

#WinesofGeorgia



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COMMUNICATING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GEORGIAN VARIETIES TO CONSUMERS

BY **CHRIS STRUCK, GEORGIAN WINE AMBASSADOR**

There are more than 500 autochthonous grape varieties in the country of Georgia, and as one might expect, they all have Georgian names.

A nemesis of wine professionals is not starting beautiful conversations about non-mainstream wines solely because the names associated with their grapes and places require a little bit more effort than those of native European ones; those which that have become commonplace in global wine discussions.

This is sad. Sad because we can do better and sad because we are gatekeeping from consumers delicious, unique wines. In the case of Georgian wines, we're also dampening an 8,000 year old swath of winemaking history.

But I get it. How do you crack a new code when you've made it your mission to help your guests and customers demystify wine? With Small. Little. Bites.

Keeping it simple and identifying for consumers what the five basic "Vs" are of a Georgian wine goes a long way to introducing what may seem foreign to some. The 1). Vintner (producer name, be it an individual or winery, just stick with one), 2). Variety/varieties (no more than two), 3). Vineyard (most specific place designated, but again, broad strokes), 4). Vinification (stainless steel, concrete, qvevri, oak), and 5). Vintage. See, easy peasy!

Let's start with the innocuous and the good news: the two most widely planted grape varieties in Georgia are the white Rkatsiteli and red Saperavi. That's "ruh-cats-it-el-lee" and "sah-per-ah-vee." Not so hard, right? These grapes compose a variety of styles of wine, from sparkling to amber skin contact in qvevri (an ancient earthenware fermentation vessel that is buried underground), and most everything in between.

Georgia's native varieties offer so many unique viticultural and ampelographic talking points. Saperavi, for example, is one of only a handful of teinturier grapes of the world, meaning the juice of its flesh is as red as its skin. Ojaleshi, a grape grown widely throughout the Mingrelia region of western Georgia, grows as a maghlari vine, meaning it's trained to grow up trees. Tavkveri, which makes beautiful monovarietal rosés (among other styles when blended with other red or white grapes), must be planted alongside other types of vines. This is necessary because unlike other normally hermaphroditic grapevines, it does not self-pollinate.