

ProWein 2025 – Trend text / November 2024

Gone with the wind: When wind is you terroir

By Stuart Pigott & Paula Redes Sidore

In the minds of many consumers around Planet Wine vineyards are perpetually green, their grapes ripening effortlessly under clear blue skies. Of course, most interested wine drinkers realize vineyards are not Gardens of Eden, but rather at the mercy of the weather.

One of the most important changes which the great wine boom of the late 20th and early 21st centuries brought was the globalization of the French idea of terroir, or the taste of the place. Regional character and vineyard-specific character became crucial concepts for wine production and marketing everywhere. The major factors that shape terroir – temperature, rainfall, soil type and topography (or the lie of the land) – are well known. Wind is perhaps the least widely and understood terroir factor, even as global warming has made it now count among the most significant. The annual ProWein trade fair in Düsseldorf is one of the wine industry's most important meeting places. From the 16th - 18th March 2025 more than 5,000 exhibitors and a far greater number of visitors will once again make it the temporary capital of Planet Wine. There will be much to discuss, including new perspectives on ancient subjects such as this.

The Power of Wind

For the wine industry wind is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it is the “natural air-conditioning” for wine regions as diverse as Russian River Valley in California, the Western Cape of South Africa and Great Southern in Western Australia. In each case, it is wind from the ocean to the west, that is in California from the Pacific, in South Africa from the Atlantic, and in Western Australia from the



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Indian ocean. All these regions' claims to have cool climates are largely based on the cooling effect wind has, and all can claim with some justification that their vineyards are caressed by the wind.

On the other hand wind can be a destructive force. For example, Syrah/Shiraz is grown in all of those regions and the new shoots of this variety break particularly easily in strong wind. Of course, when storms hit the vineyards, as storm Boris did in Austria and Northern Italy in September 2024, high winds accompany the rainwater to cause extensive damage. In various worst case scenarios wine is literally gone with the wind.

The Man Who Harnessed the Wind

Chile has a modern tradition of actively using wind to create new terroirs. The Sena vineyard in the Aconcagua Valley, for example, was planted with Cabernet Sauvignon and other red Bordeaux grape varieties by Eduardo Chadwick in 1998. Only 39 kilometers from the Pacific Ocean, the wind there is much stronger than in the historical Vina Errazuriz vineyards 60- 70 kilometers from the Ocean. "Sena," Chadwick has said many times, "was planted in the coolest place we could regularly ripen Cabernet Sauvignon."



However, some of Errazuriz's Las Pizarras vineyards planted with Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah lie as close as 11 kilometers to the Pacific Coast in locations long considered too windy to be suitable for viticulture. This range was launched with the 2012 vintage. You can literally taste the wind in these game-changing wines, which have high natural acidity (and low pH) previously considered impossible in Chile.

Throwing Caution to the Wind

How far can winemakers push the wind envelope? As winegrowing in the Northern Hemisphere extends northwards to take advantage



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of global warming some of the new locations are close to the North Sea and Baltic Sea.

Balthasar Röss of the Rheingau region in Germany, for example, has planted a vineyard on the island of Sylt close to the border with Denmark. This is the sunniest location in Germany, but also one of the windiest, so this is a high-risk strategy. The early-ripening PiWi (fungal-resistant) Solaris variety was the answer and since 2019 the SÖL Ring Sekt, sparkling wine, has been produced from these grapes. Welcome to the edge!

Taste the changing signature of the wines of Chile (hall 12), California (hall 12), and many others at ProWein 2025, the world's biggest and most relevant trade fair for wines and spirits.

Other wine trends covered by ProWein 2025 will include:

- The grapes of (climate) change
- Famous winds and the wines that grow there
- The New East: Europe and The Caucasus



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