

SEMILLON AND SAUVIGNON BLANC

Guide



AUSTRALIAN WINE DISCOVERED

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resources to discover and
share Australian wine



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supports the responsible
service of alcohol.





SEMILLON AND SAUVIGNON BLANC



AUSTRALIAN WINE DISCOVERED



Crafted from grapes grown under vast and diverse climates, across landscapes millions of years in the making, every glass of Australian wine tells a story.

Like those who came before us, our modern growers and makers continue to be passionate, resilient and creative; constantly driven to explore new ways to perfect old techniques. Our community is connected by a mutual respect and shared love of crafting exceptional wine, while protecting the natural wonders for future generations to enjoy. Applying modern thinking to our ancient lands, we take playful experimentation very, very seriously.

So, if you're looking for the taste of adventure, let Australian wine be your compass. Because in every bottle of Australian wine, you'll experience the wonders of Australia – a reminder of the adventure and diversity that defines our culture and our land.

SEMILLON AND SAUVIGNON BLANC VERSATILE VARIETIES THAT SING TOGETHER

Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc are two of Australia's most prominent white grape varieties, coming together to create one of the country's best-known blends.



LOOP VIDEO

Now is a great time to play the *Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc* loop video in the background, as you welcome people.

SEMILLON AND SAUVIGNON BLANC: VERSATILE VARIETIES THAT SING TOGETHER

Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc are two of Australia's liveliest and most prominent white grape varieties – and they come together to create one of the country's best-known blends.

An iconic white, Semillon has a long history in Australia where it expresses its viticulture and winemaking story through a range of styles. What makes this variety especially exciting is its long ageing potential and the opportunities it affords winemakers to experiment with different expressions. It's also one of the few grapes that lends itself to botrytis, or 'noble rot', to produce one of Australia's most celebrated sweet wine styles.

Where young Semillon is all lightness and citrus, Sauvignon Blanc is vibrant, aromatic and bursting with fruity personality. The best examples come out of cool-climate regions where it can develop a defined acid profile and fruit vibrancy. Its popularity has soared in the past two decades, and now a fresh wave of winemakers are experimenting with techniques to take this versatile variety to new heights.

Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and blends of the two are produced around Australia, but each has a flagship region that sets the benchmark.

- Hunter Valley Semillon.
- Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc.
- Margaret River Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc blends.
- Riverina Botrytis Semillon.



TODAY WE'LL COVER

- The history and evolution of Australian Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc
- Hunter Valley Semillon
- Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc
- Margaret River Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc blends
- Riverina Botrytis Semillon
- Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc by numbers



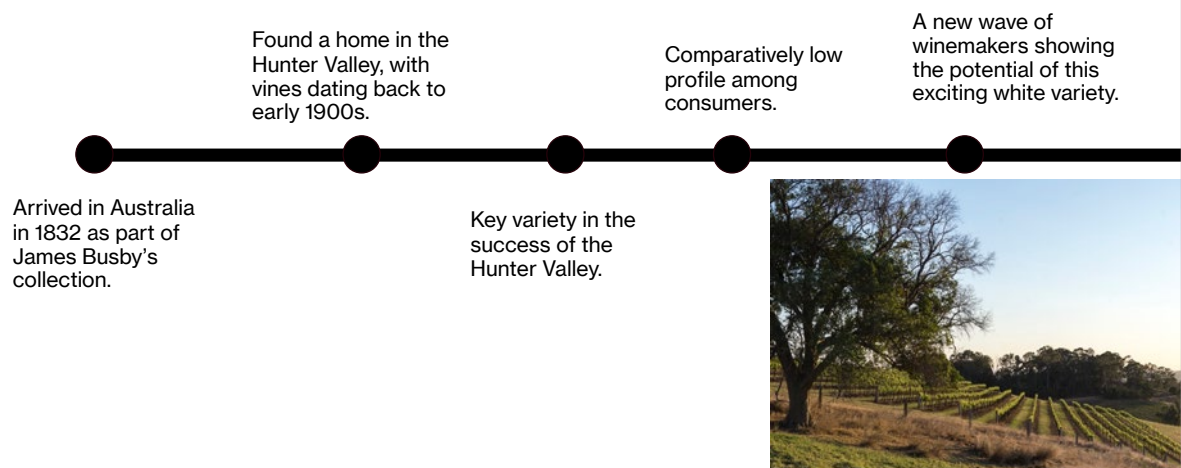
DID YOU KNOW

Australia is one of the few countries where Semillon is produced, and highly prized, as a single-varietal wine.

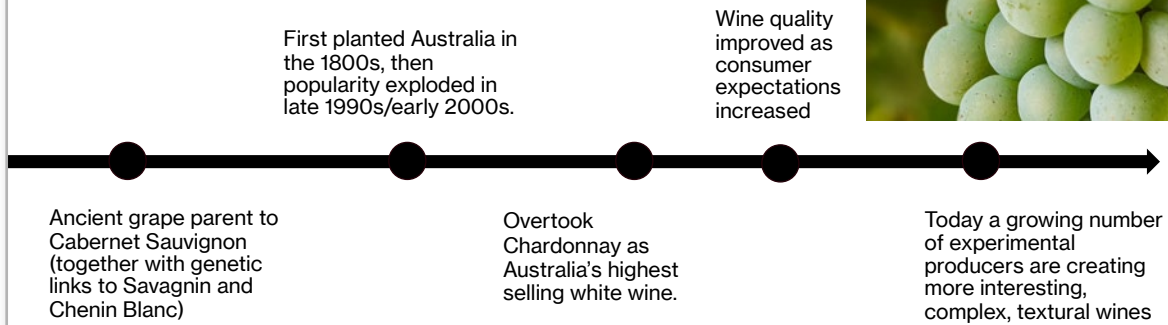
SEMILLON AND SAUVIGNON BLANC HISTORY AND EVOLUTION



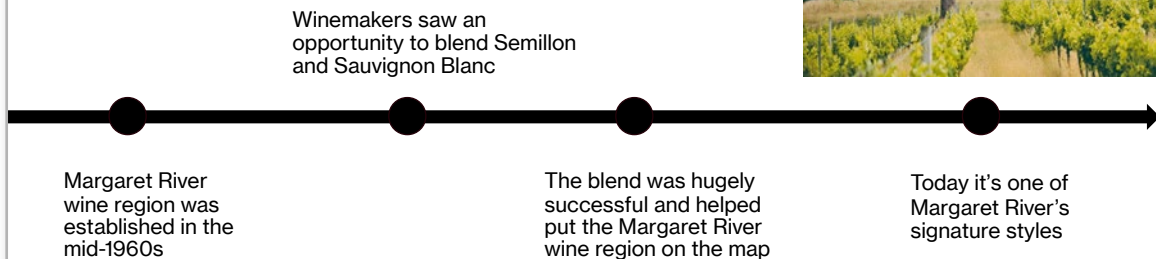
SEMILLON: AN AUSTRALIAN ICON



SAVIGNON BLANC: A RAPID RISE



SEMILLON + SAVIGNON BLANC = THE PERFECT PAIR



SEMILLON AND SAUVIGNON BLANC: HISTORY AND EVOLUTION

Semillon: An Australian icon

As with many European varieties, Semillon arrived in Australia in 1832 as part of James Busby's collection and found a home in the warm and humid Hunter Valley in New South Wales. Early Hunter Semillons were often labelled as Hunter River Riesling (or Rhine Riesling), Shepherd's Riesling, Hock, White Burgundy or even Chablis, none of which helped promote Semillon on its own merits as a standalone variety.

From its earliest days in Australia, however, it proved a popular vine with winemakers. Its vigour, ease of propagation, high yields and resistance to disease made Semillon an easy vine to like. Today, the Hunter Valley has old Semillon vines dating back to the early 1900s.

The Semillon trailblazer

One of its early proponents was legendary Hunter Valley winemaker Maurice O'Shea, who recognised Semillon's potential as a long-lived single-variety wine. He planted the Lovedale vineyard in 1946, releasing his first Semillon in 1950. His influence is commemorated today with Mount Pleasant Lovedale Semillon, an enduring, award-winning wine now crafted by winemaker Adrian Sparks.

Toward the end of the 20th century, the Hunter Valley's wine industry was flourishing and the region became well known for its superb Semillon, referred to as "Australia's gift to the world" by Master of Wine Jancis Robinson.

A new era

Despite being one of the wine world's great collectable wonders, Australian Semillon has flown somewhat under the radar of consumers, and hasn't reached the same heights of popularity as Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay.

But thanks to a new wave of dedicated vintners, that could be set to change. These experimental winemakers are creating exciting wines that show the potential of this delicate white, using methods such as organic and biodynamic farming practices, minimal-intervention techniques and fermentation in alternative vessels. Today, Semillon remains one of Australia's most exciting white wine discoveries.

Sauvignon Blanc: A rapid rise

Originating in France's Loire Valley, Sauvignon Blanc is a parent grape to Cabernet Sauvignon (together with Cabernet Franc), with genetic links to Savagnin and Chenin Blanc, among others.

This ancient variety was first grown in Australia in the 1800s, and plantings slowly grew over the following decades. But it wasn't until the 1990s that things took off. Sauvignon Blanc's stock really shot up in the early 21st century, as consumers' perception shifted and the buzz generated by Marlborough (New Zealand) Sauvignon Blanc contributed to rapid growth in the Australian market. Chardonnay's rule was over: Australian white wine drinkers had a new queen.

Passion reignited

Sauvignon Blanc is a grape that can divide opinion and is rarely met with ambivalence. It's the highest-selling white wine in Australia, yet isn't always favoured in fine-wine circles. But now, in an innovative return to old winemaking methods, a growing number of experimental producers are creating interesting, complex, textural wines through techniques such as wild fermentation, skin contact and fermentation in oak and clay amphora. These exciting wines are helping to reignite a passion for Sauvignon Blanc and contributing to a diverse array of expressions unique to Australia.

Semillon + Sauvignon Blanc = the perfect pair

Way out west in the coastal region of Margaret River, a new wine industry emerged in the mid-1960s, when scientists declared it ideal for grape growing and a pioneering band of amateur vigneron took up the challenge. Excited by the initial success of Cabernet in the region – and with climatic similarities to Bordeaux – winemakers were inspired to produce other varieties that worked so well in the Bordeaux region. Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc were both thriving in Margaret River's vineyards, and winemakers snatched at the opportunity to blend the two and create something entirely new in Australia – although the blend originated in Bordeaux. They couldn't have imagined how successful it would be, and it is this blend that has been largely responsible for putting Margaret River on the map. Today, it is one of the region's signature styles.



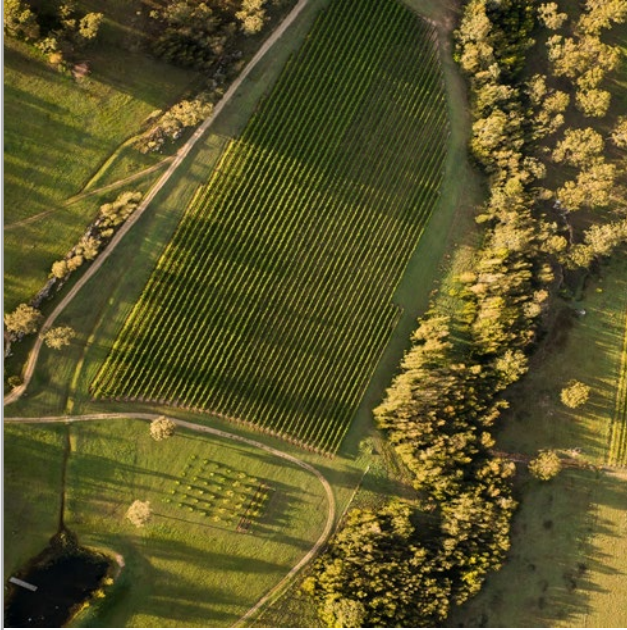
SUGGESTED DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why was Semillon sometimes labelled as Hunter River Riesling (or Rhine Riesling), Hock and White Burgundy? How has this influenced the reputation and consumption of Semillon today?
- Despite its global acclaim, why has Semillon not gained an appreciation from Australian consumers similar to the heights of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay?
- What are the reasons behind Sauvignon Blanc's rapid and sustained popularity among the general public in recent times? And conversely, why is it often snubbed by those in the premium sector?



DID YOU KNOW

- Sauvignon Blanc is grown in 44 out of 65 Australian wine regions.
- Semillon is grown in 36.



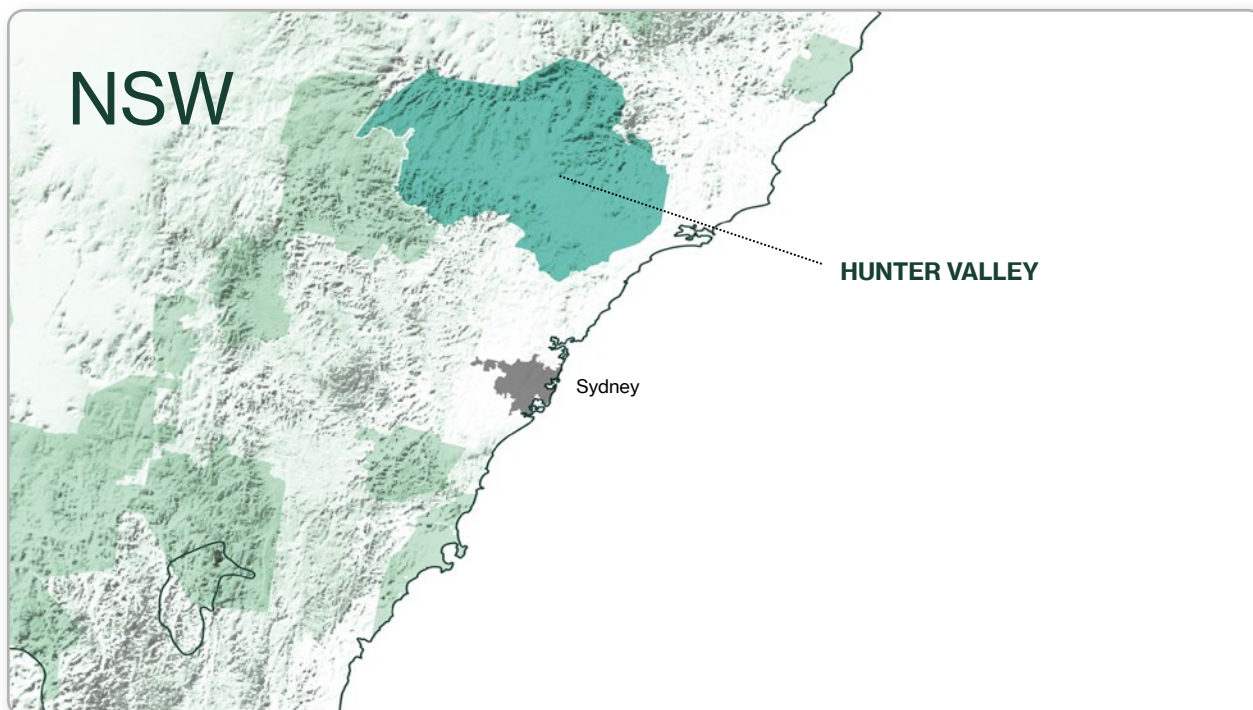
HUNTER VALLEY SEMILLON AN AUSTRALIAN ORIGINAL

- Benchmark style from the Hunter Valley
- Transforms over time from a zesty, crisp youngster into aged wine of deep golden hue, with nutty, honey and straw characters
- Retains distinctive stamp of primary fruit and acidity even after decades in the cellar

HUNTER VALLEY SEMILLON: AN AUSTRALIAN ORIGINAL

Semillon is a delicate, versatile grape that can be produced in a range of styles. In Australia it's made as both a single-variety wine and as a blend. It can perform well in both cool and warm climates, but it's in the uniquely warm and humid region of New South Wales' Hunter Valley that it really shines.

Hunter Valley Semillon is a true original in the wine world, able to transform over time from a zesty, crisp youngster into an aged wine of deep golden hue, with nutty, honey and straw characters – almost as if the wine has spent time in oak. The best examples retain an identifiable stamp of primary fruit and a nucleus of fine acidity, even after decades in the cellar.



HUNTER VALLEY SNAPSHOT

The birthplace of Australian wine:

The first vines were planted by 1823, with commercial grape growing beginning soon after. Today, the region produces world-class Semillon, Chardonnay and Shiraz.

Rich in natural wonders:

Green rolling hills are dotted with iconic vineyards. The region is bordered to the north, west and south-west by the Great Dividing Range and surrounded by national parks.

Old vines:

The Hunter Valley is home to some of the oldest vine stock in the world, with vineyards dating back to the 1860s. It has Semillon vines from the early 1900s.

Popular tourist destination:

At just over three hours' drive from Sydney's CBD, the Hunter Valley has become a beacon of entertainment for Sydneysiders and tourists who are attracted by its natural beauty, rich history and exceptional food and wine scene.



DID YOU KNOW

The Hunter Valley was officially classified as a zone in 1996, encompassing the region of Hunter and the subregions of Broke Fordwich, Pokolbin and Upper Hunter Valley. Sitting within the Hunter Valley zone, the Hunter region is almost as large, and encompasses the majority of the wine-producing areas.



Latitude

– 32° 34'S

Altitude

The Hunter Valley wine region has a low altitude starting at around 50 metres in Lovedale, with some higher altitudes in the Upper Hunter Valley such as 220 metres in Mount View.

Climate

The climate is characterised by warm and humid days in spring and summer, and cold nights in autumn and winter. The rain, humidity, cloud cover and gentle sea breezes mitigate the warmth. The summer-dominated rainfall can occur during harvest in some years.

Growing season rainfall

– 527mm (20.7in)

Calculated from October to April in Australia, growing season rainfall is a good indication of how much water is available to the vine. Rainfall in the Hunter Valley is medium, with the Lower Hunter area typically receiving more rainfall than the Upper Hunter.

The region can experience early summer rains and thunderstorms, sometimes with the threat of hail, which can damage or reduce crops. The positive outcome of the summer rain is that high humidity and afternoon cloud cover reduce the impact of high temperatures.

Mean January temperature (MJT)

– 23.1°C (73.6°F)

Mean January temperature refers to the mean temperature of the warmest month.

Please check the Wine Australia website for up-to-date information. Altitude refers to the highest and lowest vineyard in the GI region, not necessarily the highest or lowest point within the region and is calculated using the National Vineyard Scan and state contour datasets. Latitude is taken at the central point of the GI region. Meteorological data is taken from the national climate data bank of the Bureau of Meteorology: the Australian Data Archive for Meteorology (ADAM). Climate indices have been calculated across the whole GI region by the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystem CRC as part of a research project co-funded by Wine Australia. Growing season rainfall (GSR) and mean January temperature (MJT) based on 1991–2017 averages from the Bureau of Meteorology (2018). GSR is calculated from October to April.



SOIL

Soils vary across the region from sandy alluvial flats to deep loam and friable red duplex soils. Semillon typically does best on sandy alluvial flats.

Soil

The soils of the Lower Hunter vary from sandy alluvial flats to deep loam and friable red duplex soils. In the Upper Hunter, the rivers and creeks of the region contribute to the area's black, silty loam soils that are often overlaid on top of alkaline clay loam. Throughout the hills of the Brokenback Range sit strips of volcanic basalt that are valued by growers as they restrict vigour and concentrate mineral flavours in the grapes.



VITICULTURE

- The Hunter Valley's warm climate, humidity, heavy rains and storms present a challenge
- Skilful growers have adapted and established the region as the top producer of quality Semillon
- **Harvest:** January to mid-February; Semillon one of the first to be picked

FEATURE VIDEO

Now is an appropriate time to play the feature video, *Hunter Valley Semillon*.

VITICULTURE AND WINEMAKING

Viticulture

The Hunter Valley is among the warmest wine regions in Australia. Its warm climate, humidity, heavy rains and risk of summer storms present a challenge to Hunter Valley growers who have a long tradition of adapting to both climate and market changes. On paper, what might seem like a difficult area to produce quality grapes has built a reputation as one of Australia's top wine regions, thanks in large part to the skills of its grapegrowers. Rich, fertile soils and a reliable water supply in the Hunter River have also helped the region flourish.

Vineyard management and trellising

Many growers opt for open-canopy management and trellising. To prevent rot and mould, a technique called leaf pulling is used. Some vineyards use vine training systems including Scott Henry, Smart-Dyson and V-Trellis, and in areas where sunburn can be a problem, Vertical Shoot Position is also used.

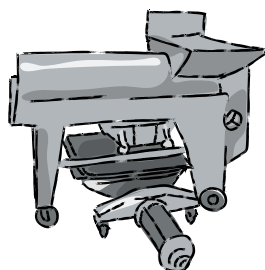
Harvest

Harvest typically occurs from early January to mid-February, ahead of most other Australian wine regions, as the warm climate tends to provide a shorter, more compact growing season. Semillon is generally one of the first varieties to be picked. With summer rains that can threaten fruit, growers keep a careful eye on the weather in the lead-up to harvest for the best time to pick.

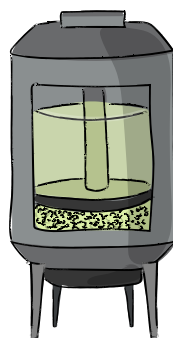
HOW WHITE WINE IS MADE



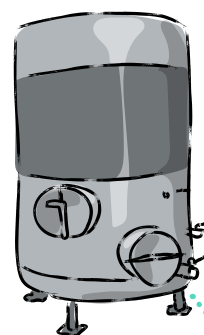
1. HARVEST



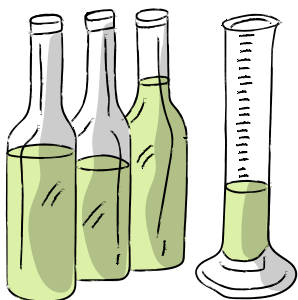
2. DESTEMMING
AND CRUSHING



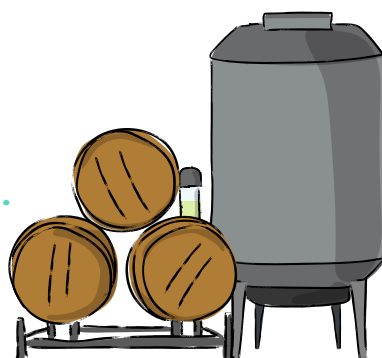
3. PRESSING



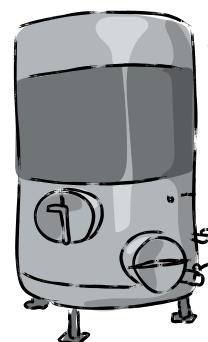
4. JUICE
SETTLING



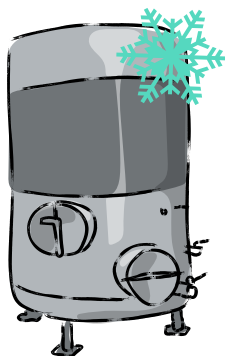
7. BLENDING



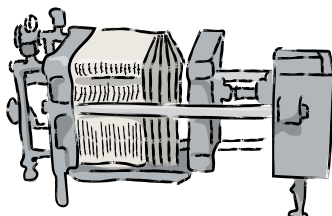
6. MATURATION



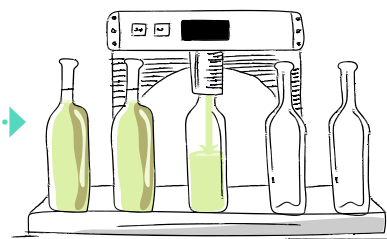
5. FERMENTATION



8. STABILISATION

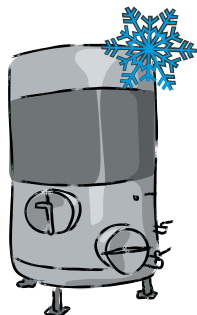


9. FINING AND FILTERING



10. BOTTLING

WINEMAKING:



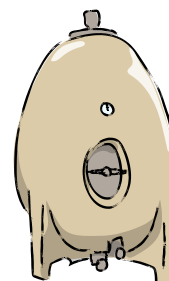
COLD FERMENTATION
IN STAINLESS STEEL



SOME BARREL
FERMENTATION



BARREL
MATURATION



MINIMAL INTERVENTION
APPROACH

Winemaking

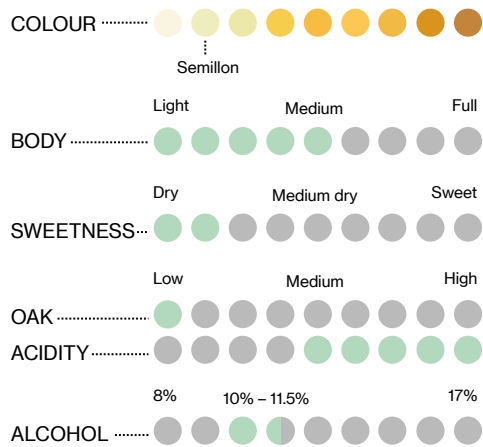
The climate of the Hunter Valley arguably shouldn't be capable of producing Semillon with any great character. Yet Hunter Semillon is one of the region's best-regarded varieties. Meticulous winemaking is key. Grapes are generally picked early while they have a low sugar content (usually around 10–11% alcohol) and high natural acidity. They are gently handled in the winery and crushed with minimal skin and seed extract. The juice is fermented at cold temperatures in stainless steel and transferred to the bottle after a short period of maturation.

With a typically Australian philosophy of experimentation and innovation, Hunter Valley winemakers are constantly exploring techniques to create interesting expressions of Semillon.

A lighter-touch, minimal-intervention approach is increasingly common, with some wineries creating preservative-free wines.

The efforts of modern winemakers are reinvigorating Semillon's once austere and out-of-fashion image and creating a new legion of fans.

HUNTER VALLEY SEMILLON CHARACTERISTICS



Youthful,
unoaked
style

FLAVOURS

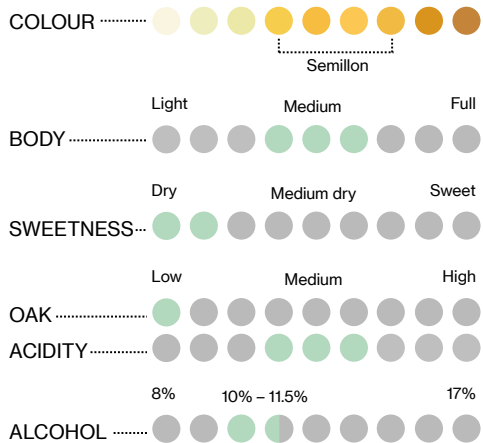
TYPICAL FRUIT FLAVOURS

- Lemon
- Green apple
- Quince

TYPICAL SECONDARY FLAVOURS

- Herbs
- Grassiness

HUNTER VALLEY SEMILLON CHARACTERISTICS



Bottle
aged,
unoaked
style

FLAVOURS

TYPICAL FRUIT FLAVOURS

- Lemon
- Apple
- Quince
- Fig

TYPICAL SECONDARY FLAVOURS

- Toast
- Straw
- Honey
- Honeysuckle
- Vanilla

STYLES AND CHARACTERISTICS

When first bottled, Hunter Valley Semillon is almost water-white in appearance with aromas of citrus, grass, straw, lanolin and subtle green herbs. It is crisp and delicate with a chalky minerality. Patience pays great dividends, however, and the finest examples with high acidity and low alcohol transform after as few as five years in the bottle, revealing honeyed, toasty characters – almost as if the wine has spent time in oak (even though it hasn't).

Hunter Semillon is capable of ageing gracefully for well over 20 years. The best wines will retain an identifiable stamp of primary fruit and a nucleus of fine acidity even after decades in the cellar.

Today, a growing number of styles are produced in the Hunter Valley, and in a twist on the traditional style, Bimbadgen Estate creates a unique non-vintage sparkling Semillon, giving the bright citrus flavours a boost of delicate bubbles from secondary tank fermentation using the Charmat method.



COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAM

Learn more in the **Aged wine** and **Hunter Valley** modules, available at www.australianwinediscovered.com

FOOD PAIRINGS



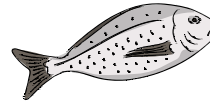
YOUNG SEMILLON



OYSTERS



PRAWNS/SHRIMPS



WHITE FISH

BOTTLE - AGED SEMILLON



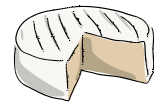
SMOKED CHICKEN



CHICKEN



PORK



SOFT CHEESE

Food pairing

With its freshness and acidity, Hunter Semillon is a food-friendly drop that pairs well with shellfish, crustaceans and most fish. Aged Semillon can be served with fuller-flavoured foods such as smoked fish, chicken, pork and soft cheeses.

Notable producers include:

- Tyrrell's 'Vat 1' Hunter Semillon – consistently named one of the best in the world. It shows a honeyed, toasty complexity beyond its citrus characters with ageing.
- Mount Pleasant 'Elizabeth' Semillon – a lively and fresh citrus palate, and a multi-award winner.
- Brokenwood Wines 'ILR Reserve' Semillon – zesty lime and toasty beeswax, and a consistent award winner.

Other regions

Other notable regions producing Semillon include the Barossa Valley and Margaret River.



DID YOU KNOW

Semillon is one of the greatest cellaring whites in the world, with some wines as old as 50 and still going strong.



SUGGESTED DISCUSSION POINTS

- The Hunter Valley is home to some Semillon vines that date back to the early 1900s. How might these vines influence the characteristics of a Hunter Semillon?
- How have Hunter Valley winemakers shaped Semillon styles in Australia?



ADELAIDE HILLS SAUVIGNON BLANC

A FRUITY CROWD PLEASER

- Well suited to cool climate
- Produces vibrant, aromatic wines bursting with natural acidity
- Benchmark style from Adelaide Hills

ADELAIDE HILLS SAUVIGNON BLANC: THE FRUITY CROWD-PLEASER

Sauvignon Blanc loves a cool climate, where it produces vibrant and aromatic wines bursting with natural acidity. The undulating, elevated region of Adelaide Hills in South Australia's Mount Lofty Ranges has established itself as the benchmark for Sauvignon Blanc in Australia, with winemakers creating distinctive wines of vibrancy, structure and complexity.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

ADELAIDE HILLS

ADELAIDE HILLS SNAPSHOT

A cool-climate haven:

Adelaide Hills is one of the coolest and most elevated regions in Australia. Its steep terrain creates an infinite array of valley microclimates.

German heritage:

Settled by German immigrants in the 1800s, Adelaide Hills' central town Hahndorf remains Australia's oldest-surviving German settlement.

Region reborn:

Vines were planted in the 1870s, but due to the difficulties of cool-climate viticulture in that era, most were removed by the 1930s. The region was reborn in the late 1970s and is now acclaimed for its wonderful expressions of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Shiraz.

Hotbed of creativity:

While still a young wine region, Adelaide Hills has played a vital part in the evolution of Australian wine and is itself constantly evolving. Emerging varieties are thriving and it is home to cutting-edge winemakers pushing the boundaries.



DID YOU KNOW

Adelaide Hills has two official subregions: Lenswood and Piccadilly Valley.



ADELAIDE HILLS SNAPSHOT

Latitude

– 34° 98'S

Climate

Adelaide Hills experiences cool winters with winter-dominant rainfall. A large proportion of the region is fortunate enough to have robust underground water supplies, with water quality ranging from 'spring water' in the Mount Lofty area to generally drinkable water throughout the rest of the region.

Growing season rainfall (GSR)

– 268mm (10.5in)

Adelaide Hills receives relatively low levels of rain during its growing season. However, rainfall varies throughout the region, increasing at higher elevations and mainly falling in winter and spring. A large proportion of the region is fortunate enough to have robust underground water supplies, with water quality ranging from 'spring water' in the Mount Lofty area to generally drinkable water throughout the rest of the region.

Mean January temperature (MJT)

– 20.4°C (68.7°F)



SOIL

Soils vary with a mixture of grey-brown or brown loamy sands, and patches of sandy soils over clay subsoils. Low-lying areas with heavy soils provide potential for greater vigour, while higher, well-drained stony soils allow vigour control.

Soil

Adelaide Hills' soils are highly variable in structure and chemistry. The region has a mixture of grey-brown or brown loamy sands, with patches of sandy soils over clay subsoils. Soil depth is also variable due to topography, which can range from steep slopes to undulating hills, resulting in shallow stony soils at the top of hills and deep peat-like clays at the bottom of hills. Low-lying areas with heavy soils provide potential for greater vigour, while higher, well-drained stony soils allow vigour control.



VITICULTURE

- Relatively early-ripening variety
- Canopy management is vital
- Integrated management regimes to reduce chemical use
- Hand-pruning and harvesting
- Harvest: early February to March

VITICULTURE AND WINEMAKING

Viticulture

Sauvignon Blanc is a relatively early ripening variety that does well in cool but sunny regions. In areas that are too warm, the grapes will quickly become overripe and produce wines with dull flavours and flat acidity. It is a vigorous vine with small yellow-green berries and can tend toward excess production of foliage, making canopy management vital.

Due to rainfall, pest and fungal disease can present a challenge, and Adelaide Hills growers are increasingly using integrated management regimes to reduce the use of chemicals.

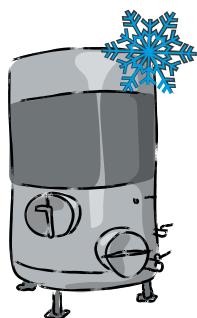
Trellising and pruning

The region's varying soil types create vines that are either too vigorous or not vigorous enough, so growers use trellises and green harvesting techniques to maximise sunlight exposure to ripen the grapes. Common trellis types include Vertical Shoot Position and the Lyre trellis system. Steep slopes restrict the use of machinery in some areas, so vineyards are often hand-pruned.

Harvest

Harvest time is critical. In Adelaide Hills, Sauvignon Blanc is generally harvested in early February to March, when growers determine the right balance has been achieved. Some winemakers pick the fruit at various intervals to blend different characteristics into a single wine, achieving the desired levels of green, herbaceous characters alongside ripe fruit flavours.

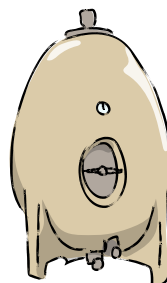
WINEMAKING:



COLD FERMENTATION
IN STAINLESS STEEL



BARREL
FERMENTATION



EXTENDED SKIN
CONTACT



BARREL
MATURATION

NEW AND EXPERIMENTAL TECHNIQUES

Winemaking

In the winery, the focus is generally on highlighting Sauvignon Blanc's zesty fruit aromas and bright acidity. Generally speaking, it's a straightforward wine to vinify, usually fermented at cool temperatures in stainless steel tanks to preserve its youthful fruit characteristics. However, some Adelaide Hills winemakers are experimenting to create more interesting expressions. Techniques include:

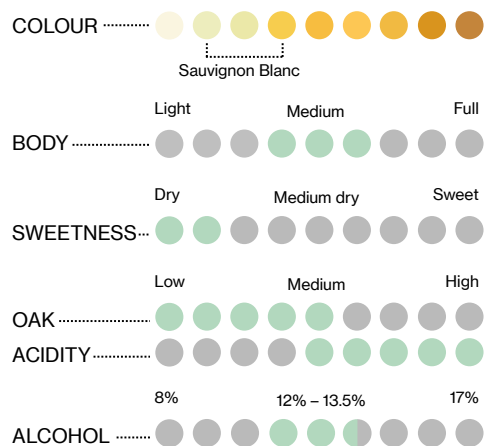
Extended skin contact: Some winemakers are experimenting with techniques such as extended skin contact to build texture and weight, and create interesting styles. The skins are left in contact with the juice, rather than pressing the juice off the grapes before fermentation, imparting phenolics and sometimes, depending on the style desired, an orange hue to the wine.

Barrel fermentation: Wines that are barrel fermented have different characteristics to wines that are fermented in stainless steel. As well as imparting oak flavours, it helps to create wines with a rounder, broader mouthfeel and firmer structure. These wines may also spend time on lees, resulting in more complex textures and aromas.

Barrel maturation: While oak flavours largely come from seasoning and toasting, ageing Sauvignon Blanc in oak barrels also imparts different flavour compounds depending on the age of the oak (new or used) and to a lesser extent its provenance (American, French or other European countries).

ADELAIDE HILLS SAUVIGNON BLANC

CHARACTERISTICS



FLAVOURS

- Kiwifruit
- Pineapple
- Gooseberry
- Passionfruit
- Herbs

SAUVIGNON BLANC

CHARACTERISTICS AND FLAVOUR PROFILES

Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc at its best is vibrant, aromatic and fresh with complexity and texture. It is typically medium-bodied with notes of kiwifruit, lemon citrus, pineapple, gooseberry and passionfruit, and some herbaceousness. It often has a soft, succulent middle palate and a crisp, refreshing finish. It's an early-drinking wine that doesn't usually benefit from age.

FOOD PAIRINGS



GOAT'S CHEESE



GREEN
VEGETABLES



OYSTERS



SHELLFISH



CHICKEN

Food pairing

A classic and invigorating food pairing for Sauvignon Blanc is goat's cheese, with the wine's zippy acidity a perfect match for the cheese's briny sourness. Other pairings that work well include green vegetables, oysters and shellfish, light chicken dishes and briny, tangy sauces.



DID YOU KNOW

Sauvignon Blanc has a strong varietal expression, regardless of where it is produced, so it's a good starting point for beginners learning to recognise different varieties.

Notable producers include:

- Deviation Road.
- Shaw + Smith.
- Tomich.
- Hesketh.
- Nepenthe.

Other regions

Other notable regions producing Sauvignon Blanc include Margaret River, Mornington Peninsula, Yarra Valley and Tasmania.



ADVANCED NOTES

THE SCIENCE BEHIND SAUVIGNON BLANC FLAVOURS

Along with Muscat and Gewürztraminer, Sauvignon Blanc makes some of the most distinctive white wines of all varieties. It's bursting with herbaceous and vegetal aromas and tropical fruit flavours – but how do they get there?

It's largely due to several aroma compounds in the grapes, or in the yeast present in grape must, and their interactions. These include:

- Methoxypyrazines – these contribute herbaceous and vegetal (snow pea, capsicum, asparagus and fresh-cut grass) aromas.
- Volatile thiols – these contribute aromas of citrus, grapefruit, passionfruit and blackcurrant.
- Monoterpenes – these provide floral, perfumed and tropical fruit aromas.

These compounds are found in other grape varieties as well, but are particularly concentrated in Sauvignon Blanc, giving the wine its unique aromas and flavours. Once in the winery, fermentation creates esters, higher alcohols and fatty acids, which add new characters and contribute to aroma and flavour complexity.



FUN FACT

The first Friday in May is International Sauvignon Blanc Day.



COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAM

Learn more about this region in the **Adelaide Hills** module, available at www.australianwinediscovered.com



SUGGESTED DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why is selective harvesting important for Sauvignon Blanc?
- How does the cool climate of Adelaide Hills influence its Sauvignon Blancs? How would you distinguish these from Sauvignon Blancs from other Australian cool-climate regions?
- How might a Sauvignon Blanc that's spent extended time on skins differ from a wine made more traditionally?



MARGARET RIVER SEMILLON SAUVIGNON BLANC BLENDS

MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

- Two varieties that are inherently complementary
- Benchmark style from Margaret River
- Crisp, elegant and fruit-driven

MARGARET RIVER SEMILLON SAUVIGNON BLANC BLENDS: MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

Fresh, delicate Semillon provides a tempting canvas for some winemakers, who influence aroma, flavour and texture through blending it with Sauvignon Blanc. This classic blend is one of Margaret River's signature wine styles, along with Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. The two varieties are inherently complementary, with Semillon contributing flavour and roundness to the more austere, sharper Sauvignon Blanc notes to create a wine that's greater than the sum of its parts.

These broadly appealing blends from Western Australia's best-known wine region are crisp, clean, elegant and fruit-driven, and generally made for early drinking.



DID YOU KNOW

In blends with a larger proportion of Semillon, that variety's name will appear first: Semillon Sauvignon Blanc (SSB). Wines with a higher quantity of Sauvignon Blanc are usually called Sauvignon Blanc Semillon (SBS).

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

MARGARET RIVER



MARGARET RIVER SNAPSHOT

- **Natural wonder:** In the southwest corner of Western Australia, about 270 kilometres south of Perth, Margaret River is one of the world's most geographically isolated wine regions. It's a popular tourist destination with its stunning beaches, diversity of plants and wildlife, and vineyards dotted throughout forests and native bushland.
- **Bright young star:** After its establishment in the 1960s, the Margaret River wine region quickly built a reputation for producing world-class Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Semillon/Sauvignon Blanc blends. The region now produces around 20% of Australia's premium wines from just 3% of total crush.
- **Classic meets innovative:** Winemakers have typically taken a traditional approach, but in recent years the established names have been joined by a new generation of producers redefining what Margaret River wine could be.



Latitude

– 33° 96'S

Climate

Margaret River's climate can be compared to that of Bordeaux in a dry year. It has the most marked maritime climate of any region in Australia in terms of rainfall and a low diurnal temperature range, which leads to even heat accumulation.

Growing season rainfall (GSR)

– 202mm (7.95in)

Mean January temperature (MJT)

– 20.9°C (69.62°F)



SOIL

Predominantly gravelly or gritty sandy loams on granite and gneiss, with low overall water-holding capacity.

Soil

Margaret River soils are predominantly gravelly or gritty sandy loams on granite and gneiss, with low overall water-holding capacity.

Running down the middle of the region is the Leeuwin-Naturaliste ridge, which connects Cape Naturaliste to the north and Cape Leeuwin to the south. The granite bedrock of the ridge is 150–600 million years old, layered in places with two-million-year-old limestone. Over time, the ridge has created a complex network of gneiss, schist and granite-based soils, the oldest in the world.

These soils are low in nutrients, resulting in low vigour in the vineyard – ideal for producing high-quality grapes.



FUN FACT

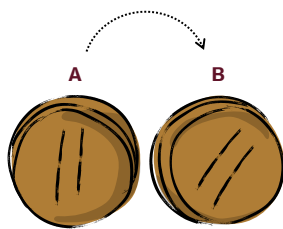
Margaret River winemakers have much to inspire them: the region hugs a 120-kilometre stretch of stunning Indian Ocean coastline and is one of the richest areas of plant species in the world.



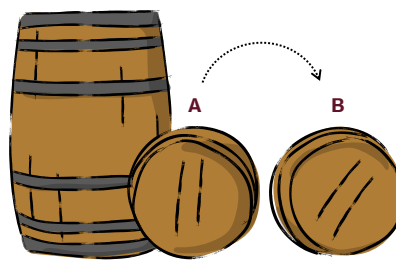
VITICULTURE

- Region ideally suited to grape growing
- Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc top two planted varieties
- Minimal-intervention, sustainable, organic and biodynamic practices

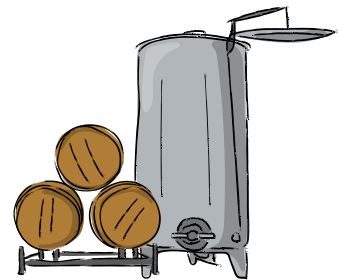
WINEMAKING:



VARIETIES CAN BE BLENDED
IN DIFFERENT PROPORTIONS



BLENDED SOON AFTER
FERMENTATION OR JUST
BEFORE BOTTLING



OAKED OR
UNOAKED

VITICULTURE AND WINEMAKING

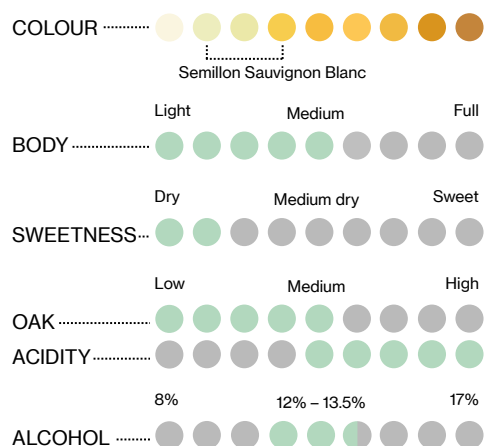
With its maritime-influenced Mediterranean climate, warm dry summers and heavy winter rainfall, Margaret River is a region ideally suited to grape growing. Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc are its top two planted white varieties (with Chardonnay just a fraction behind). While the majority of vineyards are conventionally farmed, Margaret River's climate allows for minimal-intervention viticulture, and traditional, organic and biodynamic techniques are practised in some vineyards.

In the winery, Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc are blended in different proportions depending on the desired style, and can be blended soon after fermentation or just before bottling.

The wines can be oaked or unoaked, depending on the winemaker's approach. Some winemakers simply blend unoaked Semillon with unoaked Sauvignon Blanc to create vibrant, crisp whites, while others employ barrel fermentation for added complexity, weight and concentration.

To further influence depth, style and flavour, some winemakers experiment and tweak, picking blocks of grapes at different ripeness and varying the proportion of juice fermented in stainless steel versus oak. These wines show what can be done with Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc through skilful winemaking that enhances rather than hides the grapes' characteristics.

MARGARET RIVER SEMILLON SAUVIGNON BLANC CHARACTERISTICS



FLAVOURS

- Gooseberry
- Passionfruit
- Lime
- Lemon curd
- Grapefruit

SEMILLON SAUVIGNON BLANC CHARACTERISTICS AND FLAVOUR PROFILES

Margaret River Semillon Sauvignon Blanc – or Sauvignon Blanc Semillon, depending on the proportions of each in the blend – is distinctive, known for its liveliness and bright personality. Semillon can be grassy, but in this blend it adds a honeyed richness to the tropical fruits and sharper acidity of Sauvignon.

The wines typically show tropical fruit characters, lemony notes and pronounced herbal, grassy tones, and can swing between austere and fruity. Unoaked styles are vibrant, fruit-filled and crisp, while wines that see oak have greater depth and texture.



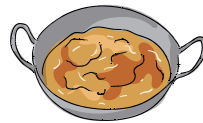
COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAM

Learn more in the **Margaret River** module at www.australianwinediscovered.com

FOOD PAIRINGS



SEAFOOD



MILD CURRIES



CHICKEN



CITRUSY SAUCES

FOOD PAIRING

These blends match easily with a variety of food, in particular seafood, which is abundant in the coastal region of Margaret River. They also pair nicely with poached chicken, mild curries and citrusy sauces.

Notable producers:

- Vasse Felix.
- Voyager Estate.
- Xanadu.
- Cape Mentelle.
- Clairault.



SUGGESTED DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why do these two varieties work so well together as a blend?
- Why has Margaret River become Australia's most successful producer of this classic blend?



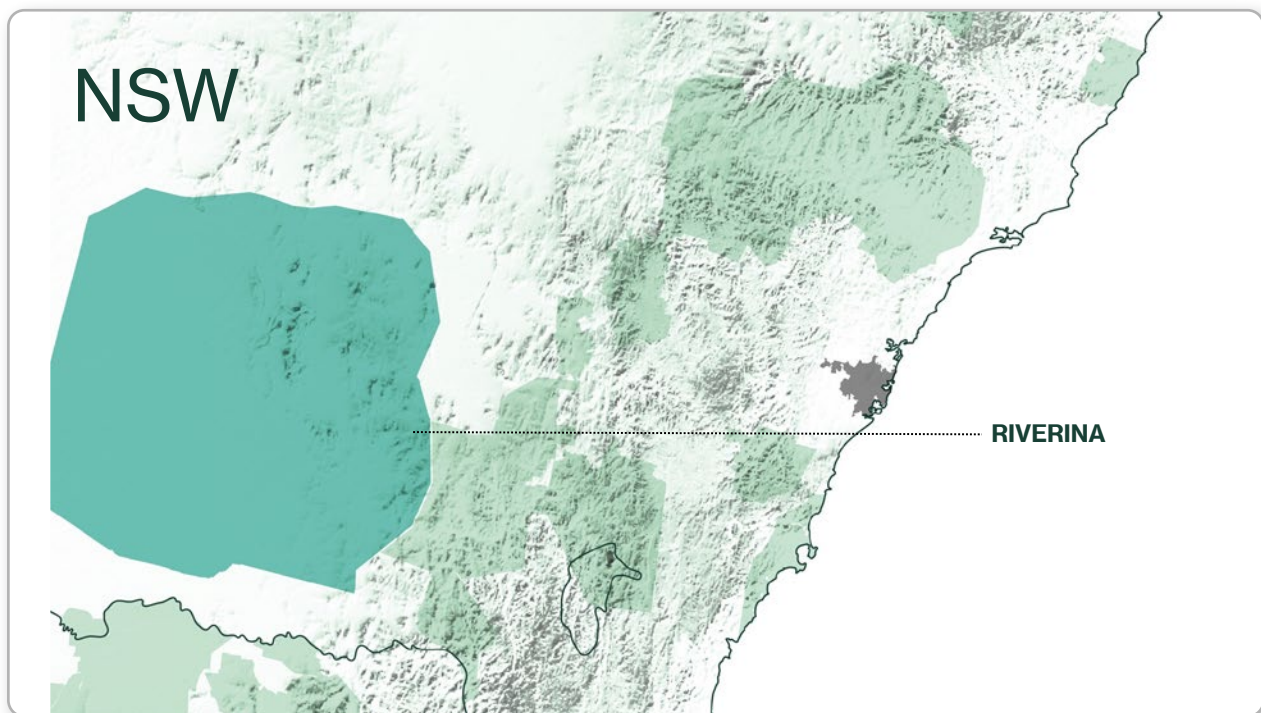
RIVERINA BOTRYTIS SEMILLON WORLD-CLASS DESSERT WINE

- Rich, honeyed dessert wine
- Product of the fungus Botrytis or 'noble rot'
- One of Australia's most celebrated sweet wine styles
- Benchmark style from the Riverina

RIVERINA BOTRYTIS SEMILLON: WORLD-CLASS DESSERT WINE

Botrytis-affected grapes are occasionally a good thing – namely when a winemaker wants to produce a sweet dessert wine such as Botrytis Semillon. This rich, honeyed wine is a product of 'noble rot', a benevolent form of the fungus botrytis cinerea that dehydrates the grapes and concentrates their nectar. Along with Botrytis Riesling, it's one of Australia's most celebrated and successful sweet wine styles.

Botrytis occurs best in humid conditions, including the warm region of the Riverina, and a number of these wines, such as De Bortoli 'Noble One' Botrytis Semillon, are highly sought after globally.

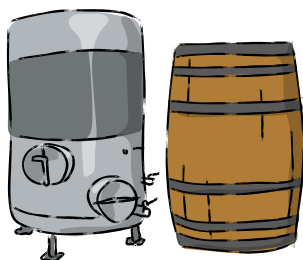




VITICULTURE

- Riverina's humid mornings and warm, sunny afternoons are ideal for Botrytis
- Grapes are left on the vine two months after maturity for Botrytis to develop
- Hand-picked around May

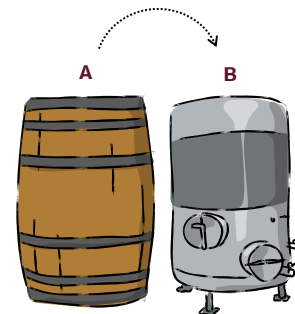
WINEMAKING:



FERMENTED IN OAK AND/OR STAINLESS STEEL



MATURED IN OAK FOR UP TO 12 MONTHS



MAY BE BLENDED WITH SOME UNOAKED WINE TO ADD FRESHNESS

VITICULTURE AND WINEMAKING

The Riverina is a large, warm region in the south-west plains of New South Wales known for producing a high volume of wine including Shiraz and Chardonnay, but its specialty is Botrytis Semillon. With its foggy, humid mornings and warm, sunny and still afternoons, the region has ideal weather conditions for the spread of noble rot.

Blocks of Semillon grapes are specially selected and left on the vine for up to two months after maturity. An ideal growing season involves long warm days and summer rain, which creates high humidity levels and initiates the botrytis, followed by drier conditions in early autumn, which allows the grapes to dry out while the botrytis develops.

The grapes are carefully monitored, and once the optimum flavour and sweetness levels have been reached, picking by hand begins – typically in May, though this can vary depending on weather.

In the winery, the juice is fermented in oak barrels or stainless steel tanks (or a combination of both) for several months, as the high sugar concentration prolongs fermentation. The wine can be matured in new and/or seasoned oak barrels for up to 12 months. It may be blended with a small portion of unoaked wine after maturation to add freshness and balance before being bottled, usually under screw cap.

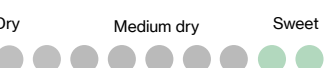
RIVERINA BOTRYTIS SEMILLON

CHARACTERISTICS

COLOUR 

Botrytis Semillon

BODY 

SWEETNESS... 

OAK 

ACIDITY 

ALCOHOL 



FLAVOURS

- Dried apricot
- Apricot nectar
- Peach
- Citrus
- Marmalade
- Mango

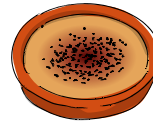
RIVERINA BOTRYTIS SEMILLON CHARACTERISTICS AND FLAVOUR PROFILES

Riverina Botrytis Semillon is a gloriously sweet, opulent and complex dessert wine with impressive intensity and length, and a refreshing citrus lift. It's pale golden in colour with aromas of dried apricot, marmalade, honey and crème brûlée, and flavours of stone fruits and citrus. Oak ageing can lend the wine nutty, vanilla and biscuit characters. These rich, elegant wines will generally benefit from ageing for five to 10 years.

FOOD PAIRINGS



FRUIT-BASED
DESSERTS



CRÈME BRÛLÉE



BLUE CHEESE



AGED CHEDDAR

FOOD PAIRING

The name 'dessert wine' says it all: Riverina Botrytis Semillon is a perfect accompaniment to fruit-based desserts and lighter dairy-based desserts such as crème brûlée, as well as cheeses – especially pungent and bitey ones like blue and aged cheddar.

Notable producers include:

- De Bortoli.
- Nugan Estate.
- McWilliam's.
- Gramp's.
- Petersons.



ADVANCED NOTES

NOBLE ROT: FRIEND AND FOE

Botrytis cinerea is one of a number of different fungi that can cause bunch rot in grapevines. It's a weather-driven disease that can cause significant loss of grape yield and quality. Grapegrowers use a range of management measures to help prevent botrytis. However, there are times when growers actually encourage noble rot to occur – specifically when they wish to create sweeter, more complex dessert wines. This can only be done in regions and conditions where the development of its benign form is possible, namely humid, misty mornings and warmer/dry afternoons with breezes to dry out the grapes.

Botrytis causes grapes to dehydrate while maintaining the sugar levels, resulting in sweeter and more viscous wines. Semillon grapes have thin skins, making them susceptible to the fungus, and have a particular affinity for botrytis owing to the balance and freshness Semillon brings to the honeyed sweetness.



COMPLEMENTARY READING

DE BORTOLI WINES: AUSTRALIA'S BOTRYTIS PIONEER

One of Australia's most awarded wines is also one of its sweetest: the internationally acclaimed 'Noble One' Botrytis Semillon from De Bortoli Wines in the Riverina. It was first produced at the family winery in 1982, when no one else in Australia was making such a style. But Darren De Bortoli was convinced it would work.

His pioneering spirit has been handed down through the family. Darren's grandfather Vittorio arrived in Australia from northern Italy in 1924 with almost nothing to his name. He worked hard to carve out a life for himself and his family, and built a reputation as a quality winemaker at a time when table wines were still a rarity.

His son Deen learned the ropes and began expanding and modernising the winery. He focused on the new wine styles that were capturing the imagination of emerging wine consumers. Sharing his determination, it was Deen's son Darren who took De Bortoli to the very top of the wine world. One of his most ambitious ideas was to produce an Australian version of the botrytis-affected wines from France.

It was the early 1980s and many people thought he was crazy for even trying. But he quickly turned doubters into believers with De Bortoli's great 'Noble One' Botrytis Semillon. It was soon recognised as one of Australia's great wines and was named Best Botrytis Wine at the International Wine & Spirit Competition in 1985. More than three decades on, it has set the benchmark for Australian dessert winemaking and remains one of the most awarded Australian wines in history.



SUGGESTED DISCUSSION POINTS

- How do Botrytis Semillon dessert wines differ from late-harvest or cordon-cut styles?
- Are botrytis-affected wines produced elsewhere in Australia? What makes the Riverina the leading region for these wines?

AUSTRALIAN SEMILLON AND SAUVIGNON BLANC POTENTIAL AND POSSIBILITY

The future of these versatile varieties is bright, with great potential and new possibilities ahead.



POTENTIAL AND POSSIBILITY

The future of these lively, versatile varieties in Australia is surely a bright one, with golden-skinned, age-worthy Semillon on the path to reaching its full potential, and the popularity of Sauvignon Blanc pushing winemakers to experiment with alternative techniques and exciting new expressions.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Semillon is a delicate grape with a long history in Australia. It can perform well in both cool and warmer climates, but it's in the uniquely warm and humid region of the Hunter Valley where this variety really shines.
- Hunter Valley Semillon is a true original in the wine world, able to transform over time from a pale, zesty and crisp wine into an aged gem of deep golden hue, with nutty, honey and straw characters.
- Semillon is often blended with Sauvignon Blanc, a vigorous variety that loves a cool climate where it produces vibrant, aromatic, fruit-driven wines. The elevated region of Adelaide Hills is the benchmark for Sauvignon Blanc in Australia.
- The best-selling white wine in Australia, Sauvignon Blanc shot to popularity in the early 2000s and is enjoying a renaissance of sorts as innovative winemakers explore techniques to create more complex and interesting expressions.
- Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc are inherently complementary, and the blend has become a signature style of Margaret River, where crispness, elegance and intensity are its hallmarks.
- Versatile Semillon is also at the heart of Australia's most celebrated sweet wine style, Botrytis Semillon. The warm Riverina region produces Australia's finest examples, renowned the world over for their opulence, intensity and refreshing citrus lift.

Suggested timings

This module is designed to be taught in one to three hours. How long you spend on each topic – or whether you cover it at all – will depend on your attendees as well as time allocation. Below are two different examples of how you may wish to divide your time.

ONE-HOUR CLASS

Topic	Time
Welcome and introduction	5 mins
History and evolution of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc	3 mins
Hunter Valley Semillon (including tasting)	12 mins
Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc (including tasting)	12 mins
Margaret River Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc blends (including tasting)	12 mins
Riverina Botrytis Semillon (including tasting)	12 mins
Summary and class close	5 mins

THREE-HOUR CLASS

Topic	Time
Welcome and introduction	15 mins
History and evolution of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc	10 mins
Hunter Valley Semillon (including tasting)	30 mins
Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc (including tasting)	30 mins
Break	20 mins
Margaret River Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc blends (including tasting)	30 mins
Riverina Botrytis Semillon (including tasting)	30 mins
Summary and class close	15 mins

SUGGESTED WINES TO TASTE

These are just suggestions – you can select whichever wines best suit your tasting and audience. Wines may or may not be available in your area.

- Brokenwood Hunter Valley Semillon
- Tyrrell's 'HVD Single Vineyard' Hunter Valley Semillon
- West Cape Howe Great Southern Semillon Sauvignon Blanc
- Fraser Gallop 'Parterre' Margaret River Semillon Sauvignon Blanc (barrel-ferment style)
- Shaw + Smith Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc
- Wicks Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc
- De Bortoli 'Noble One' Riverina Semillon
- Margan 'Botrytis' Hunter Valley Semillon
- Dandelion 'Wishing Clock of the Adelaide Hills' Sauvignon Blanc
- Domaine A 'Lady A' Tasmania Sauvignon Blanc (barrel ferment style)
- Oates Ends Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon (Barrel-ferment style)
- Cullen 'Mangan Vineyard' Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon
- Mount Mary 'Triolet' Yarra Valley Semillon Sauvignon Blanc Muscadelle



THANK YOU