

GIVE PINOTAGE WINE A CHANCE



The name Pinotage is a little bit misleading because it sounds so much like Pinot Noir. It is easy to assume they taste alike. Not true. In fact, the South African grape looks and tastes more like Shiraz even though Pinotage is technically related to Pinot Noir.

We do not hear more about the deliciously dark grape because Pinotage has struggled with a very bad reputation for the last 20 years, but fortunately, things are changing. If somebody love a bold barbecue-friendly wine, Pinotage wine is definitely worth investigating.

Pinotage is a grape crossing of Cinsaut and Pinot Noir. It was first crossed in South Africa in 1925 in the gardens of scientist Abraham Perold. Perold observed how Pinot Noir struggled in South Africa's climate, so he crossed them with a very productive species Cinsaut called Hermitage. Perold's goal was to create a wine that was as delicious as Pinot Noir but grew as well as Cinsaut.

The Scientist designed super grapes were all the rage during the 1920's including Austrian Zweigelt, German Scheurebe and South African Pinotage.

The result of the crossing between Cinsaut and Pinot Noir was unexpected. The Pinotage grapes were extremely dark in color and the wine they created was bold and high in

tannin and anthocyanin, nothing its the progenitors. Despite the difference in flavor, Pinotage would eventually become the 2nd most planted grape in South Africa.

Since Pinotage is such a productive wine grape, producers often made very low-quality commercial wine with it. It didn't help that Pinotage was such an inky grape, making it possible for wineries to stretch their wine as thin as possible. What the winemakers didn't realize back in the 1980's and 1990's was that Pinotage is a tricky wine to make well. Fortunately, in the last 15 years, several producers have banded together and focused on reducing the crop yields and used careful winemaking techniques to manage this unique grape.

Pinotage is dense in color and bold in flavor with notes of plum sauce, tobacco, blackberry, tar and licorice.

Pinotage association member and winemaker Danie Steytler Jr. says it's common to find purple fruits and black fruits in Pinotage, but occasionally you'll taste amazing red fruit flavors of raspberry, red licorice and even red bell pepper on optimal vintages.



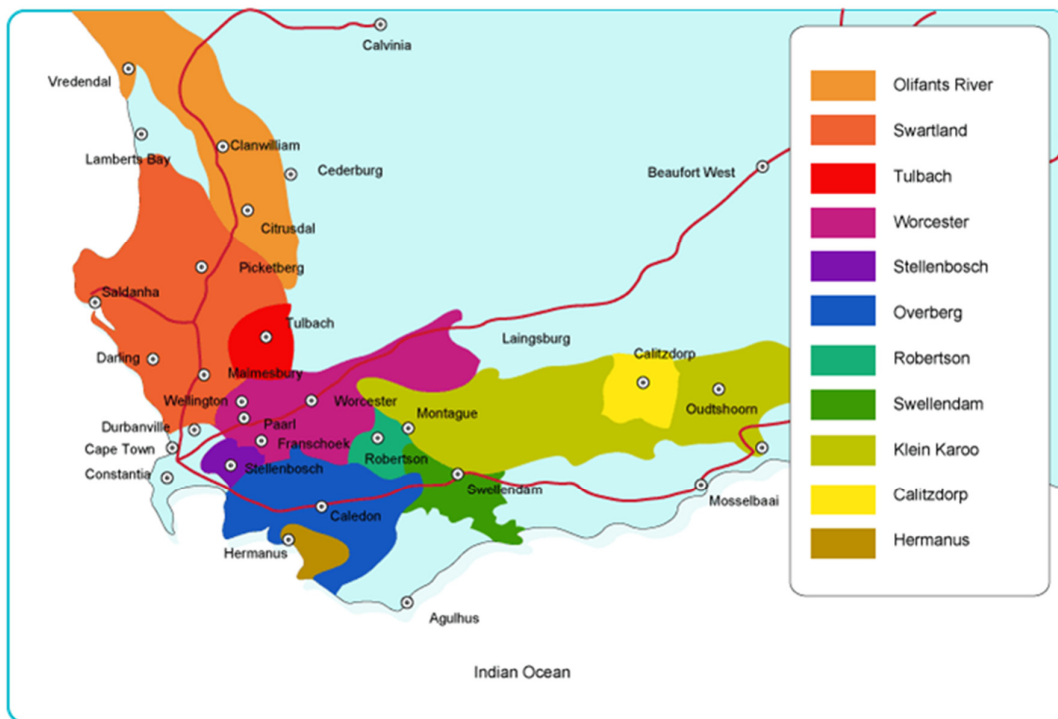
On great bottles of Pinotage, you'll be delighted by the flavors other than fruit. A wide array of other flavors includes rooibos, dried leaves, bacon, sweet and sour sauce, hoisin and sweet pipe tobacco.

You should expect tannins to be bold but to have a sweet note on the finish –almost like flavored smoke. As far as acidity is concerned, the grape is typically high pH or low acidity so most winemakers will acidify their wines early in the fermentation process so the acids are more integrated. Many wineries in hot climates, including California, Australia and Argentina,

acidify their wines. Well-integrated acidification is unnoticeable although some tasters appear to be more sensitive to this trait than others.

Pinotage can go very wrong because it's so volatile. When it's bad, it will smell very pungent and sharp, almost like nail polish remover. This smell is a clue that the wine has high levels of Volatile Acidity (VA) which is caused by a high proportion of a 'bad acid' called acetic acid. Besides the sharp smell, some of the wines can become over-extracted which is a process where the wine spends too long on the skins and seeds. Over-extracting Pinotage will make the wine taste like burnt tar.

Production Regions - Northern Cape, Olifants River, Swartland, Klein Karoo, Paarl, Robertson, Stellenbosch, Worcester, Breedeckloof and Cape South Coast.



Vigour and Ripening - The cultivar has moderate to good vigour, with a yield potential of 10t/ha to 15t/ha. It is an early variety that ripens from the second half of February.

Leaves and Berries - The leaves are medium sized to relatively big, dark green, oblong and five lobed. Berries are small, oval shaped with a dark blue-black colour when ripe. The skin is thick and sticky, while the flesh is soft and juicy.

Pests and Diseases - The variety is not very susceptible to powdery mildew, but less resistant to botrytis than Cabernet Sauvignon. Many problems are escaped by the fact that Pinotage ripens early in the season.

Pinotage may be used as a single varietal or blended with other vines. One example, is the Cape Blend, which is defined as a distinctive South African red blend that contains at least 30%, but no more than 70% Pinotage.

The Pinotage grape can be made into a wide variety of wine styles, depending on the way it was grown and matured. Pinotage on Richter 110 rootstocks planted on western slopes, may produce a distinct banana flavour, while eastern slopes with deeper soils may bring out black cherry fruit, along with hints of leather and tar. The clever use of oak, may give Pinotage a chocolate or coffee twist.

Five facts to prove Pinotage is awesome:

1. It has a formal fan club dedicated to telling the world just how amazing it is - Due to the initial unpopularity and misconceptions around the wine, organizations such as the Pinotage Association and popular fan site The Pinotage Club are doing as much as possible to change the bad rep. The best way, they reckon, is to not only educate winemakers on how to cultivate the best crop possible, but to also teach connoisseurs how best to enjoy the varietal.

2. Pinotage wine has its very own day to celebrate just how awesome it is - International Pinotage Day takes place on the 2nd Saturday of October annually.



3. It's inspired the best wine event in the world - Pinotage on tap was named the best wine event in the world by the 2014 Drinks International Wine Tourism Awards. The wine festival at Diemersfontein Wine Estate is dedicated to proving just how yummy the varietal can be when paired with the right venue and atmosphere. Since 2004, the shindig has given Pinotage lovers a reason to have a good time. The event has also grown so large that there's now a Durban and Johannesburg Pinotage on Tap.

4. White Pinotage and Pinotage bubbly actually exist - Given its history, it comes as no surprise that the red grape has inspired winemakers to be daring and come up with interesting wine spin-off styles. In particular, Mellasat Vineyards, near Paarl, has created the world's very first white Pinotage while KWV's Café Culture has added a coffee Pinotage bubbly to its range.

5. It's gone global - The rest of the world is hopping onto the Pinotage train as more countries are growing the grape and more restaurants are adding it to their wine list which is great news for SA. Zimbabwe and New Zealand are now the largest Pinotage producers after South Africa.



smoke, tar, spicy teriyaki, decades old spice box, fresh paint, coffee; Structure – Body - light-medium-full; Sugar – Dry; Tannins – High; Acid – Low; Alcohol - Medium-Plus; and Finish - Sour-sweet, medium.



Food matches for Pinotage include spicy pepperoni pizza, raised eggplant with garlic and South African oxtail stew.

Pinotage is a socialite when given the chance, and its medium to full-bodied nature makes it easy to pair with almost any food you can think of. The Pinotage Association swears by this wine's adaptability. As long

as the food's good, it says, the wine will work. There are different categorizations of Pinotage, though. A lifestyle Pinotage is medium-bodied and it pairs well with game fish or a hearty bean soup, or even try it with sushi and sashimi, it says.

Full-bodied Pinotage works well with venison or rich meat dishes, while well-wooded pino often has chocolate tones associated with it and so could work well with that sweet, don't be shy to try, says the association.