

The Origin of Wine Grapes

Where were the world's first wine grapes grown?

Bordeaux, Burgundy, Napa Valley. We know the names of famous wine appellations today. But where was the world's first wine appellation? Grape geneticist Dr. José Vouillamoz and bimolecular archaeologist Dr. Patrick McGovern think they might know. Their research **published last fall** revealed that most of the wine grapes cultivated today come from the southern region of Turkey, and that farmers there grew grapevines to make wine as long ago as 8,000 B.C. (and possibly before).

Vouillamoz and McGovern discovered the origin of domesticated grapevines by using DNA sequencing, which revealed that the greatest number of matches between the DNA in domestic wine grape varieties and the DNA in wild varieties occurred in southern Turkey.

This DNA sequencing also provided insight into surprising family connections between some of our favorite grape varieties: **syrah** is the great-grandchild of **pinot noir**, and **gouais blanc**, known to make only a neutral quaffing wine, is the surprising Casanova of wine grapes, fathering more than 80 other grape varieties, including some popular ones like **chardonnay, riesling** and **gamay**.