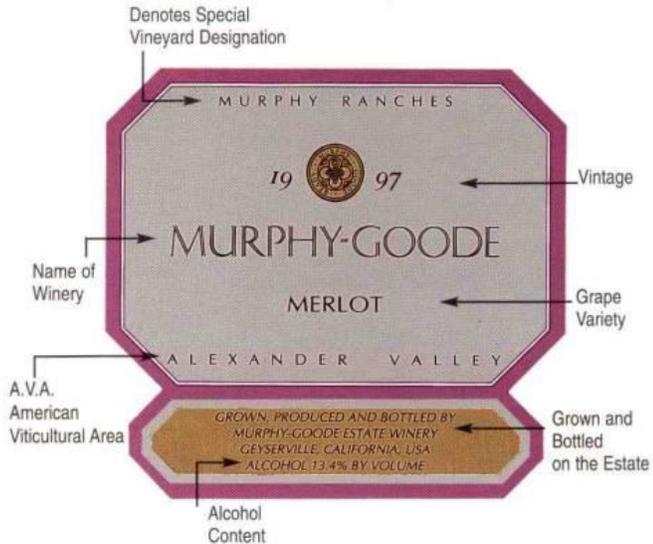


## American Wine Label



## French Wine Label



## How to Read a Wine Label – New World, United States

Wineries have always used wine labels to provide customers with useful information to assist them in the selection and appreciation of wine. January 1, 1983, new federal wine label requirements changed the minimum information that a label must contain and also redefined the meaning of particular terms.

California wineries have historically provided a good deal more information than the minimum amount required by law and have spent millions of dollars and years in the courts defending consumers, and the California Wine (primarily Napa) reputation, with truth in labeling laws. This has now extended beyond California to include the majority of the United States. **Do keep in mind that some states have higher requirements than the Federal standard.**

1. **Brand Name Mandatory.** If no brand name is on the label, the bottler's name is considered the brand. It is also useful to refer to the bottler's name if a winery has several brands.
2. **Vintage Optional.** The year designates the year in which the grapes were harvested. As of May 2006, the U.S. law allows up to 15% of the blend can be from a vintage other than the stated year. The law was designed to allow American producers to be held to the same standards as other wine producing countries, previously the U.S. standard required 95% of the stated vintage be in the bottle. This regulation only applies to wines that do not use American Viticulture Area (AVA) designations as appellation of origin. For example, if the grape source is noted to be "California," the 85% of stated vintage rule is applicable. Appellation-specific wines are held to a higher standard. For wines noted to be from a specific AVA, for example, Napa Valley or one of its sub-appellations, the rule is 95% of the grapes must be from the stated vintage. The vintage bears no relationship to when the wine was bottled.
3. **Appellation of Origin** Wine labels may contain several levels of geographic distinctions: California State law requires that 100% of the grapes come from within California. Other States Federal law and nearly all other states require that 75% of the fruit must come from within the named state. Officially Designated Viticultural Areas. Since 1983, at least 85% of the grapes must come from the named region (for example "Napa Valley.")
4. **Wine Type Mandatory.** A wine may be labeled by a grape or varietal name such as Chardonnay or Cabernet Sauvignon, or it may be given a generic name such as "Red Table Wine." Prior to 1983, a wine labeled as a varietal was required to contain at least 51% of the named grape varietal and have the "taste, aroma, and characteristics" of the grape varietal. Beginning in 1983, wines using varietal names must derive at least 75% of their volume from the grape designated. Many individual state laws require a

higher percentage, example Oregon and Washington.

*Wine authorities agree that 100% varietals are not automatically the best wines. The winemaker's art often includes the blending of different varietals. Labeling law does not require that generic names imply anything about the grape varietals in the wine. Many wineries voluntarily list the proportions of the grape varietals that comprise generic wines.*

5. **Special Designations** *Optional*. Labels often contain special terms to indicate unusual qualities of the wine, such as degree of sweetness or color. Sometimes the wine was of such a high standard as to be designated by the winemaker as a special selection or private reserve.
6. **Vineyard of Origin** *Optional*. Many wineries name the vineyard in which the grapes were grown because the winery believes the property produces an unusually high-quality grape. The winery or an independent grower may own the vineyard. Federal policy requires that 95% of the grapes must have been grown in the vineyard named.
7. **Producer and Bottler** *Mandatory*. This part of the label gives a great deal of information about the production of the wine. The label must indicate the bottler and its location. Several descriptions are common:
  - a. "Produced and bottled by" certifies that the bottler fermented 75% or more of the wine. Used in combination with other information on the label, such as a vineyard, this term provides the consumer with significant information about the origin of the wine and who is responsible for its production.
  - b. "Cellared and bottled by" indicates that the bottler has aged the wine or subjected it to cellar treatment before bottling.
  - c. "Made and bottled by" indicates that the bottler fermented at least 75% of the wine (10% before July 28, 1994).
  - d. "Bottled by" indicates that the winery bottled the wine, which may have been grown, crushed, fermented, finished, and aged by someone else.
8. **Estate Bottled** *Optional*. This term certifies legally that the winery grew 100% of the grapes on land it owns or controls and that the winery crushed, fermented, finished, aged, and bottled the wine in a continuous process. Both the vineyard and winery must be located in the viticultural area that is stated on the label.
9. **Alcohol Content** *Mandatory*. This statement on a table wine indicates the alcohol content by volume, with a tolerance of plus or minus 1.5%. However, the tolerance cannot be used to label as a table wine a wine containing more than 14% alcohol. Dessert wines contain more than 14% but no more than 21% alcohol and are permitted a plus or minus margin of 1%.
10. **Net Contents** *Mandatory*. The fluid volume in metric measurement must be indicated on the label or be blown into the glass.
11. **Declaration of Sulfites** *Mandatory*. Beginning in 1988, wines which have a level of 10 parts per million or greater of sulfur dioxide must be labeled with a sulfite declaration. *Note all wine contain natural sulfites*
12. **Government Warning** *Mandatory*. All wine bottled after November 18, 1989 must bear the federal warning.