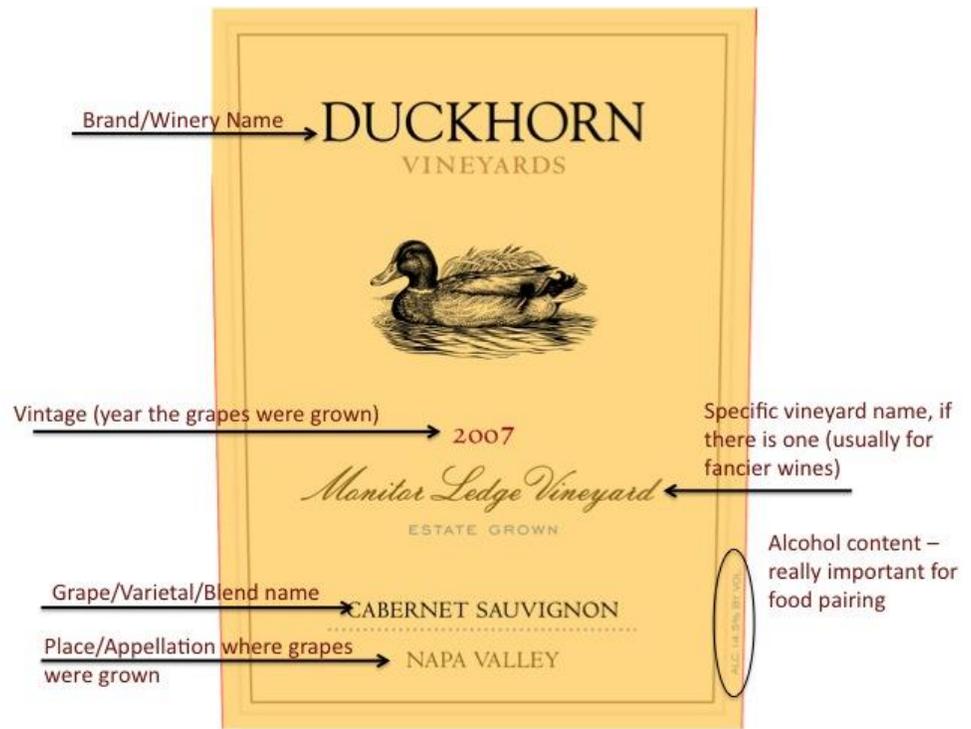


Wine Label Information



Old World Label – Place or Village listed instead of grape variety. Geography is key in knowing what is in the bottle.

New World Label – (USA, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, So Africa)
Lists the grape variety on the label



Wine labels vary from producer to producer and from country to country.

While they convey a wealth of information and can be quite artistic, they can also be complicated and confusing.

Have you ever found yourself reading a wine label and wondering what a term means or whether the wine is of high quality? Understanding wine labels isn't always straightforward.

Here's a guide to help eliminate the confusion.

The 6 Main Parts of a Wine Label

Producer, Brand or Wine Name

The producer is whoever made the wine – on Old World labels. The Brand or Winery Name is listed on New World labels.

Type of Wine

New World Label - This is where you'll see the varietal or wine blend, such as Cabernet Sauvignon or Sauvignon Blanc. However, not all wines list the grapes that make up the blend or their proportions. Also, varietal labeled wines aren't necessarily pure. Wines produced in the United States can be labeled with a varietal if they **contain at least 75 percent of the named grape – this is the federally requirement, many states Washington and Oregon require a higher percentage to be in the bottle of the named grape.** The standard benchmark is 85 percent, but again not required.

Old World Label - Wines from France, Italy, Spain, etc. list the place or village on the label making it a bit more difficult to know what is in the bottle. Example: Chianti = Sangiovese grape, Rioja = Tempranillo grape, Bordeaux + Blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc

Growing Region or Appellation

This section is highly variable. The region in question could be large (California), legitimately "regional" (Napa County) or more specific (Calistoga AVA or Russian River Valley AVA). Other wines list the growing region by the specific vineyard, indicating the grapes came from one vineyard only, instead of from several vineyards around the region.

Some appellations, especially throughout Europe, are only allowed to grow certain grape varieties for use in their blends. Knowing what the appellation allows can help you understand both the growing region and the grapes used. This can be useful for learning how to read French and Italian wine labels, among others.

Year/Vintage

Most wines state their vintage on the bottle, indicating the year the grapes were harvested. Wine growing regions throughout the year can have unpredictable weather or climactic conditions. This means that some of these wines can have a wide range of quality, depending on the vintage.

Warmer climates tend to have more predictable weather, which can lead to more consistency among vintages. Keep in mind that this is a generalization, as good and bad harvests can and do happen everywhere. Bottles without a vintage, or non-vintage bottles, will typically contain wine from several harvests.

Alcohol Content

You'll see the alcohol percentage by volume (ABV) listed on most wine bottles. Standard ABV is about 12 - 14 percent, but the amount varies widely. Keep in mind that the listed ABV isn't a firm number. U.S. winemakers are allowed +/-1.5 percent, which means a bottle listed as 12.5 percent alcohol could be as low as 11 percent or as high as 14 percent alcohol. European winemakers are allowed a margin of 0.5 percent.

Volume

Finally, every bottle lists how much wine it contains. Measurement is typically in milliliters, with 750 mL as the standard wine bottle amount. Other than 750 mL, you're most likely to see the Magnum, 1.5L, on the shelves. At the extremes, bottles can contain as little as 187.5 mL (the Split or Piccolo bottle) and as much as 30L (the Melchizedek or Midas bottle). Also, some European producers use centiliters instead of milliliters (75 cl vs 750 mL).

Other Information You'll Find on Wine Labels

You may see where the wine was bottled. "Estate bottled" means the producer grew the grapes, produced the wine, and bottled the wine. "Produced and bottled by" means the producer fermented the grapes but did not grow them. "Cellared and bottled by" means the producer received the grape must only after it was fermented. Reserve is another term that might appear on the wine bottle. Reserve wines are considered higher quality since they're aged for longer. However, in the United States, New Zealand, Australia and other New World countries, there are no set rules determining what qualifies as aging for Reserve labeling – that decision comes down to the specific producer. **Only** in Spain and Italy are there specific rules about when wine labels can say Reserva or Riserva, respectively.

Recap: The Steps to Read a Wine Label – These 6 items are required on all wine labels

- *Locate the producer name or wine name
- *Identify the varietal or blend
- *Check for the vintage (year)
- *Look at the ABV
- *Determine where the grapes were harvested (the appellation or growing region)
- *Check the bottle volume

Look for additional information, such as whether the wine is estate bottled, if the wine has special aging, or if the grapes came from older vines.