Jewell Towne Vineyards, MA
- Villa Antonio Winery, MO
- Fox Creek Vineyards, IL
- Flag Hill Winery, NH
- Highland Manor Winery, TN
- Niagara Landing Wine Cellars, NY
- Yates Cellars, NY

- Most widely planted non-*labrusca* grape in New York.

Aurore

- Matures early, but is a favourite of birds, as well.

- Wine quality is generally poor and is in the process of being replaced.

- Bully Hill Vineyards, NY
- West Hanover Winery, PA
- Jewell Towne Vineyards, NH



- The product of a cross between Seyval and Chardonnay. It was released for production only in 1990.
- Popular in Mid- Western and Mid-Atlantic states where Chardonnay has failed to thrive.
- Can produce a full-bodied dry wine, with good acidity, but less “character” than Chardonnay.
- Serves well with chicken.
- Flavours include: fresh fruit, pear, lemon.
- Lindwedel Wine Garden, MO
- Wallace Winey, IA
- Crown Valley Winery, MO.

Chardonel



- A Gewürztraminer hybrid (together with Seyval Blanc).
- Superiour wine quality and cold resistance.
- Flavours include: spicy, honey, apricot, floral, pear, apple. Muscat-like favour can develop if left on the skins to ferment.
- Ages quite well.
- Well suited to different wine styles, from sweet to dry.
- Released on in 1996. Has grown in popularity in New York, Pennsylvania and the Mid-West.
- Can be served with shrimp, fish, salad.

Traminette



Some wineries that produce *varietal* Traminette

- Arbor Hill Winery, NY
- Taylor Brooke Winery, MO
- Whyte Horse Winery, IN
- Goose Watch Winery, NY
- Crown Valley Winery, MO
- Corcoran Winery, VA
- Hedman Vineyards, IL
- Deer Run Winery, NY
- Wallace Winery, IA
- St. Francis Winery, MO
- *Kinkead Ridge Winery, OH*
- Pirtle Winery, MO
- AmRhein Wine Cellars, VA
- Veritas Vineyards & Winery, VA

- Suitable for cool climates, this is the second-most planted vine in England, though it has been heavily restricted by the European Union.

Seyval/
Seyval Blanc

- Flavours can be a little tart or lack intensity; includes: herbal, fruits, vanilla.
- Made into various wine styles, from semi-sweet to dry.
- Is the parent of a number of newer French-American hybrids including Traminette and St. Pepin.
- Pairs well with pork and Asian cuisine, as well as poultry and cream or butter sauces.



Some wineries that produce *varietal* Seyval Blanc

- Gold Leaf Wines, VT
- Persimmon Creek Vineyards, GA
- Buffalo Creek Vineyard & Winery, MO
- Stone Hill Winery, MO
- Tower Rock Winery, MO
- Owl Creek Vineyard, IL
- Heritage Wine Cellars, PA
- Adair Vineyards, NY
- Keuka Springs Vineyards, NY
- *Breitenbach Wine Cellars, OH*
- Williamsburg Winery, VA
- Simmons Winery, IN
- Atwater Estate Vineyards, NY

- First relieved in 1985. It is related to Seyval Blanc and another hybrid related to Pinot.

Melody

- The wine tends to have a short finish.
- Produces light-bodied wines.
- Flavours include: fruit, floral.
- Goose Watch Winery, NY
- Wagner Vineyards, NY
- Linganore Wine Cellars, MD



- Produces high sugar levels even in cold climates, and maintains good acidity.
- Makes excellent ice wine in New York and Ontario.
- Flavours are fruity and floral. Makes wines from semi-dry to sweet.
- Thirsty Owl Wine Company, NY
- Elk Creek Vineyards, KY
- Alba Vineyards, NJ
- *Viking Vineyards, OH*
- *Ferrante Winery, OH*
- *Breitenbach Wine Cellars, OH*

Vidal Blanc



photo courtesy of Stone Hill Winery

- Produces an excellent dessert wine when picked late.
- Can develop good sugar levels and acidity.
- Very susceptible to Botrytis bunch rot in humid conditions, but wine made from infected grapes can add additional character to the wine.
- Crown Valley Winery, MO
- Winery at Wilcox, PA
- Prejean Winery, NY
- Woodhall Wine Cellars, MD
- *Slate Run Vineyards, OH*

Vignoles/
Ravat 51



- Horizon
- St. Pepin
- LaCrosse
- La Crescent
- Esprit
- Villard Blanc
- Vivant
- Ventura
- Muscat Ottonel
- Ravat 34



Other White Hybrids

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