

Terroir



Dave & Emily Margulis
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Ok there we said it. Now! What in the world does it mean? First of all it's pronounced *tehr – wahr*. *Terroir* is French, and refers to the characteristics of soil. Mostly related to the growing of Grapes, coffee, and tea. A loose translation is "A sense of place". *Terroir* is the physical environment. Basically the earth, minerals, nutrients etc. What comes naturally to a region where the grapes are grown. The physical environment where the vines grow has a very big impact on how the grapes will taste. Ground with a lot of minerals will produce grapes with a mineral flavor. When French wine producers use the term *terroir*, it not only includes reference to the type of soil (chalky, claylike, gravelly, sandy) but also to other environmental factors that might influence the quality of the finished wine, such as altitude, position relative to the sun, angle of incline, and water drainage. The French and many other old world traditionalists are emphatic about the impact of *terroir* on wine, insisting that one can taste the difference. Most new world producers don't want to embrace this idea, they believe that viticulture and viniculture practices are what make the wine. It has become evident that the grapes from some vineyards in the New World result in better and more distinctive wines, and those grapes are sought after by winemakers. It's also true that from the same *terroir* some French producers create much higher quality wines and that there are stylistic differences introduced by winemakers even in wines of similar quality.

The number one most important factor is Climate. Climate is what determines which grape varieties will grow well in a particular region. If it's cool, or hot during the day. How cold it gets at night, and the breeze that comes in from the sea, all effect the grapes as they grow. If you grow the same type of grape in two different areas with completely different soil, you will end up with wines that have a completely different taste. Even though the label says for example Chardonnay. The wines can be as different as day and night. If you had to think of one point that most people think of when they think of *terroir* it would be soil, or dirt. Just about everyone who grows grapes and produces wine, has their own opinion on the soil and the final wine that was produced. So now you know. When you hear some wine expert somewhere talking about *terroir*, you will know what they are talking about.

Don't forget us for all your wine, and wine info. Emily and David Margulis. The Traveling Vineyard - www.myttv.com/8623. You can always email us at: winewithus@hotmail.com

Dave and Emily
Personal Wine Consultants
The Traveling Vineyard
www.myttv.com/8623
liwinetastingbydave@yahoo.com
631-889-0308