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Everything You Need to Know About Sauvignon Blanc

And why you should try the different styles of wine made with this popular grape.

Sarah Tracey

The wine grape sauvignon blanc has never been more popular: it's planted on more than 275,000 acres of vineyards all over the world. Odds are that you've had a sip or more in your glass at some point. You may even have a bottle in your wine rack right now and not know it—because depending to where it's grown, it may go by other names. Get familiar with the many faces of sauvignon blanc and learn which regional styles you like most.

California Dreamin': Fumé Blanc and Beyond

The king of white grapes in California is indisputably chardonnay but thanks to the efforts of wine legend Robert Mondavi, there are also some incredibly delicious sauvignon blancs being produced. Until the late 1960s, Californian sauvignon blanc was very sweet and generally low quality. Mondavi was a fan of the grape, but didn't think he could overcome its poor reputation in California so he took inspiration from the Pouilly-Fumé wines from the Loire and labeled his sauvignon blanc as 'fumé blanc.' The fresh name, and the fact that he aged the wine in oak barrels, giving it added depth and richness, created new demand for California sauvignon blanc. Today fumé blanc wines will still be aged in oak, but wines labeled sauvignon blanc may be aged in oak or steel—it's the winemaker's choice. Thanks to all that California sunshine, the wines have more fleshy and ripe fruit notes than their old world counterparts; if you've been turned off by the more austere style of some French sauvignon blanc, you may just love the styles being made in California.

TRY: Oberon Sauvignon Blanc 2016, \$17; Gamble Family Vineyards Sauvignon Blanc 2016, \$25; Inglenook Sauvignon Blanc 2016, \$35; Lail Vineyards 'Blueprint' Sauvignon Blanc 2016, \$38