

# thebacklabel<sup>®</sup>

A monthly wine journey curated for adventurous souls

## AUSTRIA + HUNGARY





# VINUM RES PUBLICA

BY LOGAN LEE

WINE IS CULTURE, politics, agriculture, environment, and much more. As you pour a glass this evening, remember that it tastes like it depends on so many more variables than a Coke or a Budweiser. It is the only product you sip on that is shaped by climate change, agriculture, winemakers, and, yes, even politics...

The Roman Empire laid the groundwork for so many modern ways of the world. The Roman calendar. Aqueducts for fresh water. Roads (they all the lead to Rome). You name it and much of our way of life starts with the Romans. At the height of the empire, it was ruled by Trajan and governed close to 70 million people or, at that time, 21% of the world's population. The city of Rome was the Ancient version of New York City, the largest metropolis of the day and the crossroads of finance and culture.

We can thank the Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius, for legalizing vines in what is now modern Austria and Hungary. Ever since the 2nd century, wine and politics have been inextricably linked in this part of the world.

So, for this month's edition of thebacklabel, we make our way to Austria and Hungary! We dive into how another empire made its mark on Austria and Hungary. That empire was the Soviet Union, and the impact of communism on the wine industry was real. We're exploring a few WA all-time faves like Zweigelt, Grüner Veltliner, and Furmint. But we've also found some new bffs like Pinot Blanc, Blaufränkisch, and Portugieser. One of our best somm friends, Kaitlin Ohlinger takes a look at why Austrian wines pair with such hard-to-pair foods. Oh yeah, and speaking of food, our friends at Food52 hooked us up with some really epic recipe pairings that are all about leftovers. Let no turkey go to waste, and use it for something different than a sammy this season.

And from the WA Crew to your friends and family, we wish you the most amazing holiday season.

Now onward to the wine!

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## CONTENTS

### FEATURES

2 VINUM RES PUBLICA

6 THE ENIGMA OF AUSTRIAN WINE

20 WINE, THE COLD WAR AND COMMUNISM

35 5 WAYS TO REUSE A WINE BOTTLE

### RED WINES

8 2016 EVOLÚCIÓ BLAUFRÄNKISCH

10 POTATO (PEEL) FOCACCIA

12 2017 HIDDEN VINEYARDS ZWEIGELT

14 STRAWBERRY TOP PESTO

16 2017 VYLYAN MACSKA PORTUGIESER

18 BEST EVER TURKEY CHILI

### WHITE WINES

22 2017 EVOLÚCIÓ FURMINT

24 BANANA PEEL CAKE WITH BROWN SUGAR FROSTING

26 2017 HIDDEN VINEYARDS PINOT BLANC

28 RADISH TOP AIOLI

30 2017 GREEN EYES GRÜNER VELTLINER

32 FRIED ASPARAGUS TRIMMINGS

# The Enigma of Austrian Wine

BY KAITLIN OHLINGER



**AUSTRIA: THE SOUND OF MUSIC.** The soaring peaks of the Alps. Something about the Austro-Hungarian empire that you slept through in high school. Was that a thing?

What do we think of when we think of Austrian wine? Probably a very standard Grüner Veltliner, found in a 1L bottle. This is a sturdy wine that's easy to locate, and you can purchase it with the assurance that it will be a fresh, light white perfect for literally whatever it is you're up to. This isn't a wine that fights with anything; it just is. An enjoyable "no-brainer"... but perhaps a little ordinary?

Why then is it that Austrian wines are a stealthy darling of the restaurant world? Yes, a good value-priced workhorse of a Grüner will make any profit margin decision maker smirk with glee, but Austrian wine captivates the curious, the driven and the creative food and beverage pros. How?

## **They work with foods that are heckin difficult to pair.**

The lean, herbal and peppery palate of a young Grüner is a perfect match with weird veggies like asparagus and artichokes, and the exasperating herb tarragon.

A Grüner with a little age and complexity can happily venture into smoked fish, paté, and fried food.

An energetic, fresh Austrian Blaufränkisch works magic with Chinese cuisine, as the palate is generous yet soft.

## **The indigenous grapes truly shine.**

Many wine-producing regions have climates that are suitable for the overzealous viticulturalist who just \*has\* to plant a new grape in a new place. Austria is not one of them. While there is grape diversity, the real gems are the true Austrian grapes: Grüner Veltliner, St. Laurent, Blaufränkisch, Zweigelt. For a professional wine person, it is truly compelling to discover a memorable wine of character that knows where its spiritual home is — Austria's got em.

## **They're people pleasers.**

A fun fact about Austrian reds, in particular, is that they have interesting lineage; Zweigelt

is a cross of St. Laurent and Blaufränkisch developed in 1922. St. Laurent is believed to be a crossing of Pinot Noir with an unknown second parent.

What does that mean? These reds are like little shape-shifters, taking on different qualities of their parentage, and of more familiar grapes in general. To the insightful wine mind that loves to categorize, Austrian wines are a delight to break down:

Want a Pinot Noir, but one that's wearing mud boots and has a touch more color and density? Zweigelt.

Want the peppiness of a Syrah, but not necessarily with oak, that boasts dark fruit yet no sappiness? Blaufränkisch.

Need a pristine, food-friendly white with the high acid of a Pinot Grigio, but a fun touch of spice and enough versatility to go from salad to sashimi to risotto? Grüner!



## 2016 EVOLÚCIÓ BLAUFRÄNKISCH

WEINLAND, AUSTRIA

100% Blaufränkisch



Aromas of sun-drenched raspberry jam, which finishes with a smooth funk that smells like blackberry bushes lining horse stables



Tangy, funky and tart, this wine tastes like the first cool day of fall after a relentless summer

**MOOD:** Lounging in a giant pile of Autumn leaves and laughing until your cheeks hurt with your friends to the tune of the new Mumford & Sons track, Guiding Light

### FRUIT



### TANNIN



### ACIDITY



### BODY



**T**his bottle might just be the best use of the word funk cause this wine is all about funk. Blaufränkisch, also known as Pinot Noirs' funky-ass little sibling who rocks the trendy threads, has all the dopest dance moves and gives off the "I don't give a damn" cool vibe. This grape is native to the cooler climate in Austria which shows in its glistening and bright acidity. Imagine freeze-dried raspberries, cherries, and red currants slowly melt across your mouth into a state of funky sublime-ness aka deliciousness!

Poppy and electric in your mouth, it brightens up every inch of your palate. It makes you feel like you're on an extended vacation, in a beautiful place where it is eternally early fall, wrapped in your favorite worn-in flannel button down. With its beautiful acidity and light body, this wine is ideal for pouring a brimming glass and inviting friends over to wrap yourselves in blankets and play in a huge pile of autumn leaves.



This wine will be great for making fancy leftover turkey sandwiches with cool kid Asian ingredients like hoisin and garam masala.



## POTATO (PEEL) FOCACCIA

MAKES: 2 ROUNDS OF FOCACCIA

### INGREDIENTS

**1 cup (4 to 5 ounces) lightly packed potato peels (see headnote for more)**

**4 cups (17 ounces) all-purpose flour**

**1 tablespoon kosher salt**

**2 teaspoons instant yeast**

**6 tablespoons olive oil, divided**

**2 teaspoons butter, softened, for greasing**

**Flaky salt for sprinkling**

**Loaded Baked Potato variation**

**4 green onions, thinly sliced**

**3 tablespoons (3/4 ounce) bacon bits (see headnote for more)**

**1/2 cup (3 ounces) packed grated cheddar cheese**

1. Place the potato peels in a small saucepan with 1 1/2 cups water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to maintain a simmer over medium heat. Cover and cook until the peels are very tender, 20 to 30 minutes. Allow to cool slightly.

2. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, whisk together the flour, salt, and yeast. (If making the Loaded Baked Potato version, add the sliced green onions, shredded cheese, and bacon bits, and stir to mix.) Set aside.

3. Transfer the peels and remaining cooking water to 2-cup measuring cup (or larger), purée using an immersion blender, and then add more water to reach the 2-cup mark (if you do this before blending you risk making a mess). Alternatively, the peels and cooking water can be transferred to a blender instead. This potato peel water mixture needs to be in the 95° to 115° F range for happy yeast, so I blend when the mixture is still warm, then add cold water, check the temperature, and if it's still too warm, wait for it to cool off. If you don't have a thermometer, fear not, just check the temperature by putting a few drops on the inside of your wrist, it should feel warm, but not hot.

4. Pour the potato peel water mixture into the dry ingredients, and, using a rubber spatula, mix until the liquid is absorbed and the ingredients form a sticky cohesive mass of dough. Pour 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in the bottom of a large container with a lid (or use the same bowl that you used to mix!), transfer the dough to the container, turn to coat in oil, then cover and refrigerate for 24 hours. (Okay, or 18 hours if that works better for your schedule. Okay, okay, \*at least\* 12 hours, but that's the minimum, and really, 24 hours is best. Patience is a virtue and all that.)

5. Grease two 8- or 9-inch pie plates (or something similar) with 1 teaspoon butter each, then pour a tablespoon of oil into the center of each pan. Deflate the dough and separate it into two equal pieces (Alexandra Stafford does this with two forks and it works really well). Place one piece into each of the prepared pans. Roll the dough balls in the oil to coat them all over, and let the dough balls rest for 2 to 4 hours (depending on the temperature of your kitchen), until they have puffed up and filled the pans.

6. Once the dough balls look like they've had enough rise time (or close to it), heat your oven to 425° F. Once your oven is at temp, drizzle the remaining olive oil on them (1 tablespoon on each), stipple the dough with your fingertips to create deep dimples, sprinkle with flaky salt, and then put them directly into the oven. Bake for 25 minutes, or until golden brown all over.

7. Remove from pans, transfer to a cooling rack, and wait patiently. (Or rip into it while it's warm, I won't tell.)



## 2017 HIDDEN VINEYARDS ZWEIGELT

BURGENLAND, AUSTRIA

100% Zweigelt

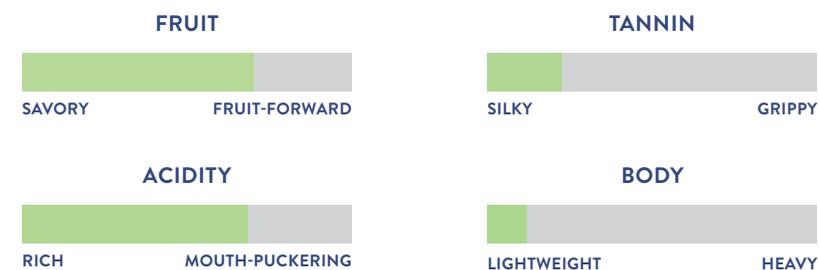


Dark cherries and cassis marinated in flat Dr. Pepper



A guilty pleasure of lush ripeness becomes more complex with silky smooth tannins and a faint touch of spice

**MOOD:** Wednesday night listening to Mrs. by Leon Bridges and thumbing your way through a Vienna travel guide. Look at you, surviving half of the week and getting smarter too.



**T**wo grapes walk into a bar... JK! Would you believe us if we told you that this grape is named after a guy called Dr. Zweigelt?!?! Well, in 1922, the good doctor took two grapes, St. Laurent and Blaufränkisch, and crossed them together to make Zweigelt, which is now the most planted varietal in Austria. The grape is really the best of both of its parents. The St. Laurent gives it that nice ripe cherry, while the Blaufränkisch imparts the spice.

The wine is velvety smooth and the body is definitely on the lighter end of the spectrum making it gulp-able without weighing you down during all the holiday meals on your calendar this season. As you sip, your brain might think you've found dark cherry Kool-Aid, but a more complex and only-for-adults version. And by adults, we just mean 21 and older. No judgments on your inner child making an appearance this holiday season.



One of the more versatile red wines around making it a great holiday season wine because it pairs with turkey, ham, and the tofu mold that only your guests from Brooklyn eat.



## STRAWBERRY TOP PESTO

MAKES: 3 CUPS

**36 grams parsley (stems included)**

**50 grams whole ramps (garlic can  
be substituted seasonally)**

**72 grams strawberry tops**

**100 grams Parmesan-style cheese**

**6 grams fresh whole cayenne**

**80 grams black walnuts**

**385 milliliters (1 3/4 cups)  
Georgia olive oil**

**4 grams salt**

1. Remove rind from cheese and cut in 1/4-inch blocks.
2. Combine parsley, ramps, strawberry tops, cheese blocks, cayenne, and black walnuts and grind through a meat grinder with the smallest possible die setting.
3. Thoroughly mix ground ingredients in a metal mixing bowl and combine with olive oil and salt.
4. Reserve pesto in plastic containers and store in refrigerator or freezer depending on desired shelf life. It keeps for one week in the refrigerator or one year in the freezer.



## 2017 VYLYAN MACSKA PORTUGIESER

VILLÁNY, HUNGARY

100% Portugieser



Pomegranate seeds left in a Ziploc bag on your desk overnight



Easy sipping and uncomplicated liquified sour cherry and plum jam

**MOOD:** Surviving the week when Friday hits... Simultaneously throw on Peaceful Life by Guts (featuring Lorine Chia), Superman-style change into your lounging clothes, and pop a bottle of wine that is made for easy, thoughtless enjoyment.

### FRUIT



### TANNIN



### ACIDITY



### BODY



If you spend any length of time in NYC, you'll come to find that every neighborhood has at least one "go-to" hang out spot. It can be a lounge, restaurant, or dive bar, but it is of that neighborhood. It's your version of Cheers and maybe someone knows your name. Wine regions are kinda like neighborhoods, and each region has its go-to grape just like every neighborhood as its best haunt.

In Tuscany, it's Sangiovese or "Chianti." In Rioja, it's Tempranillo or simply "Rioja!" Each region, just has its local jam! Maybe not as famous, but definitely as delicious, is Portugieser hailing from Villány, Hungary. This is the first time this grape has found its way into a WA box, but we're quickly embracing the hard to pronounce wine because it's super easy drinking, simply refreshing, and vibrant with smooth notes of sour cherry, plum, and pomegranate. It's like you've got that insider tip on the cool bar in every neighborhood.



Guilty and simple pleasure time aka some fancy fudge-y chocolate or just frozen M&Ms with a solo cup brimming with this vino.



## BEST EVER TURKEY CHILI

SERVES: 4

**Olive oil**

**2 tablespoons tomato paste**

**1 medium to large onion, chopped**

**5 cloves garlic, minced**

**1/2 red bell pepper, chopped**

**1 teaspoon chili powder**

**1/2 teaspoon hot paprika**

**1/2 teaspoon dried coriander**

**1/4 teaspoon oregano**

**Dash of cinnamon**

**1 pound ground turkey breast**

**1 cup dark beer, such as Leffe  
Brown**

**One 28-ounce can diced  
tomatoes**

**One 15 1/2-ounce can kidney  
beans, drained**

**1/2 teaspoon hot sauce or chile  
paste**

**Salt and pepper**

**Sour cream, chopped chives,  
cilantro, and/or shredded cheese,  
for topping**

1. Heat a bit of olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the tomato paste, onion, garlic, and red pepper, then cook, stirring occasionally, until softened. Add the chili powder, hot paprika, coriander, oregano, and cinnamon; stir and allow to cook until aromatic, 1 minute.

2. Add the ground turkey and cook, breaking it up with a spoon, until lightly browned. Pour in the beer and allow to cook down slightly.

3. Add the tomatoes, beans, and hot sauce or chili paste.

4. Allow the chili to simmer, uncovered, until thickened, about 40 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Top with sour cream, chopped chives, cilantro, and/or shredded cheese.

# WINE, THE COLD WAR AND COMMUNISM

BY HAYES PEEBLES

ON NOVEMBER 9, 1989 the Berlin Wall was hacked to pieces, officially destroying the border between Communist East Germany and Ally-backed West Germany. But the mauerfall ('wall fall') not only pulled down the Berlin Wall, it also marked the collapse of the USSR itself.

All those countries that became Soviet Socialist Republics or 'satellite states' to Russia after WWII would soon gain their independence and carve out new national identities. Slovenia and Croatia emerged out of what was once Yugoslavia, while nations like Hungary and Georgia ditched their Socialist Republic governments too.

One could study the collapse of Communism for years and still not know what the hell happened. In order to fully appreciate the ways in which the melting of the Cold War impacted global politics we'd have to devote a hefty part of our lives to the topic. We're not going to pretend that we've done that. But, we have focused in on a tiny piece of the puzzle that is near and dear to our hearts. What could it be? Wine? Good guess.

When the so-called Iron Curtain fell, people started to realize that some damn good wines had been hiding behind it. When we say people, we don't just mean people in the United States and Western Europe, we mean like... everyone. Suddenly — or so it seemed — delicious wines were being made in surprising places like Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Georgia.

But here's the thing, wine isn't new to Eastern Europe at all... people were making wine in modern day Georgia 8,000 years ago. The WTF-worthy tastiness of these wines is appreciated by so few because hardly anyone had access to them for such a long time.

In communist economies like those of Yugoslavia and Hungary, wine production happened through large cooperatives. Private ownership of vineyards was highly discouraged, and very rare. Government officials would contact these cooperatives and tell them what and how much

to make based on their facts and figures. Needless to say, this made the life of winemakers tricky.

The myth is that because these winemakers were forced to produce such large quantities of wine for their comrades in the republic, they stopped making wines of any real quality. True, the quality of the wines produced for the republic was often poor, but winemakers in the Eastern Bloc didn't stop making great wine by any means... they just kept it all for themselves! Only now (about 25 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain) are these delectable and historically significant wines stepping out of small villages and winemaker's cellars onto the world's stage.

We here at Wine Awesomeness are not historians, economists, philosophers or politicians, but we are very very happy that the cookie of history has crumbled in such a way that these wines have finally made their way West, where we can drink them all night and day!



## 2017 EVOLÚCIÓ FURMINT

TOKAJ, HUNGARY

100% Furmint

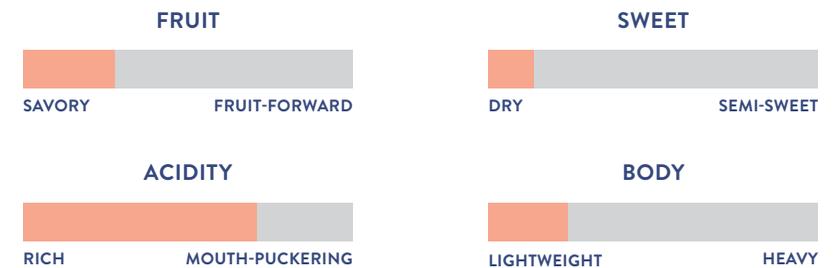


It's like a new fragrance, dubbed "Autumn Elegance," dotting every department store counter with aromas of peach skin, apricot, and chrysanthemum



Refreshing and rich at the same time with crisp green apple, quince, and uber high quality almond extract

**MOOD:** Fall brunch... Lately by Wet eases out of the surround sound aka the Jambox as you master turning that leftover turkey into Turkey and Waffles!



**T**okaj is a wine region held on a pedestal by nearly every American sommelier. But, surprisingly, the wines from this part of Hungary are not household names. First thing you'll notice is this wine comes in a funky-shaped bottle. This is mandated by the powers to be in Tokaj and every wine hailing from this place comes in this shaped vessel. You don't come across dry Furmint all that often, but when you do, they should behave like this.

Tokaj has a very strong record of producing sweet wines, but this Furmint is firmly planted on the dry side of the wine spectrum. At first sip, the juice is all about ripe stone fruit with notes of peach, nectarine, and apricot, but as you get to know this bottle better you will find subtle nutty bitterness, a pinch of mint, and rich almond for a complex and grand finish.



Move past the same old mimosa and elevate b-fast game with this off-the-beaten-path varietal that brings a slight touch (not too much) of classiness to brunch when all your friends are hungover.



## LINDSAY-JEAN HARD'S BANANA PEEL CAKE WITH BROWN SUGAR FROSTING

MAKES: ONE TWO-LAYER CAKE

### FOR THE CAKE:

**Peels from 2 very ripe organic bananas, stem and very bottom discarded (about 100 grams), well washed—see note below**

**½ cup unsalted butter, softened, plus more for buttering the pans**

**1 ½ cups granulated sugar**

**2 large eggs, separated**

**½ cup buttermilk**

**1 ⅔ cups cake flour (210 grams), plus more flour (any type) for flouring the pans**

**1 teaspoon baking soda**

**¼ teaspoon baking powder**

**½ teaspoon fine-grain sea salt**

### FOR THE FROSTING

**½ cup unsalted butter**

**1 cup packed (220 grams) light or dark brown sugar**

**¼ cup milk, 2% or higher**

**1 ¾ to 2 cups powdered sugar (220 to 250 grams), sifted**

1. Heat the oven to 350° F.

2. To make the cake: Cut the banana peels into 1-inch pieces and place them in a small saucepan with 1 cup of water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and allow the mixture to cool slightly, then strain the banana peels, reserving 1/4 cup of the cooking water.

3. Meanwhile, butter and flour the sides of two 8-inch round cake pans and line the bottoms with parchment paper. Butter and flour the pans again to coat the paper.

4. Transfer the peels and the 1/4 cup of cooking water to a tall, narrow container and puree with an immersion blender until completely smooth (a mini food processor would do the trick, too!).

5. Cream together the butter and sugar in a large bowl using an electric mixer (or a wooden spoon for an arm workout) until pale and fluffy, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the egg yolks one at a time, mixing until incorporated, and scraping down the sides of the bowl after each addition. Mix in the banana peel mixture, then stir in the buttermilk until well-combined.

6. In a medium-size bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Add the dry ingredients to the bowl with the butter mixture and stir gently, just until combined.

7. Put the egg whites in another bowl (make sure it's clean and dry!) and whisk until soft peaks form—either by hand or with the whisk attachment on an electric mixer. If using an electric mixer, start slowly and gradually increase speed to medium-high. You're done when you pull out the whisk or beater and a soft peak is formed, but immediately collapses. Gently fold the egg whites into the batter and divide the batter evenly between the two prepared pans.

8. Bake, rotating the pans halfway through, until the tops are golden and a toothpick inserted into the center of each cake pulls out with dry crumbs rather than wet batter, about 25 minutes. Let the cakes cool completely in the pans.

9. When the cakes are completely cool and you're ready to assemble, make the frosting: Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over low heat. Stir in the brown sugar and cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes. Stir in the milk, raise the heat to medium-high and cook, stirring constantly until the mixture boils. Remove from the heat and let cool to lukewarm. Gradually whisk in 1 3/4 cups powdered sugar, beating until smooth. If the frosting is too thick, add more of the milk; if it's too loose, slowly add the additional powdered sugar, until it reaches a spreadable consistency. Use the frosting immediately, as it will begin to thicken and stiffen as it sits.

10. To remove the cake from the pans, invert one cake pan on a serving plate, lift off the pan, and peel off the parchment. Repeat for the second cake pan. Put one layer of the cake on a serving platter and spread about one third of the frosting evenly over the top. Set the other layer on top, and spread the remaining frosting over the top and sides of the cake.

NOTE: Banana peels contain some of the same proteins found in latex, and could cause an allergic reaction. Those same proteins might also make your immersion blender feel slightly gummy to the touch. Rub the surface down with cooking oil, and then wash it normally. As with any fruit or vegetable where you're eating the peels, it's a good idea to buy organically grown and scrub them well.



## 2017 HIDDEN VINEYARDS PINOT BLANC SOPRON, HUNGARY

100% Pinot Blanc

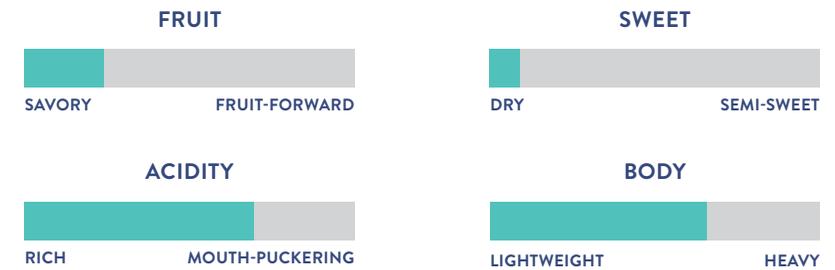


First time you had sliced Granny Smith apples lightly sprinkled with nutmeg and cinnamon as a kid



A delightful coating of apples, pears, and spice with a slightly puckered finish

**MOOD:** Making a Sunday supper for your fraaands with Mt. Joy's Silver Lining playing in the background as you await a new episode of 60 Minutes.



**T**hese grapes are hand-picked and organically farmed on the shore of Lake Fertő, which is one of the largest bodies of water in Europe that isn't tied to an outgoing/ingoining water source aka a river. This large lake is where tons of Austrians and Hungarians spend their summers, and sailboats dot the horizon during the warmer months. Who's ready to go!?!?

Since wine takes on so many characteristics of its environment, this lake plays a large part in the flavors in the bottle. This happens because the lake affects the climate meaning cooler days in the summer and warmer ones in the winter. Think of Mother Nature hitting a yoga class. The coolness creates acid in the wine which is that bite in the back of the mouth that is kinda like a sweet tart and makes you want more and more. The warm climate gives the grapes a chance to be more fruity — that's where the apple and pear flavors come in this bottle. When acid and fruit combine, you get balance! Namaste.



You're feeling sauce-y when you pair up this fuller style of white vino with creamy dishes i.e. hollandaise, alfredo, gravy, etc. etc. Rule of thumb: bigger body white vinos go well with nearly anything rich and creamy.



## RADISH TOP AIOLI

MAKES: ABOUT ONE CUP

**1 cup chopped radish leaves  
(stems discarded)**

**1 large clove garlic**

**1/2 teaspoon salt**

**1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard**

**1 room temperature egg**

**Juice of 1/2 lemon**

**1/2 cup vegetable oil**

**1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil**

1. In the bowl of a mini food processor, add the radish leaves, garlic, salt, Dijon, egg, and lemon juice. Process until smooth.

2. Combine the two oils and, with the processor running, slowly drizzle into the processor, utilizing the two tiny holes on the lid. Process until thick and then refrigerate to thicken further.



## 2017 GREEN EYES GRÜNER VELTLINER

NIEDERÖSTERREICH, AUSTRIA

100% Grüner Veltliner

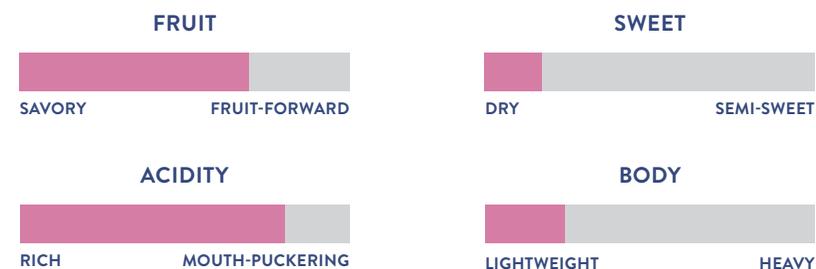


Juicy green apple Now and Laters hanging out at the bottom of a Sonic Limeade



Caramel apple rice cakes with acidic lime notes that sting the back of your jaw in the way that makes you keep on sippin'

**MOOD:** Starting to start Saturday night. Too Many Colors by Twin Shadow is playing just a little too loud as you try on ten pairs of jeans, while sorta dancing on a mission to find the perfect fit for the night out



**T**his might be the one grape that definitely drives every Sommelier into some sort of temporary daydream where somms are all getting together and talking about obscure wine stuff. Nerd ALERT! Here's the translation...

Grüner Veltliner is a native varietal to the hills of Austria — and this bottle is a prime example of it. Crisp and clean but with a biting acidity, these Green Eyes are not messing around. While at first, you may notice notes of pear-lemonade rising from the glass, beneath these are dried dill and supple-sweet apricots left out in the sun.

This wine basically just transports you straight into a dancing kinda mood: wearing those perfectly fit jeans and shaking it like no one is watching. Next thing you know you'll start break dancing all across the dance floor.



Vietnamese and Thai flavors call for special care when pairing with wine. Whether that Southeastern Asian dish is inspired from Thanksgiving leftovers or not, Grüner Veltliner is your go-to.



## FRIED ASPARAGUS TRIMMINGS

SERVES: 1 TO 4

**1 bunch asparagus**

**1 cup Wondra flour**

**3 cups canola oil**

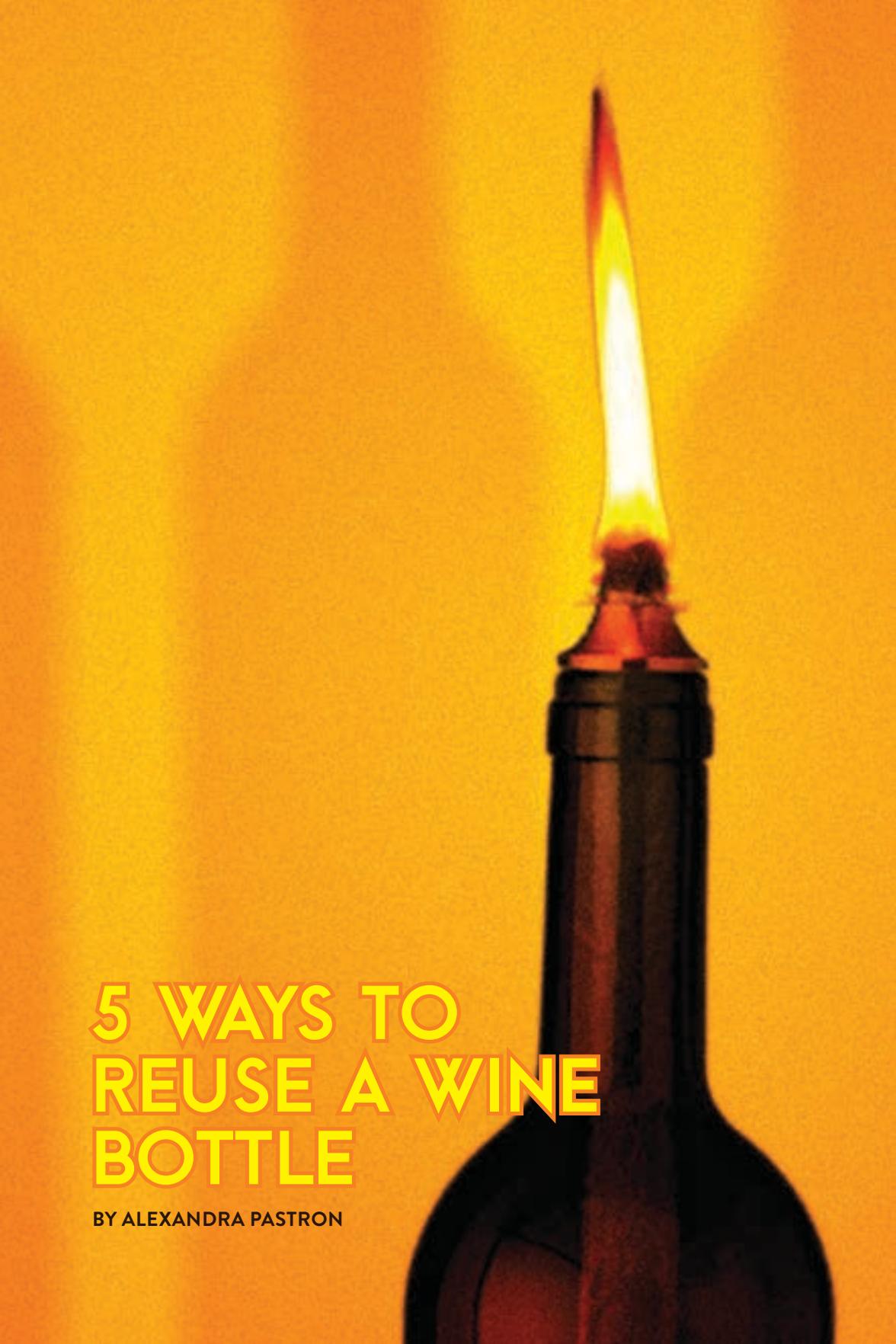
1. After giving the asparagus a good rinse, grab a stalk and lay it flat. Starting about 3/4 of the way up, with a veggie peeler, work your way around the stalk, peeling pieces off as you go. Try to get them as wide as you can.

2. Place all the shaved trimmings on a baking sheet and pat dry to remove any excess water.

3. Sprinkle the flour all over the trimmings and toss with your hands to get an even coat. The stalks should be evenly white when you are done.

4. Heat oil to 350° F degrees and fry in batches until stalks are rigid and golden brown.

5. Remove from heat and sprinkle liberally with kosher salt.



# 5 WAYS TO REUSE A WINE BOTTLE

BY ALEXANDRA PASTRON

**YOU ALREADY KNOW** how you can reuse the corks from all that wine you've been drinking — but what about the bottles? Before you toss 'em in the recycling, check out these 5 easy ways to give them new purpose once they've been emptied of all that delicious vino.

## 1. DISH SOAP DISPENSER

Yes, dish soap technically already comes in a plastic bottle, but wouldn't it look so much nicer if it was in glass? This one is so easy there's no reason you shouldn't at least give it a try.

## 2. TIKI TORCH

These wine bottle torches are not only easy to make — they're totally badass. Think about it, how cool would these look lining your patio? Plus, they're easy to refill so you can use them over and over again. Talk about recycling.

## 3. CHANDELIER

This chandelier takes DIY to the next level. Plus, how awesome would this look in your wine cellar or dining room? Not to mention you get to show off how much wine you've been drinking lately.

## 4. WIND CHIME

Picture it: You're sitting outside on your patio/ porch/ fire escape drinking a refreshing beverage as your wind chimes clink gently in the breeze. Worth the effort? Absolutely.

## 5. CANDLE

Now you may be thinking there is already a candle on this list — but this one is different! While your wine bottle torches are looking awesome outside, these chic little guys will look even better on your bedside table. So the next time you're thinking about dropping \$20 on a fancy candle, try making one yourself instead. Bonus: You get to design your own fragrance.

Head on over to [thebacklabel.com](http://thebacklabel.com) to get the complete directions, and don't let another bottle go to waste!

# GLOSSARY

## ACIDITY

Gives wine a bright, crisp, tart taste and is essential in keeping a wine balanced — acidity balances out sweetness. You can gauge how acidic a wine is by taking note of how much you salivate after your first sip of wine. More saliva = more acid.

## BODY

Describes how heavy wine feels on the palate. When determining body, picture the difference between how skim milk feels in your mouth versus how heavy cream feels. If a wine feels like skim milk, it has a lighter body. If it feels more like heavy cream, it has a full body. Acidity, sweetness, tannin and alcohol all affect the body of a wine.

## DRY

A “dry wine” is one that does not have a sweet taste. However, even if a wine is technically dry, it can still have a considerable amount of residual sugar that’s concealed by a higher acidity.

Example: unsweetened is technically “dry.”

## FRUITY

Commonly confused with sweetness (because we affiliate fruit with sweetness), “fruity” describes the presence of fruit flavors in wine. To better understand fruitiness in wine, imagine unsweetened iced tea with lemon squeezed in it. The tea has a fruitiness from the lemon but is still dry because it’s unsweetened.

## SWEETNESS

A wine’s sweetness is measured by the amount of naturally occurring sugar — Residual Sugar (RS) — that’s left in the wine at the end of the fermentation process. This sweetness is ranked from bone dry (Brut Nature) to very sweet (doux) and can usually be detected by a slight tingling sensation on the tip of the tongue.

## TANNIN

The astringent or “grippy,” almost drying, feeling a red wine leaves in your mouth. A wine’s tannin level is determined by how long the pressed juice sits with the grape seeds and stems, which is where tannins are naturally found. Example: think about how your mouth feels after drinking unsweetened black tea — also high in tannin.

## VARIETAL PRONUNCIATION

**Blafränkisch** [blow FRAHN-keesh]

**Zweigelt** [ZVY-gelt]

**Portugieser** [por-chuh-GHEE-zer]

**Furmint** [foor-meent]

**Pinot Blanc** [pee-noh blahnk]

**Grüner Veltliner** [GROO-ner FELT-lih-ner]

## THANKS FOR BEING A MEMBER! DID YOU KNOW...

### THE WINE

We’re constantly tracking down, taste-testing and selecting authentic bottles from winemakers around the world — wines that are new to us and hopefully new to you, too. We curate authentic wines rather than bulk blending so that you can truly experience the diverse world of wine.



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Discovered something you love in your box? Browse our wine shop and stock up on your favorites. Members get exclusive discounts on the wine shop (up to 25% off!) AND free shipping (when you select “No-Rush” shipping at checkout). Hurry! They go fast.



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