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WHAT'S UP

German Wine

101



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PLAN AHEAD

By Katie Wells



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BAVARIA

Michaelis-Kirchweih Fürth | Oct. 3 – 14, 2026

As declared by the mayor, "Our Michaelis church fair proudly and quite rightly bears the venerable title of 'Queen of Franconian church fairs.'" And rightly so, as the over 900-year-old celebration attracts nearly 1.5 million visitors every year. Enjoy folk dances, a trombone choir, the annual harvest festival parade (which spans through the entire Fürth city center), cannon fireworks, rides and more. Couples can enter the Marriage Lottery and win prizes to help them start their married life.

michaelis-kirchweih.de



KAISERSLAUTERN

Chestnut Festival in Annweiler am Trifels | Oct. 3 – 4, 2026

It's chestnut season, and as part of the annual Palatinate Chestnut Days from Oct. 1–Nov. 15, the *Keschdefeschd* takes place in the town hall square of Annweiler. Guests can shop at market stalls for products made from chestnuts like chestnut honey, chestnut liquor and chestnut bread while listening to music. Children can partake in a treasure hunt and win a small prize. Don't miss the crowning of the 22nd Chestnut Princess on Saturday. tourenplaner-rheinland-pfalz.de



SPANGDAHLEM

BUNBERT Oktoberfest Wittlich | Sept. 25 – Oct. 31, 2026

On the weekends for an entire month, is the Wittlich Oktoberfest. Don your dirndl or lederhosen, grab your friends, book a table in the festival tent and sip beer while listening to music all night long. Live performances will vary depending on the day. A new addition this year, on Oct. 11, is the Kids' Oktoberfest where there will be music, dancing and family-friendly activities all afternoon.

www.oktoberfest-wittlich.de



STUTTGART

Cannstatter Volksfest | Sept. 25 – Oct. 11, 2026

This autumn funfair is often referred to as the "Oktoberfest of Stuttgart" and it is considered the second largest beer celebration in the world. Historically, it was a celebration of agriculture after the 1815 eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia caused a period of crop failure and famine. The first Sunday of the festival kicks-off with a 200-year-old tradition, the annual Volksfest Parade. There will be a variety of traditional carnival rides and festival food staples like beer and brats. cannstatter-volksfest.de



WIESBADEN

Frankfurter Buchmesse | Oct. 7 – 11, 2026

Calling all book lovers and writers! The Frankfurt Book Fair is the largest trade fair for books in the world. If you loved Scholastic book fairs as a kid, this event is a much larger version, where you can peruse multiple genres of books and hear about upcoming new releases. You can also meet authors, talk to literary agents and listen to seminars. The five-day annual event takes place on the Frankfurt Trade Fair grounds. The opening days for the general public are from Oct. 9–11. buchmesse.de/besuchen ■



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SPOT
LIGHT
ON...

German Drinking Laws

Story and Photo by Kat Nickola

Many people are surprised when they PCS to Germany and see young people buying beer at their local grocer. However, those teens aren't being sneaky. German laws regarding alcohol are designed with teaching progressive responsibility in a culture where alcohol is a heritage.

Below are German drinking laws. U.S. military personnel in the country are subject to additional restrictions.

- Teens 14 and older may drink beer or wine. They may not buy it, but a legal guardian may purchase it for them as long as they are drinking together, whether at a restaurant or at home.
- Teens 16 and older may buy and drink undistilled alcohol such as wine, beer, spritzers or beer/soda mixes. This includes from a grocery or drink shop, in restaurants and beer gardens, or at a bar or club until midnight.
- Adults 18 and older are allowed to purchase and drink any alcoholic beverage, including spirits, mixed drinks, wine and beer.
- Drinking alcohol in public is not illegal nation wide. Germans have get-togethers with alcohol at parks and natural areas, they may buy an alcoholic soda to drink while walking downtown, they may imbibe while riding the train or expect alcohol for sale at hiking events.
- Certain areas in larger cities DO prohibit drinking in public, but you can expect to see posted signs. Also, some special events like *Fußball* matches will enact alcohol prohibitions if rowdiness is expected.
- In Germany, public drunkenness is not a crime, but it is socially unacceptable. Being a public nuisance is illegal and includes being a safety hazard while drunk.
- Blood alcohol level (BAL) in Germany is measured by milligrams per milliliter, while the U.S. uses grams per 100 milliliters. This means that a 0.3% BAL in Germany equals a 0.03% BAL in the U.S.
- Drunk driving is not tolerated. There is a 0.5% BAL tolerance, unless the driver is involved in an accident or traffic violation when it's lowered to 0.3%. Drivers under age 21 (legal driving age is 18) have a 0.0% limit. Drinking restrictions only apply to the driver.
- Electric scooters are legally considered a vehicle, so the same drunk driving laws apply. ■

GERMAN WORD OF THE MONTH

Schlenkern (verb) *shlen-kahn*

Literal translation: swing

Meaning: Swinging or dangling, like the arms of a drunk person as they wobble home.



German Beer 101

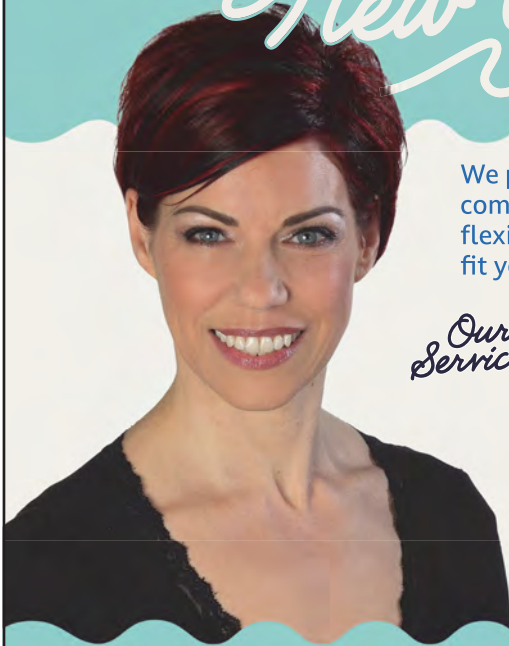
Pictured: Waldmeister-Secco Spritz

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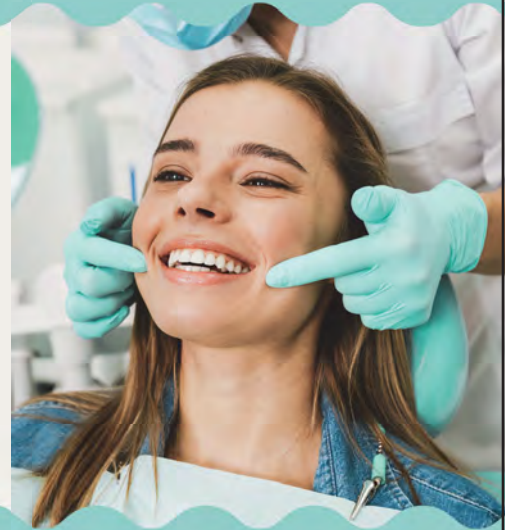


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RIDING THROUGH STUTTGART'S WINE HILLS

Story and Photos by Joe LaForest

This was the kind of Sunday afternoon you wish you could bottle. It was in the mid-60s with clear skies and the faint smell of blooming vines in the air. I started my ride in **Obertürkheim**, a village along the Neckar River and an easy train ride away. The village was just shaking off its quiet morning stillness as I began to pedal. My goal was simple: follow the wine trail, take in the views and let the afternoon unfold at its own pace.

Nothing is better than a Sunday bike ride through Stuttgart's wine hills, where warm sun, history and a chilled glass of white wine come together.



The climb began gently, and the scenery rolled out like a painting. Vineyards draped across the hillsides, their green bringing a pop to the landscape. Before long, I coasted into **Uhlbach**, where a courtyard festival had sprung to life. A German band had played under the open sky, people gathered at long tables and the first round of local wine was already flowing. The sound of laughter and clinking glasses filled the square, so I paused to take it all in.

In Uhlbach, I found the perfect blend of history and refreshment. The **Weinbaumuseum Stuttgart**, housed in a 17th-century wine press house, shares its space with a wine tasting room—both run by the same local winemakers. I stepped inside, ordered a glass of Aldinger's VDP, and brought it outside into the courtyard. The music played, people laughed and lingered and I sipped slowly, soaking in the scene. Afterward, I strolled through the museum exhibits, learning about the tools, traditions and stories behind the vineyards that lined my route. It was a moment where past and present folded together: wine in one hand, heritage in the other.

The real climb came next: up to the village of **Rotenberg** and the iconic Grabkapelle. The neoclassical chapel, built by King Wilhelm I as a tribute to his wife, sits like a crown on the hill. Just before reaching the top, I stopped for a second glass of wine at the nearby cafe. This time, I savored a refreshing Sauvignon Blanc that cut perfectly through the climb's effort. The view from the top was worth every pedal stroke. I saw a patchwork of vineyards, the winding Neckar River and the city fading into the distance. I rested for a while, grateful for the quiet.

From there, I pedaled downhill to join up with the Neckar River bike trail. As I rolled closer to the river, the path quieted. On one side, riverside reeds swayed in the breeze; on the other, the edge of the city peeked through. It was a smooth, contemplative finish to a day shaped by sunlight, grapevines and good wine.

The ride ended the way perfect afternoons should: quietly, with tired legs, a full heart and the lingering taste of good wine. If you're looking for a local adventure that blends nature, history and culture, a ride through Stuttgart's wine country offers all three. Just bring a bike, an open schedule and maybe an empty glass.

Many of the local trails weave through sloped vineyards connected by cutback paths, which are tight switchbacks carved into the hillside that were likely once used by vineyard workers hauling baskets of grapes. These paths offer alternating glimpses of old stone walls, resting benches and sudden panoramic views of the Neckar valley below. Riding through them isn't just scenic—it's immersive. You're pedaling through the backbone of Württemberg's wine country, with every turn a chance to pause, breathe and take in a new layer of the landscape.

One of the perks of biking in Stuttgart is how easy it is to get around with your bike. Both the U-Bahn and S-Bahn networks are bike-friendly, allowing for seamless travel to and from different parts of the city and its surroundings. Whether you're starting your ride in a village like Obertürkheim or returning from the Neckar, it's easy to hop on public transit with your bike in tow.

There are lots of cycling options in the wine country surrounding Stuttgart: from a short, local afternoon ride to the 400km-long Württemberger *Weinradweg* (wine bike trail). There is also a hiking route called the *Weinwanderweg* Obertürkheim. ■





German Wine

101

By Kat Nickola



When I joined my neighbor at the Weinfest in his childhood village on the Mosel River, we spent the sunny day on a tractor in the steep vineyards and partied at a riverfront park late into the evening. Everyone was there: kids on the carousel, a teenage wine queen, two family restaurants selling food and old folks in the oompah band. Local wines were sold by the bottle and the town youths arrived on Bacchus' barges, in a shirtless and very merry nod to the origin of wine in Germany.

The first viticulture came to the area with the Romans. They likely cultivated wild grapes along the Mosel River as part of establishing the garrison town of Trier on its banks. Roman culture heavily influenced areas west of the Rhein, which is where most Germanic wine production stayed until the reign of Charlemagne in the 800s. His efforts to spread Christianity eastward brought monastic wine.

Viticulture grew into a massive industry through the 1400s, when tried and true grape varieties like Rieslings developed and vineyards were much larger than today. Wars, climate and a cultural shift toward beer saw a decline in the early modern period. Post-World War II, however, viticulture was revitalized as part of reconstructing West Germany.

The mighty Rhein River is the lifeblood of German wine. The German Wine Act of 1971 defined 11 major growing regions called *Anbaugebiete*. They were all along the Rhein or its tributaries like the Mosel, Main and Neckar. After reunification in 1990, two more small regions were added along the Elbe River and its tributaries.

Almost all German wine is classified as top-tier *Qualitätswein* (quality wine). This requires the grapes to be grown in a specific *Anbaugebiet*, which is on the label. This means that German wines remain highly local. They may also have a *Prädikat* designation for special attributes related to harvest times.

High quality, family-made local wine, like the kind in my glass at the village Bacchanalia, is a 2,000-year-old tradition worth celebrating. It's easy to support local vintners by simply buying and imbibing the reasonably-priced *Qualitätswein* that lines German grocery shelves.



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Qualitätswein



aus deutschen Landen



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Anbaugebiete:

GERMAN HIGH-QUALITY WINE REGIONS

The 13 official Anbaugebiete are designated areas for vinifying Qualitätswein and account for most of Germany's wine production.

Hessische Bergstrasse

Germany's smallest wine region has vineyards scattered on low hills and is known for its early, warm weather for growing both Riesling and Spätburgunder.

Saale-Unstrut

The cool climate and northern latitude of the Saale and Unstrut Rivers mean the small vineyards here grow hardy Müller-Thurgau.

Sachsen

Tough and hardy Müller-Thurgau predominates the small, steep vineyards of this region along the Elbe River.

Rheinhessen

With the most vineyard acreage in Germany and big wineries, this region grows many varieties where the Rhein has carved a wide hilly valley.

Franken

Vineyards of Silvaner and Bacchus line the Main River where wine stays local and is uniquely bottled in a round, green Bocksbeutel.

Mittelrhein

Vineyards full of Rieslings climb every hillside between the quaint villages that line this scenic segment of the Rhein River.

Rheingau

Southfacing hills host vineyards that date back to the earliest abbeys and monasteries of the Middle Ages. Most now grow Riesling and Spätburgunder.

Ahr

The steep slopes and volcanic rock along the Ahr River creates a slightly warmer microclimate, perfect for growing red Spätburgunder grapes.

Mosel

Vineyards growing Riesling and other white wine grapes line the steep hillsides of southwesterly-facing slopes of the Mosel River.



Nahe

This region has huge variation in soil and rock types, meaning it produces many different types of wine at small vineyards.

Palz

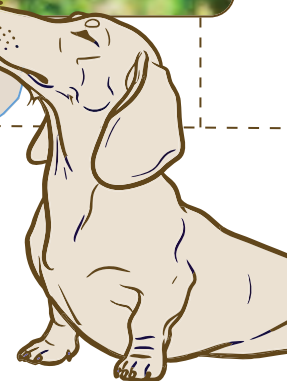
Tucked between the Haardt mountains and the Rhein River, the vineyards along this strip of land offer a good split between mild whites and reds.

Baden

Stretching along the warm, sunny southern Rhein, there are lots of wineries and variety in Baden including popular Spätburgunder and Müller-Thurgau.

Württemberg

Warm hilly land and the Neckar River valley make this Germany's premier red wine region. Cooperative wineries grow the famous regional Trollinger.



Top 10 German Wines

In Germany, most wines are *sortenrein* (single varietal) meaning they are made with 100% of a certain type of grape. Labels on a bottle will list the wine type as synonymous with the variety of grape used. Blended wines will use a brand or invented name instead.

1. **Riesling.** Germany's most popular wine is this delicately citrusy, acidic white that rules the vineyards along the Rhein and Mosel rivers. It can taste *Trocken* (dry), *Halbtrocken* (half-dry), *Feinherb* (off-dry and fruity), *Liebliche* (delicately sweet) or even *süß* like a dessert wine, making it very versatile for pairing.

2. **Müller-Thurgau.** This was the most produced wine until the 1990s when Rieslings became popular for export. It is still mass-produced with high yields, making a light, slightly fruity, mildly dry white wine that can be served with any course.

3. **Spätburgunder.** The first red grape on this list, the *Spätburgunder* (Pinot Noir) has risen in popularity and grows on more acres than the Müller-Thurgau, but with slightly lower yields, making it almost tie for second place. It has an elegant medium-bodied and dry berry flavor, perfect for accompanying roast meats and cheeses.

4. **Dornfelder.** Another red wine, this grape grows well in the warm, wide valleys west of the Rhein River. It is deeply red and dry but with dark fruit flavors and low tannins that make it smooth in the mouth and great with a hearty meal.

5. **Graubugunder.** This white wine, called the Pinot Gris outside of Germany, is actually descended from the red Pinot Noir, making a golden, mostly dry wine. It's medium-bodied flavor reminiscent of tree fruits is great with creamy dishes and pasta.

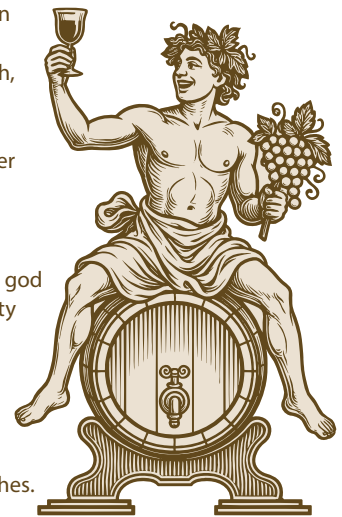
6. **Silvaner.** Planted primarily in Franken along the Main River, this dry white is clean, simple and refreshing. It pairs well with unpretentious chicken or fish dishes.



7. **Weißburgunder.** Another white wine, this variety is delicate with a fresh acidity that makes it a light, typically dry, summer wine that pairs well with lighter fare and creamy dishes. It can also be made into a *Sekt* or sweet dessert wine.

8. **Portugieser.** This wine is often crafted as a *Weissherbst* (rosé) or a pale red. It has a very fresh, medium-bodied taste with little tannin that is perfect for everyday drinking and summer grill outs.

9. **Bacchus.** Named for the wine god himself, this is a popular variety in the Franken region. It is an easy-drinking white that can be dry to medium-sweet and is fruity, crisp and very aromatic. Bacchus goes well with spicy, fresh and zesty dishes.



10. **Trollinger.** A light, fresh and fruity red wine with low tannins, this refreshing wine is a great picnic wine. It is almost solely produced in the Württemberg area around Stuttgart. ■

How to Read a German Wine Label

By Karen Bradbury

When it comes to wine, the golden rule is a simple one: drink what you like. If you live in Germany, congratulations! You live in one of the world's powerhouses in terms of top-shelf white wine production. And while you can certainly splash the cash to buy top quality bottles from Germany's most prestigious makers, you'll no doubt be tickled by the quality of bottles you can pick up without breaking the bank.

Reading a German wine label might seem daunting at first, but once you've established your own likes, it's actually pretty easy to match up the information on the text to your taste preferences. While not each and every label will match the below description, this basic info should prove helpful in helping you to decipher which wine to decant and when. Beginners take heart, as this information is geared to you.

Producer: Topping the label, you'll generally find the name of the winery that made the wine.

Type of grape: Next down on the label is generally the type of grape used to make the wine.

Quality of wine: Beginning in 2026, wine is grouped into three categories based on where the grapes were grown: The first is *Deutscher Wein*, (German wine), which is simply wine made in Germany outside of a special region; older bottles will still be labeled *Tafelwein* (table wine). The second category is *Landwein* (country wine), which is made from a minimum of 85% of grapes grown within a special designated wine growing region. The final category is *Qualitätswein* (quality wine), which accounts for roughly 80% of the country's production. Quality wine grapes are grown within one of the Germany's 13 designated high-quality growing areas called *Anbaugebiet*.

Year: The vintage refers to the year in which the grapes were harvested.

Color: White, red or rosé? While whites and reds aren't labeled as such, the exception to the rule is rosé, which is a wine made of red grapes through a process in which the grape skins, which lend the wine its pigment, are removed after a short period of time. This results in a wine of a pinkish shade. Wines labeled as *Weissherbst* or *Blanc de Noir* are types of rosé wines. A *Rotling* is made from both red and white grapes.

Dry vs. sweet: Many labels indicate how dry the wine will taste according to the following scale: *trocken* (dry) no hint of sweetness, *halbtrocken* (half-dry) only the slightest hint of sweet, *feinherb* (off-dry) a little bit sweeter; *lieblich* (sweet) definitely on the sweet side and *süß* (sweet) with full-on sweetness.



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Sparkling wines: Wines containing CO₂ are categorized according to their degree of carbonation. *Perlwein* is only slightly sparkling; within this category, *Secco* is a German take on Italy's Prosecco. *Sekt* is full-on fizz.

Wine region: A *Qualitätswein* label will always indicate which of the 13 high-quality growing areas the grapes hail from. These are, from largest to smallest in terms of vineyard area: Rheinhessen, Pfalz, Baden, Württemberg, Mosel, Franken, Nahe, Rheingau, Saal-Unstrut, Ahr, Sachsen, Mittelrhein and Hessische Bergstraße.

Quality control number: This nine-digit number known as the *Amtliche Prüfnummer* indicates the wine-growing region, village, estate, sequence in which wine from this particular maker was submitted for testing and the year in which the testing was carried out.

Bottler: Not all wineries bottle their own wines. The words *Abfüller* or *abgefüllt* indicate a third-party bottler, who may be located in a town outside the original wine-growing region.

Alcohol content: The percentage figure shows you how much alcohol by volume, or ABV, is in the bottle. ABV will range anywhere from 8.5% to a maximum of 15%. Wines containing no more than 12% ABV would generally be described as light, whereas those over 13.5% would be considered strong or heavy wines.



PHOTO BY PHILLIP WELLMAN

Of course, not all wines are created equally. The taste of a dry Riesling will vary wildly depending on its region of origin, vintage, type of soil on which the grapes are grown, winemaker's vision and dozens of other factors. Not all wines will win you over, but chances are you'll eventually find one that will rock your world. Until then, keep trying and tasting, as learning and discovery count amongst the joys in life. ■

Location: The address of the winery/bottler must be indicated on the label.

Allergens: Wines with sulfites, a food preservative and stabilizer, must carry the warning *Enthält Sulfite*.

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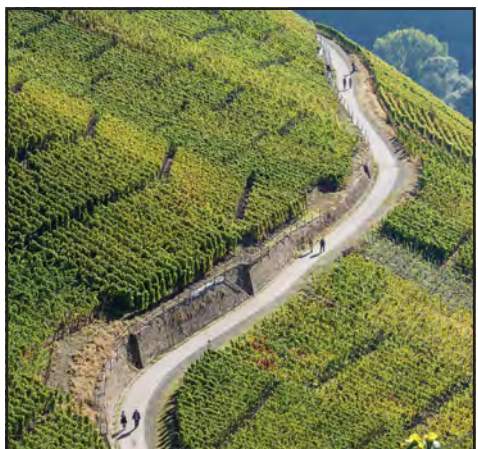
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YOUR SNAPSHOT

PHOTO BY
Lin Sao



Hot Air Balloons in Cappadocia, Turkey

One of the best ways to explore **Cappadocia, Turkey** is by soaring over surreal rock formations called *peri bacaları*, or fairy chimneys, and catching a sunrise or sunset from above. Cappadocia is known for its annual Hot Air Balloon festival held in early August. Photographer Lin Sao captured the magic of the hundreds of giant balloons filling the sky. This year, the festival is Aug. 11–13, 2026. ■



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