



STRUCTURE

4. Answer the following questions with appropriate negative or positive **short answers** applying your own views and ideas. One example is done for you.

Example) Is most Catalan wine good? Yes, it is.

- a) Have you ever grown your own personal grapevine? _____
- b) Would you like to take a wine tour of Italy? _____
- c) Can you grow wine grapes without using pesticides and chemical fertilizers?

- d) Do you like to walk in vineyards? _____
- e) Will you continue to study English after this course? _____
- f) Do you have to worry about crop irrigation in this region? _____
- g) Should you let a red wine breathe before serving it? _____
- h) Had there been much opportunity to sell cava internationally before this past decade?

- i) Could you make your own wine? _____



READING

5. Read the excerpt below and underline any vocabulary you are unsure of. Read it a second time and answer the questions on the next page. After completing the questions, work with a partner(s) to decide if you have the same answers. If not, try to come to an agreed conclusion.

By Randal Caparoso

Soil vs. Climate: Does the Hat Make the Man?

Winemaking is a skewed business. Take the question of soil as it pertains to wine quality. When the experts talk about the great wines of France, they talk about the inherent superiority of France's soils.

Why, for instance, does Chateau X produce such great wines every year, while Chateau Y just across the road produces distinctly average wines? Both estates may have the same types of grapes planted, and may experience the exact same weather patterns and lavish just as much care in the winery, year after year after year. Yet why is X always better than Y? The answer, according to the French, is the soil.

Which makes perfect sense when you consider the fact that the French came to this logical conclusion after several hundred years of observation. They even know exactly what type of soil is superior: limestone, or soil dominated by more than 50 per cent calcium carbonate.

In France, these outcroppings of white, chalky, chunky, fractured terrains - derived from fossilized sea matter originating in Jurassic times - occur all over the country; and not coincidentally, in the greatest vineyards. Everywhere limestone is found, the French observe healthier, more balanced vine growth, resulting in wines with superior depth, intensity, balance

and longevity. What else, if not soil, can explain the differences in quality?

But if limestone, as one writer put it, is the "caviar" of viticulturists, what is the stuff of highly regarded vineyards in places like California, Oregon, Tuscany, and parts of Australia and Spain, where there is almost no limestone at all?

So what gives? As the American vintners would have it, it is decidedly not the soil that determines quality; but rather, climate, and things like clonal selection, trellising, leaf and grape thinning, yield, and choice of barrel and vinification techniques. Good, well drained soil, of course, also contributes to quality; and along the West Coast, these types may vary from shallow, compacted clays to deep, gravelly or sandy, and even boulder strewn loams.

So how does a wine drinker navigate through this thought process towards an understanding of what makes the best wine? Like anything, I guess, with a grain of salt, and suspension of disbelief. But if you prefer a more rational approach, here is a sensible way of thinking about it:

1. Makeup and quality of soil are crucial to vine health and ultimately wine quality, particularly in regions where climate can be somewhat marginal and thus

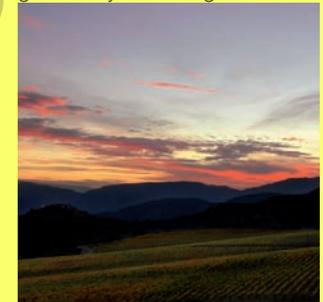
more dependent upon superior soil.

2. Climate, however, is a far more important factor than soil; since, unlike soil, climate doesn't just add to quality, it is an absolute requirement. It is very possible to grow great wine without absolutely perfect soil, but you cannot with less than optimal climate.

3. The fact that France's greatest wines come from limestone encrusted sites proves the importance of soil only within the scope of France's growing conditions. Outside of France, all bets are off.

As to who produces the best wines from specifically French varieties - France, the U.S., or Italy, Spain, or Australia? This is a debate destined for eternity. I, for one, have better things to do. Like enjoying my wine.

Great soil may indeed make for great wine. Then again, so do a great many other things.



**Article by Randal Caparoso and published at www.wineloverspage.com