

# Fusion Wines Ltd.

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## Advice on Selecting Swiss Wines

### for Commercial Wine Lists

#### Overview

This document aims to give some basic advice related to the selection of Swiss wines for commercial wine lists, such as those found in restaurants and retail outlets. It does not recommend specific wines, but provides a framework for such recommendations, which can then be made in the context of the price-positioning required and any culinary matching felt appropriate.

#### Basics

Switzerland is a very small wine producing country by international standards, and consumes far more wine than it produces. With an affluent domestic market seemingly happy to pay premium prices for Swiss wines, and with the imbalance between consumption and production, there has never been the need to export. Most producers who export do so not for economic reasons, but for the prestige of having their wines seen in international markets. As such, Swiss Wine is rarely seen on export markets, and there is no developed export infrastructure to support exports. Most Britons who have been exposed to Swiss wines will have gained such exposure in Switzerland, either on holiday or on business. Switzerland however has much to offer to the wine-lover, and has a wide range of wines produced from both indigenous Swiss and international grape varieties.

#### Principal Grape Varieties

The following table summarises the principal grape varieties grown in Switzerland; it is not exhaustive. These are not described in detail here; fuller descriptions are provided on our website. Suffice it to say here that the Swiss varieties are very distinctive and will probably be the focus of interest for list-makers, but it would be an error to ignore the stunning wines that Switzerland is capable of producing from some of the better-known international varieties.

	<i>Swiss</i>	<i>International</i>
<i>White</i>	<b>Chasselas</b> , Humagne Blanche, <b>Petite Arvine</b> , Amigne, Heida, Lafnetscha, Hermitage	Aligoté, Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Viognier, Sauvignon Blanc, Johannisberg
<i>Rosé</i>		Gamay, Pinot Noir
<i>Red</i>	<b>Gamaret</b> , Garanoir, <b>Cornalin</b> , Humagne Rouge	<b>Gamay, Pinot Noir, Syrah, Zinfandel</b>
<i>Sweet</i>	<i>Various</i>	
<i>Sparkling</i>	<b>Chasselas</b>	Chardonnay

## Regions

There are many different winegrowing regions in Switzerland and each of them has its strengths and weaknesses, and is best known for one or more varieties/styles. The following table, again not exhaustive, summarises the main regions and what they are known for:-

<b><i>Region</i></b>	<b><i>Wines</i></b>
<b>Geneva</b>	Whites include Chasselas, Aligoté, Chardonnay, Pinot Blanc, Viognier, and Sauvignon Blanc. The reds range from fresh fruity Gamays, through classic grape varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir, to exciting varieties such as the Gamaret and Zinfandel and also some excellent blends. All in a variety of styles, including oaked and unoaked, and all from top makers.
<b>Valais</b>	A range of wines from the Valais - one of the highest altitude winegrowing regions in Europe. Powerful reds from indigenous and international grape varieties rival anything produced elsewhere in Europe, and a range of lovely whites including some lovely Fendants. Switzerland's rarest grapes come from here
<b>Vaud (Lavaux)</b>	Principally Chasselas – Switzerland's best whites come from here.
<b>Vaud (Chablais)</b>	Chasselas whites from Aigle/Yvorne; good reds based primarily on Gamay/Pinot Noir.
<b>Ticino</b>	Mainly Merlot – red and white.
<b>Graubunden</b>	Reds from Pinot Noir plus a useful range of whites from mainly international varieties.

## **List Construction**

The difficulty in putting together lists, especially where the number of wines is small, is to reconcile the small number of wines with the abundant choice and diversity on offer, whilst attempting to achieve something that is representative of what Switzerland has to offer. Ideally one would include a variety of grapes, regions, prices, well-known makers, etc. in a single list – but with a limited number of wines this is not easy. I've put together outline suggestions for small, medium, and comprehensive sized lists.

Essentials for any Swiss list are **Fendant** (Chasselas wines from the Valais) and **Dôle** – a blend of Pinot Noir and Gamay. These are the wines most likely to be encountered by Britons during trips to the Skiing areas of Switzerland.

### **Basic List (approx 2-4 wines)**

A very basic list should typically include at least:-

- a Fendant from the Valais
- a Dôle from the Valais

It may also be appropriate to include one or more of:-

- a second white, possibly another Chasselas based wine (albeit not called Fendant) from Geneva or the Vaud – possibly Chablais or Lavaux, depending on price positioning
- a white based on an indigenous Swiss variety such as Petite Arvine
- a red from Ticino/Valais/Graubunden – Merlot or Pinot Noir.
- a rosé – Dôle Blanche from the Valais

### **Intermediate List (5-10 wines)**

Choose from:-

Whites

- a Fendant from the Valais
- a 2<sup>nd</sup> Chasselas-based white from Vaud – La Côte, Lavaux, or Chablais
- a white Merlot from Ticino
- a Heida from the Valais

Rosé

- a Dôle Blanche or Oeil-de-Perdrix

Reds

- a Dôle from the Valais
- a Gamay from Geneva or Valais
- a Ticino Merlot
- Pinot Noir from Valais
- Humagne Rouge from Valais

## **Comprehensive List (over 10 wines)**

A larger list really does open up possibilities to explore some of the more exotic wines Switzerland has to offer, including some of the rarest grapes on earth.

Start with all the above and then add:-

### Sparkling

- a Chasselas-based bottle fermented sparkler ("méthode traditionnelle")

### Whites

- a Humagne Blanche from Valais
- a Lafnetscha (Completer)
- a Petite Arvine – probably the finest Swiss white grape
- Gwäss (Gouais Blanc)
- Rèze
- Amigne de Vétroz
- Johannisberg
- Himbertscha

### Reds

- Cornalin (Vin Rouge du Pays)
- Eyholzer Roter
- Pinot Noir and Syrah from Graubunden

### Dessert

- Flétrie

PLUS any one of the myriad of wines produced from common international grape varieties. This is a great journey to be undertaking – enjoy!

***Nick Dobson 15 July 2009***