

Georgian Wine

The Eurasian country of **Georgia** is one of the world's oldest winemaking countries. Its highly-prized wines from traditional grape varieties are the most sought-after from the Soviet space.

Grape varieties—The key wine grapes favored in Georgia are the red grape variety [Saperavi](#) and the white grape [Rkatsiteli](#). These are the classic varieties of the former Soviet republics, from Kyrgyzstan and [Kazakhstan](#) to Moldova and [Ukraine](#). A number of other long established varieties are widely distributed around the country.

Among these, red wine grapes are by far the most common: [Alexandrouli](#), [Aladasturi](#), [Keduretuli](#), [Ojaleshi](#) and [Usakhelauri](#). Their white counterparts are led by Chinuri and [Mtsvani](#), in both Goruli and Kakhuri variants.

A long history of winemaking—The country is also strongly associated with the continuation of ancient winemaking techniques. This includes the use of clay vessels called qvevri (or kvevri) for fermentation and storage. Similar to ancient amphorae, they are buried in the ground outside, or set into a cellar floor for temperature consistency. Winemakers in the United States, Australia and elsewhere have also begun to import and use them.

Archaeological evidence suggests that primitive wine production first began 6000 to 8000 years ago in the Caucasus region. This includes Georgia, [Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#) and eastern [Turkey](#). Each of the modern countries lays claim to being the birthplace of wine. Academic papers on the topic tend to be hotly debated.

Early Georgian winemaking traditions were still prevalent many thousands of years later, as attested by the medieval hymn 'Thou Art a Vineyard'. The hymn was dedicated by King Demetrius I (1093–1156 AD) to his new Georgian kingdom. It begins: 'You are a vineyard newly blossomed, young beautiful, growing in Eden.'

Georgia's wine producers flourished in the Middle Ages, as the eastern Mediterranean region was rocked by the Crusades. As a Christian nation, Georgia was left unscathed by Crusaders, and was able to develop its agriculture and commerce in relative peace. Later, it remained outside of the Ottoman Empire, whose Islamic Sharia law prohibited wine consumption. And so wine production flourished in Georgia until [phylloxera](#) and [mildew](#) arrived from the Americas in the late 19th Century. The pest devastated almost 150,000 acres (60,700ha) of vineyard.

When Georgia came under Soviet control a few decades later, vineyards were replanted in their thousands to meet expanded demand. However, the late 1980s saw a dramatic about-face in the Soviet Union's attitude to wine. Mikhail Gorbachev's aggressive anti-alcohol campaign effectively crippled Georgian wine exports.

The country has enjoyed only brief periods of political stability since it declared independence from the USSR in 1991. Tensions between Georgia and Russia continue today, as evidenced by Russia's 2006 embargo on Georgian wine imports, which was lifted only in June 2013. During the Soviet era, a sizeable proportion of the Soviet Union's wine was made in Georgia. Therefore, after independence Russia was a major export market. Wine represents a significant component of Georgia's economy, so the embargo had a profound effect. Wines from [Moldova](#), just across the Black Sea from Georgia, were also included in the ban.

Options for the future—Quite how Georgia's wine future will pan out is dependent on many factors, and of great interest to many in the wine world. The nation's wine producers may capitalize on 'international' grape varieties. Their climate, on the whole, makes super-ripe wine styles possible.

Alternatively, they may opt to draw on historical, long-established grape varieties and wine styles. Georgian wine traditions are strong, and the country's prime [terroirs](#) have been uncovered and studied over a long period, of which most wine nations would be envious. The most durable solution is likely to be a mixture of the two. This is a balance that even major wine nations such as [Italy](#) find hard to achieve.

Geography—The Georgian wine map is sprawling and complex. It shows that few areas of this ancient country have remained untouched by viticulture. There is also great diversity of climate, from temperate to sub-tropical.

Topography and geology vary from the Caucasus Mountains of the north to the river valleys and coastal plains of the west). From [Kakheti](#) in the south-east to Apkhazeti atop the Black Sea coast, it is only Georgia's most remote highlands that do not produce wine.

<https://www.wine-searcher.com/regions-georgian+republic#:~:text=The%20key%20wine%20grapes%20favored,being%20the%20birthplace%20of%20wine.>

Enjoy this video about Georgia's rich and ancient wine culture...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8j-275sICw4>