

# Eau de Vie

a wine, spirits, and travel newsletter

Vol.27 March 2021

## TRAVEL NEWS

Canada has effectively canceled the 2021 cruise season to Alaska by prohibiting any vessels that carry more than 12 people from entering Canadian waters until February 2022. Cruise ship lines have continuously drummed an upbeat rhythm throughout 2020 but have recently canceled sailings that run into the 2021 summer months. Most lines have canceled until June, but Disney has canceled all sailings up to August 10th 2021.

UK based airlines are reporting that [bookings are up 600%](#) after the release of the British government's exit from lock down plan. The prime minister said that international travel could resume as early as May 17th. These travel bookings are being made primarily for destinations in Spain, Greece, Portugal, and Turkey for travel in July, August, and September.

Speaking of going somewhere, it is seemingly more probable that travelers will need to present some sort of health credential before flying. [The International Air Transport Association \(IATA\)](#) has been working on this and is soon to release their own version of a health passport. EU member states, where tourism is a significant portion of their economy, are clamoring for some sort of health passport. EU bureaucracy is notoriously slow so

I wouldn't be surprised if we see member states formulating their own rules and regulations.

On the home front, [Delta Airlines](#) is continuing to block the middle seat and has removed change fees for all tickets except Basic Economy. Basic Economy tickets are unchangeable, nonrefundable and do not allow passengers to get seat assignments until the day of the flight. Airlines are also making progress in providing travelers with rapid home test kits and testing sites are being installed in airports.

9/11 changed worldwide air travel. How the pandemic will change it is still unknown but imagining air travel to be the same as before is naive. As things evolve I'll continue to keep you up to date in this newsletter.

If you know someone who would enjoy reading the *Eau de Vie* encourage them to subscribe by emailing [david@savvynomad.com](mailto:david@savvynomad.com)

*Spring Yoga:* Sara will be teaching a new yoga series this spring: Yin Relax + Bowstring Elements. The class is on Zoom, hosted through [Yoga North](#), and runs for 9 weeks on Fridays from 5:30-6:45 pm. Classes start March 19 and run to May 14, 2021.

## FRUITY SPIRITS

Broadly speaking, all hard alcohol spirits are made from either beer or wine. If you make your spirit from fermented grain (beer), we generally call that Whiskey. If you make it from fermented fruit (wine) we call that Brandy. Here's a list of terms for commonly found spirits made from fermented fruits:

**Brandy:** if it says brandy on the label it's a generic fruit based spirit.

**Eau de Vie:** French term literally meaning "water of life" but is used to denote any fruit based spirit.

**Cognac:** (FR) wine based

**Armagnac:** (FR) wine based

**Brandy de Jerez:** (SP) sherry based

**Pisco:** (CL, PR) unaged, wine based

**Grappa:** (IT) & **Marc:** (FR) fermentation of pressed/spent grape, seeds, stems and pulp

**Calvados:** (FR) cider based

**Applejack:** (US) cider based

**Poire:** (FR, US) pear cider based

**Kirsch:** (GR, DK) fermented cherry

**Slivovitz:** (CZ, PL) fermented plum

Below is an easy recipe to try with Cognac and Amaretto. Enjoy!



# A SHORT GUIDE TO COMMON TERMS ON AMERICAN WINE LABELS

If all wines tasted the same or if at least all grape varieties tasted the same then picking up a bottle of your favorite would be simple. Selecting a bottle of Chardonnay or Cabernet Sauvignon for dinner would be like buying a head of broccoli. But wine isn't like that. Wine is the most nuanced beverage in the world. Wine is different because of where the grapes are grown. Different because of what the growing season was like, when the fermentations were performed, how hard the grapes were pressed, if the grapes were carefully sorted before pressing, if the producer used oak barrels, if the barrels were new or old or French or American, and finally, how long the wine sat in the bottle before tasting. The number of factors that go into the character of a wine is almost too many to calculate.

So there you stand, grocery list in hand, with the words "red wine" scribbled at the bottom. The last stop before heading home and making dinner. In front of you is a wall of bottles all filled with wine and nothing to help you choose except the price and a label with an impossibly small font.

Get out your reading glasses because if you want to make an educated guess you are going to have to understand the words and terms on the label. Here is a short guide to the most common wine terms on a bottle of wine from the United States of America.

The largest words are often the name of the producer. If you are familiar with a producer and you like their wine then knowing their name will help you buy that brand. But if you don't know the producer then their brand name is not indicative of quality, taste, or value.

The next largest word is usually the **grape variety**. By law, if the wine contains 75% or more of a single variety then that variety can be listed on the label. The truth is that most wines, red or white, are blends. While the label may say Cabernet Sauvignon it is very rare to find a wine that is 100% Cabernet; often Merlot is used along with Malbec and Syrah and others to create the best tasting wine. If the wine says **red blend** on it then you know that the primary grape is less than 75%. **Meritage** and **Claret** also mean red blend.

They sound fancier but they mean the same thing.

Where the wine is from is the best indication of quality. I don't mean California wines are better than Oregon wines. I mean that if the label lists a specific location where the grapes were grown then the flavors and nuances of that wine will be greatly increased. Grapes sourced from just one specific area will translate the flavor of that area much better than a blend from many different regions.

The United States is divided up into AVAs (American Viticultural Regions). When a wine label lists an AVA on the label 75% of

the wine must come from that region, if it lists only a state such as California, 100% must come from California. Confusingly, every state has a slightly different rule with the top wine producing states being the most strict and those that produce less being the most lenient. Minnesota requires 51% of the wine in a bottle to be from grapes produced in Minnesota.

The vintage date is good to note because not all wines are intended to age. A sale priced wine might be a great deal because it's old but old isn't always good. Generally, if you see it for sale you should drink it right now. I'd steer clear of buying an old dusty bottle for full price that's been displayed upright on the shelf in a warm store for 10 years. That wine is probably more vinegar than wine.

Other words on the bottle are "reserve" which means it may be special but doesn't have to be and "estate bottled" which is a legal term meaning 100% of the wine is from land the winery owns or controls. Having the same people grow, harvest, ferment, age, bottle and sell their own product often leads to a better wine.

Wine labels are works of art but also important tools for consumers. They contain information that can inform if you know how to interpret the words. Don't buy a wine just because you like the label, buy it because you know what the label means.