

An Introduction to
Viticulture,
Winemaking and Wine

An Introduction to Viticulture, Winemaking and Wine:

From Vineyard to Wine Glass

By

Alan J. Buglass

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This book is dedicated to all those souls, who at various times have been fellow travelers with me through the world of wine. Except for my father, who in 1962 introduced me to wine in the form of a bottle of 1955 Nuits-St.-Georges Premier Cru, and my mother and sister, they are far too many to mention individually. Sadly, some have gone, but those who remain will realize if they chance to read this dedication.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF TABLES	xvii
PREFACE	xx
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Wine and Vines	1
1.2 Development and Progress	6
1.3 Crises of the Nineteenth Century and their Remedies	13
1.4 Hybrids	16
1.5 Modern Times	18
Bibliography and Further Reading	21
CHAPTER 2 GROWING GRAPEVINES	22
2.1 Vines	22
2.1.1 Varieties, Clones and Natural Mutations	22
2.1.2 Crossbreeds and Hybrids	33
2.1.3 Crossbreeding Techniques	35
2.1.4 Today's <i>Vitis vinifera</i> Varieties	37
2.1.5 Grapevine Ancestry	40
2.1.6 Vine Breeding Programmes	46

2.2 Vine Propagation	50
2.2.1 The Need for Propagation	50
2.2.2 Propagation Methods from Hardwood Cuttings	52
2.2.3 Grafting	53
2.3 Planning a Vineyard	58
2.3.1 Preliminary Considerations	58
2.3.2 Climate	60
2.3.3 Site	68
2.4 Planting and Maintaining a Vineyard	74
2.4.1 First Thoughts	74
2.4.2 Vine Varieties and Rootstocks	75
2.4.3 Preparing the Land	84
2.4.4 Planting	87
2.4.5 Training (Culture) Systems	88
2.4.6 Vineyard Maintenance: Weeds and Fertilizer	105
2.4.7 Mildews and Fungal Diseases	109
2.4.8 Late Spring Frost	116
2.4.9 Birds	117
2.4.10 Insect, Acarian and Nematode Pests	118
2.4.11 Viruses and Bacteria	123
2.4.12 Organic and Biodynamic Cultivation	124
Bibliography and Further Reading	127

CHAPTER 3 HARVEST AND WINEMAKING	130
3.1 Harvest	130
3.1.1 Pre-harvest Considerations	130
3.1.2 Harvesting Methods	135
3.2 A Brief Overview of Fermentation and Microorganisms	136
3.2.1 Grape Juice and Microorganisms	136
3.2.2 Fermentations Involved in Winemaking	140
3.2.3 Alcoholic Fermentation	142
3.2.4 Wild Yeasts, Cultured Yeasts and Sulphur Dioxide	147
3.2.5 Some Products of Alcoholic Fermentation	154
3.2.6 Malolactic Fermentation	156
3.3 Winemaking (With Special Emphasis on White Wine)	161
3.3.1 White Wine Styles	161
3.3.2 Crushing and Destemming	164
3.3.3 Pressing	167
3.3.4 Vertical Basket Presses	169
3.3.5 Vertical Hydraulic Presses	171
3.3.6 Water Presses	173
3.3.7 Horizontal Plate Presses	174
3.3.8 Horizontal Pneumatic Presses	175
3.3.9 Screw (Continuous) Presses	177
3.3.10 Settling, Clarification and Adjustment of Must in White Wine Production	178
3.3.11 Fermentation and Maturation	180
3.3.12 Sweet Wine	184
3.3.13 Types of Fermentation/Maturation Vessels	188

3.3.14 Racking, Fining and Filtration	192
3.3.15 Blending, Stabilization and Bottling	206
3.4 Making Red and Rosé Wines: Essential Features	211
3.4.1 Maceration Techniques and Red Wine Styles	211
3.4.2 Whole Bunch (Cluster) Maceration <i>versus</i> Destalked Bunch Maceration	218
3.4.3 Colour	219
3.4.4 Maturation and Influence of Oak on Red Wine	220
3.4.5 Production of Rosé Wines	224
3.5 Sparkling Wine Production: Essential Features	226
3.5.1 Brief Overview	226
3.5.2 The Traditional Method and the Transfer Method	229
3.5.3 The Tank (Cuve Close or Charmat) Method	236
3.5.4 The Carbonation (Impregnation) and Continuous Methods	238
3.6 Vermouth and Other Flavoured Wines and Aperitifs	239
Bibliography and Further Reading	242
CHAPTER 4 THE WINE TRADE	247
4.1 Overview	247
4.1.1 Summary of Today's Industry	247
4.1.2 History and Development	249
4.1.3 Recent Trends and Projections	254
4.2 Trade Regulations and Agreements	257
4.2.1 Regulations and Treaties	257
4.2.2 Additives, Residues and Other Contaminants	260
4.2.3 Labeling Requirements	263

4.3 Selling and Buying	270
4.3.1 Direct Transactions	270
4.3.2 Brokers, Négociants (Merchants/Distributors/Shippers) and Co-operatives	273
4.3.3 Buying and Selling Fine Wines	277
Bibliography and Further Reading	284
CHAPTER 5 STORAGE, SERVING, APPRECIATION AND ASSESSMENT OF WINE	286
5.1 Bottle Storage	286
5.1.1 The Need for Good Storage Conditions	286
5.1.2 Wine Cellars	287
5.1.3 Temperature-Controlled Cabinets	289
5.2 Bottle Closures	291
5.3 Serving Wine	296
5.3.1 Preparation for Serving	296
5.3.2 Serving	298
5.3.3 Wine Glasses	302
5.4 Appreciating Wine	303
5.4.1 Tasting Technique	304
5.4.2 Wine Colour	306
5.4.3 Odour	311
5.4.4 Taste and Tactile Sensations (Mouthfeel)	320
5.5 Wine and Food	323
5.6 Assessing/Evaluating and Judging Wine	332
5.6.1 Types of Wine Assessment	332

5.6.2 Judging and Scoring at Wine Exhibitions	336
Bibliography and Further Reading	341
APPENDICES	343
A. Measurement of Sugar Content; Scales and Interconversions. De-acidification of Must Calculations. Measurement Units and Conversion Factors	344
B. Major Research Establishments. Prominent Grapevine Breeding Centres, and Grapevine Collections. Information on Vine Varieties and General Wine Information	354
C. Some Prominent Suppliers of Grapevines, Vineyard Equipment and Materials	361
D. Some Prominent Suppliers of Winery Equipment and Oenological Materials	367
E. Routine Process Monitoring	373
INDEX	386

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1 Family tree of <i>Vitis vinifera</i> .	2
Figure 1-2 World map showing approximate mean annual temperature zones and distribution of various <i>Vitis</i> species.	3
Figure 1-3 Typical vine flowers.	4
Figure 1-4 Late mediaeval grapevine training (mid 15 th century).	9
Figure 1-5 Selection of old bottle types, showing changing shape over a few decades.	10
Figure 1-6 18 th -century wooden cross beam (left) and lever beam press (right) at Stellenbosch Wine Museum.	12
Figure 2-1 Illustration of some aspects of grapevine anatomy.	22
Figure 2-2 Parts of vegetative life cycle of the vine.	24
Figure 2-3 Growth stages of a grape berry.	25
Figure 2-4 Family tree of French-American hybrid “Chancellor”.	35
Figure 2-5 Bordeaux vine lineage.	43
Figure 2-6 Grapevine propagation methods.	53
Figure 2-7 Common bench grafts.	55
Figure 2-8 Two common field grafting techniques.	57
Figure 2-9 A: Criteria for setting up a successful vineyard. B: Summary of typical vine requirements.	59
Figure 2-10 Suitable sites for a (northern hemisphere) vineyard.	70
Figure 2-11 Vineyard soil types.	73

Figure 2-12 Grapevine training methods.	91
Figure 2-13 Examples of grapevine training systems.	94
Figure 2-14 Examples of trellis end post support systems.	95
Figure 2-15 Trellis tools.	95
Figure 2-16 Replacement cane (head cane) pruning (a) and spur pruning (b).	100
Figure 2-17 Pruning according to some common training methods.	101
Figure 2-18 Factors that can minimise vineyard fungal infections.	110
Figure 2-19 Vine maladies and pests.	113
Figure 2-20 Multiple row anti-bird netting.	118
Figure 2-21 Simplified life cycle of <i>Daktulosphaira vitifoliae</i> (Phylloxera).	119
Figure 3-1 Measurement of grape juice sugar content.	132
Figure 3-2 Anatomy of a wine grape at maturity (a) Section through berry (b) Short section showing berry tissues (c) Grape constituents.	137
Figure 3-3 Overall chemical equations for important wine fermentations.	141
Figure 3-4 Summary of alcoholic fermentation pathway and respiration.	143
Figure 3-5 Typical fermentation profiles.	144
Figure 3-6 “Sulphur dioxide” or “sulphite” in must and wine.	149
Figure 3-7 Summary of production methods for dry or medium-dry white wine.	163
Figure 3-8 Simplified section through a typical destemmer.	165
Figure 3-9 Common wine presses.	172
Figure 3-10 De-acidification scheme for use with alkaline agents.	178

Figure 3-11 Ways of making medium or sweet wine.	186
Figure 3-12 Some fermentation/maturation vessels.	189
Figure 3-13 Racking white wine between tanks.	193
Figure 3-14 Filtration mechanisms.	201
Figure 3-15 Possible blending schemes for vineyard winery.	207
Figure 3-16 Filtration, bottling and other equipment.	210
Figure 3-17 Outline of dry red wine production processes.	213
Figure 3-18 Red wine pulp or pomace maceration management.	214
Figure 3-19 Racking between casks.	223
Figure 3-20 Ways of making rosé wine.	226
Figure 3-21 Methods for producing sparkling wine.	228
Figure 3-22 Sparkling wine <i>via</i> the Traditional Method (“ <i>méthode traditionnelle</i> ”).	230
Figure 3-23 Methods of Riddling (<i>Remuage</i>).	234
Figure 3-24 Outline of Transfer Method for making good quality sparkling wine.	236
Figure 3-25 Schematic representation of tank (<i>cuve close</i> or <i>Charmat</i>) method of producing sparkling wine.	237
Figure 3-26 Outline of vermouth manufacture.	240
Figure 4-1 Common additives, residues and contaminants sometimes found in wine.	261
Figure 4-2 Typical subsidiary label with information in electronic formats.	267
Figure 4-3 Examples of label logos for (a) organic, (b) biodynamic and (c) sustainable wines.	269
Figure 4-4 Routes between producer (wine grower) and consumer.	271

Figure 4-5 Examples of Bordeaux-style bottle ullage terms.	281
Figure 5-1 Example of a temperature-controlled wine cabinet.	290
Figure 5-2 Wine bottle cork types.	293
Figure 5-3 Summary of origins of “cork taint”.	295
Figure 5-4 Assortment of corkscrews and temporary wine bottle closures.	299
Figure 5-5 Selection of wine accessories.	299
Figure 5-6 (a) Corks from old bottles of wine, showing deterioration. (b) Sediment from 49 year old Vintage Port.	300
Figure 5-7 Decanting.	301
Figure 5-8 The ISO wine tasting glass.	303
Figure 5-9 Visible absorption spectra of red wines.	310
Figure 5-10 Examples of spider web (radar chart) diagrams.	336
Figure 5-11 Score sheet for preliminary evaluation of wines submitted for exhibition.	337
Figure 5-12 Tasting sheet for evaluation of exhibition wine (with a sample score).	339

Centrefold 1 Red wine colour and age

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1 Effect on yield of the first attack of powdery mildew at Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste, Pauillac, Bordeaux	14
Table 1-2 Prominent hybrid grapevine breeders	16
Table 2-1 Selected clones of popular <i>V. vinifera</i> varieties	29
Table 2-2 Major grapevine varieties; distribution and trends	37
Table 2-3 Selection of nationally or locally important <i>V. vinifera</i> varieties	39
Table 2-4 Summary of probable genetic relationships among selected established varieties of <i>V. vinifera</i>	42
Table 2-5 Genetic relationships among selected members of the Muscat family of <i>V. vinifera</i>	44
Table 2-6 Genetic Heritage of selected modern <i>V. vinifera</i> varieties	47
Table 2-7 Hereditary make-up of selected French-American hybrids	48
Table 2-8 The Winkler Scale of heat summation	62
Table 2-9 Available water in various soils	72
Table 2-10 Common <i>V. vinifera</i> varieties and their major characteristics	76
Table 2-11 Important grapevine rootstocks	82
Table 2-12 Comparison of some common culture (training) systems	97
Table 2-13 A northern hemisphere vine grower and winemaker's calendar	107
Table 2-14 Possible antifungal spraying programme	111

Table 2-15 Common vineyard insect and acarian pests	121
Table 3-1 Summary of chemical content of grape must and wine (g/L must; g/L wine)	138
Table 3-2 Comparison of yeasts found on the skins of healthy grapes	146
Table 3-3 Maximum allowed total sulphite (SO ₂) levels in wine	150
Table 3-4 Some strains of cultivated wine yeast for inoculation of grape must	152
Table 3-5 Yield of must related to weight of pulp or grapes for horizontal pneumatic (membrane) presses	175
Table 3-6 Sugar enrichment (“Chaptalisation”) of must legislation in the EU	181
Table 3-7 Categories describing the sweetness of wine	184
Table 3-8 Comparison of common clarification (fining) agents used in winemaking	197
Table 3-9 Pros and cons of filtration methods	204
Table 3-10 Some flavour characteristics of oak used for wine casks	221
Table 4-1 Major wine exporting nations, in billions of dollars value	250
Table 4-2 World wine production (mean volumes for 2013-18)	251
Table 4-3 Export figures in terms of category, for 2017 and 2018	254
Table 4-4 Selection of notable wine vendors	278
Table 5-1 Chemical composition of natural cork used as wine bottle closures	292
Table 5-2 Chemical Components* of wine in relation to organoleptic sensation	306
Table 5-3 Common odour descriptors related to notable volatile components in wine	314

Table 5-4 A guide to matching wine with food 325

Table 5-5 Wine assessment and sensory analysis methods 334

PREFACE

The principal aim of this book is to provide newcomers to the world of wine with sufficient scientific and technical background and guidance to allow progress in their own particular fields, such as growing sound grapes, making good wine, investing and trading wine and the serving, tasting, assessment or judging of wine. In effect, I have attempted to cover all important aspects relating to grapes and wine, albeit necessarily in simplified and abbreviated form. Knowledge of science at high school, college or similar level is a definite advantage regarding most sections of Chapters 2, 3 and 5, although much of the book can be read comfortably by those with little scientific background. The book is intended for the use of novice vine growers, winemakers and trade personnel, students of horticulture, viticulture and/or oenology (such as those attending junior college or university courses or those studying for Wine and Spirit Education Trust–WSET–certificate or diploma, or similar qualifications) and students attending sommelier courses. It is hoped too, that it will be of interest to enthusiastic amateurs and those more experienced in the world of wine. Much of the book, especially Chapters 2, 3 and parts of 5, has been written from a practical viewpoint, so that aspiring vineyard owners, winemakers, sommeliers and traders may find sufficient guidance to enable them to start in the right direction along the path toward the realization of their dreams.

The Bibliography and Further Reading section that terminates every chapter contains a list of general reading matter, most of it technical, but some items are of a more descriptive nature and hence are suitable for all readers. For readers with sound scientific experience or enthusiastic curiosity, details of important and very specific scientific papers, both original research articles and reviews, are included. All the bibliographical items can be accessed, in some form or other, by use of the internet and indeed, a fair number can be found only by that means. Note that a few articles may be accessed freely through the internet only as abstracts or summaries, the full article needing a subscription or arrangement with the publisher.

I am very grateful to the many people who supplied photographic images for inclusion in a large number of the figures; there are too many to mention here, but their identities can be found in the figure captions. I thank also my wife and family for their patience and understanding during the long hours of preparation of this book.

Alan Buglass,

June 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BRIEF HISTORY

1.1 Wine and Vines

Wine is one of the world's premium beverages and its many styles are enjoyed by people from all walks of life in a wide variety of contexts. A common definition of wine is “the fermented juice of freshly harvested grapes”; it is derived from the fruit of grapevine plants, which belong to the genus *Vitis* (Fig. 1-1). Wine is a name more loosely used to describe the fermented juice of other fruit like apricots or elderberries, or even vegetables such as beetroot, or cereals like rice, but in this book it refers solely to fermented grape juice as mentioned above. In practice, the best wine is usually produced by certain cultivated varieties (cultivars) of the species whose full name is *V. vinifera* Linné spp. *vinifera*, but which herein simply will be referred to as *V. vinifera*. Collectively, these are by far of greatest importance in the world of wine. In common with the other *Vitis* species, *V. vinifera* is a climbing, ground-covering plant that thrives in wind-sheltered, sunny, moist but well-drained situations (Chapter 2.3). Its wild progenitor, *V. vinifera silvestris*, can still be found in such locations, usually on hillsides, in forest clearings and by riversides in countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea—from the Iberian peninsular in the west through southern Turkey to the trans-Caucasian countries around the Black and Caspian Seas in the east.

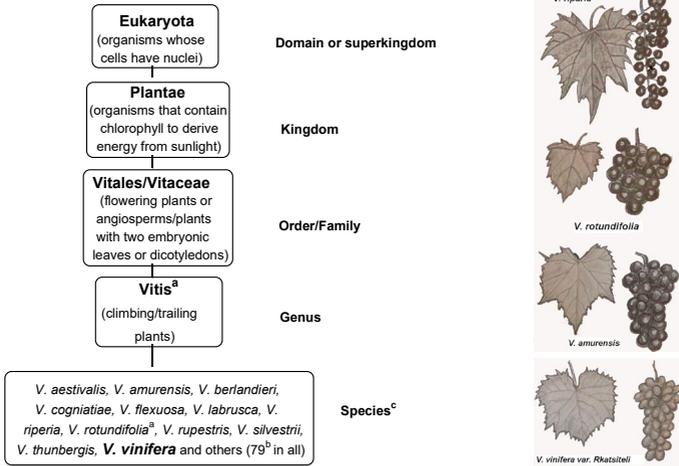


Figure 1-1 Family tree of *Vitis vinifera*. ^aSometimes divided into two subgenera: Euvitis (the major one) and Muscadin (minor), which includes *V. rotundifolia*. ^bActual number of species depends on whether some are classed as subspecies of others. ^cSpecies are further divided into varieties; *V. vinifera*, in particular, has thousands of varieties.

However, it is now rather rare and since 1997 has been included on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) “Red List” of threatened species, having suffered from diseases imported from North America (Chapter 1.4) and loss of habitat due to agricultural changes and urban development. Similarly in other parts of the world, other species of *Vitis* can be found growing wild, for example *V. berlandieri* in Arkansas, New Mexico and Texas, or *V. amurensis* in southern Siberia, China, Japan and Korea. Fig. 1-2 outlines the approximate distribution of various *Vitis* species worldwide, including wild and cultivated varieties. It can be seen that the majority are found in temperate zones; those with mean annual

pistillate dioecious plants (the majority) and so were preferentially selected by the earliest farmers for cultivation and propagation because of their consistently greater yield of fruit. Today, the big majority of cultivated vine varieties are self-pollinating, although in the southern USA, the female (pistillate) forms of many dioecious Muscadine varieties are cultivated amongst self-pollinating varieties, and dioecy is still prevalent in wild vine populations of all species.

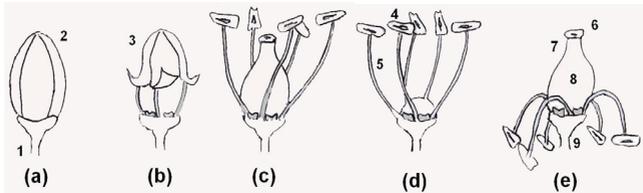


Figure 1-3 Typical vine flowers. (a)-(c) Bisexual flower, containing both male (4 and 5) and female parts (6-9), allowing self-pollination: (a) Unopened (b) Opening; calypta separating (c) Opened. (d) Male (staminate) flower. (e) Female (pistillate) flower. Key: 1 Pedicel; 2 Corolla; 3 Calypta (cap); 4 Anther; 5 Filament; 6 Stigma; 7 Style; 8 Ovary; 9 Nectary. Pistil is the whole female flower part (6, 7 and 8).

Grapevines, like other plants, can reproduce (propagate) asexually or sexually. The former is characterized by the growing of new green shoots and roots from part of an established vine (hardwood or green) in the right conditions (if inserted into soil or some nutrient-rich medium); it gives clones, new plants that are genetically identical and so have the same physiological character as the old vine. Sexual reproduction occurs *via* pollination of the female part of the flower (pistil) by pollen grains from

male part (stamens), either on the same flower or involving different flowers, as explained above. The fruit that develops from the pollination grows, ripens and eventually disintegrates or is eaten by birds or other animals, whereupon the seeds are dropped to the ground (locally or distant from the mother plant) and, under the right conditions, some of them germinate to produce a new plant. This time, however, the new vine is genetically different to either parent, and hence is noticeably different in physiology; it is in fact a new variety. Hence sexual reproduction of grapevines is used by mankind to make completely new varieties with certain advantageous traits (although it will be seen in Chapter 2.1.3 that this is no simple task), whereas asexual reproduction is used to propagate favoured clones of particular varieties (see Chapters 2.2.2 and 2.2.3).

It is likely that vines were first propagated in the earliest vineyards by “layering”, burying a fruiting shoot of the previous season from an established plant in vacant soil adjacent to the plant (see Fig. 2-3 in Chapter 2.2.2). This method, although no longer widely used, was popular in certain wine regions, like Burgundy, even up to the mid 19th century. Propagation by use of hardwood cuttings is now the major method, but it too was probably known in ancient times and used especially for generating new vineyards in distant places by planting the same varieties. Even in the earliest days, new varieties would be produced randomly from time to time, from germinating seeds of fruit that were the result of natural intraspecific cross-pollination (between the same species). When people were able to travel more easily between continents, taking with them species of *Vitis* that were foreign to the local species, natural interspecific cross-pollination became more common. By the early 19th century, new

varieties were being deliberately raised from seed. In a few favourable cases, the new varieties were cultivated and propagated. Perhaps the best-known of the early examples are Catawba, an interspecific cross (hybrid) of *V. labrusca* and *V. vinifera* (possibly Sémillon) and Concord, a hybrid of Catawba and a *V. vinifera* variety; the former was first raised in North Carolina/Maryland, the latter in Massachusetts.

1.2 Development and Progress

Archeological evidence so far suggests that the earliest known sites of *V. vinifera* cultivation and probable wine production were in Georgia, around 6000 BC. Other early sites are located in northern Iran (~5500 BC) and China (~6000 BC), although in the latter case, the vines would have been one or more of the many indigenous *Vitis* species of China; since documentary evidence indicates that *V. vinifera* was not introduced into China before 1000 BC. The earliest known winery (~4000 BC) as such, complete with primitive press, vats, cups and grape pips, is at Areni, in Armenia, although grape seeds and red juice or wine stains have been found inside earthenware vessels at numerous other sites. By the time of the great Mediterranean civilizations of Egypt, Phoenicia (both ~3000 BC) and later, Greece and Rome, viticulture and winemaking were very well established. Moreover, by these times, after at least 3,000 years of cultivation, many natural mutations would have occurred and favourable mutants would have been selected by farmers and propagated, so that even in these early years it is likely that numerous varieties were used for eating, drying (raisin production) and winemaking.

The ripe fruit of wild *Vitis* species, today, as well as of old, have pigmented (usually dark) skins. Probably a most important mutation was noticed during these early years; an occasional plant (or parts of a plant) with pale fruit would be discovered in a vineyard full of black-fruited vines. We now know this mutation involves the *VvmybA1* gene, a transcriptional regulator of anthocyanin biosynthesis that conveys black grape skin pigmentation. Deletion of the functional *VvmybA1c* allele gives mutants whose fruit have pale or even “white” (in reality, green or golden) skins. So it is likely that pale-fruited varieties like Muscat-à-Petits-Grains were already being cultivated around 3000 BC.

After about 3000 BC, wine culture was spread to other parts of the world by seafaring traders, notably the Phoenicians, to North Africa and southern Europe. This was extended later by the Greeks and especially by the Romans, who took a number of varieties of *V. vinifera* to inland Europe and established many vineyards, even as far north and west as Britain. In doing so, the Mediterranean/western Asian varieties would have plenty of time (several centuries) in their new environments to cross-pollinate with each other or with local *V. vinifera* varieties or even wild vines to produce new cross-bred plants, which if favourable, would be later propagated. Hence it is likely that during this period (~1000 BC to ~300 AD and onwards), the gene pool was considerably enlarged and the number of cultivated varieties significantly expanded.

For a variety of reasons, the taste of these early wines may not have suited most modern palates. Firstly, the use of pine resin was common in some Mediterranean countries. This may have been first used on the internal surfaces of porous earthenware jars as a sealant, but soon became

a popular addition to wine because its strong flavour masked unpleasant flavours due to oxidation, which would have been the norm in those days. “Resinated” wines, like Retsina of Greece and Cyprus, are still produced today. Pine resin gives the wine a distinct non-vinous flavour that is loved by some but hated by others. Secondly, the Romans were fond of sweetening their wines with concentrated (“cooked”) grape juice (“must”), thus producing wines altogether too sweet for most modern tastes. Modern equivalents of this; “color”, “musto cotto” and others are still used to sweeten and darken otherwise pale dry fortified wines, such as Madeira, Málaga, Marsala and Sherry. Thirdly, both the Greeks and Romans were often known to dilute their wines with water (sometimes seawater) before drinking. However, once wooden casks had become widely established (from about 300 AD), most wines would have tasted broadly similar to modern wines, but would have been generally less well rounded, coarser, more oxidized and much more variable in quality. Moreover, most wines (especially white) would be preferentially consumed by the autumn following the vintage, while they were still fresh and fruity, and before oxidation and spoilage really got under way. They would mostly be served straight from the cask and consumed over a short period of time, unless the cask was topped up with new wine. In order to delay oxidation, some winegrowers covered the wine surface in the cask with a layer of olive oil, a practice that survived from the early Roman era.

Originally vines were trained as low bushes or on tree supports, often growing alongside other crops. Later, training of individual vines on wooden stakes or on vertical wooden trellises or pergolas (Fig. 1-4) became popular. Although most modern vine training systems (Chapter