

Alternate Varietals

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Quady North Winery &
Barrel 42 Custom Winecraft

We worked with 28 “alternative” varietals in 2019

- Albariño
- Barbera
- Cabernet Franc
- Cabernet Sauvignon
- Cunoise
- Dolcetto
- Grenache Blanc
- Grenache Noir
- Malbec
- Marsanne
- Merlot
- Mourvèdre
- Muscat (Early)
- Muscat (Orange)
- Petite Sirah
- Petit Verdot
- Pinot Gris
- Pinot Meunier
- Primitivo
- Riesling
- Roussanne
- Sangiovese
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Syrah
- Tempranillo
- Vermentino
- Viognier
- Zinfandel

Why alternate varieties?

- To be ahead of a changing climate
- To grow a variety best suited to a site
- To meet consumer demand
- To offer breadth in your portfolio
- To have more stories to tell (marketing)
- Because it is fun and keeps work interesting

A Strategy for Choosing Varietals

1

Assess
your site

2

Assess
your
market

3

Consider
what
appeals to
you

Assess Your Site

- Evaluate your climate
 - Growing degree days
 - Frost-free season length
- Test your soil
- Consider wind and direction of sun exposure
- Determine water availability
- Gather information from other growers with similar sites
- Consider leveraging consultants for input
- Based on the assessment, create a list of varieties that match your site profile

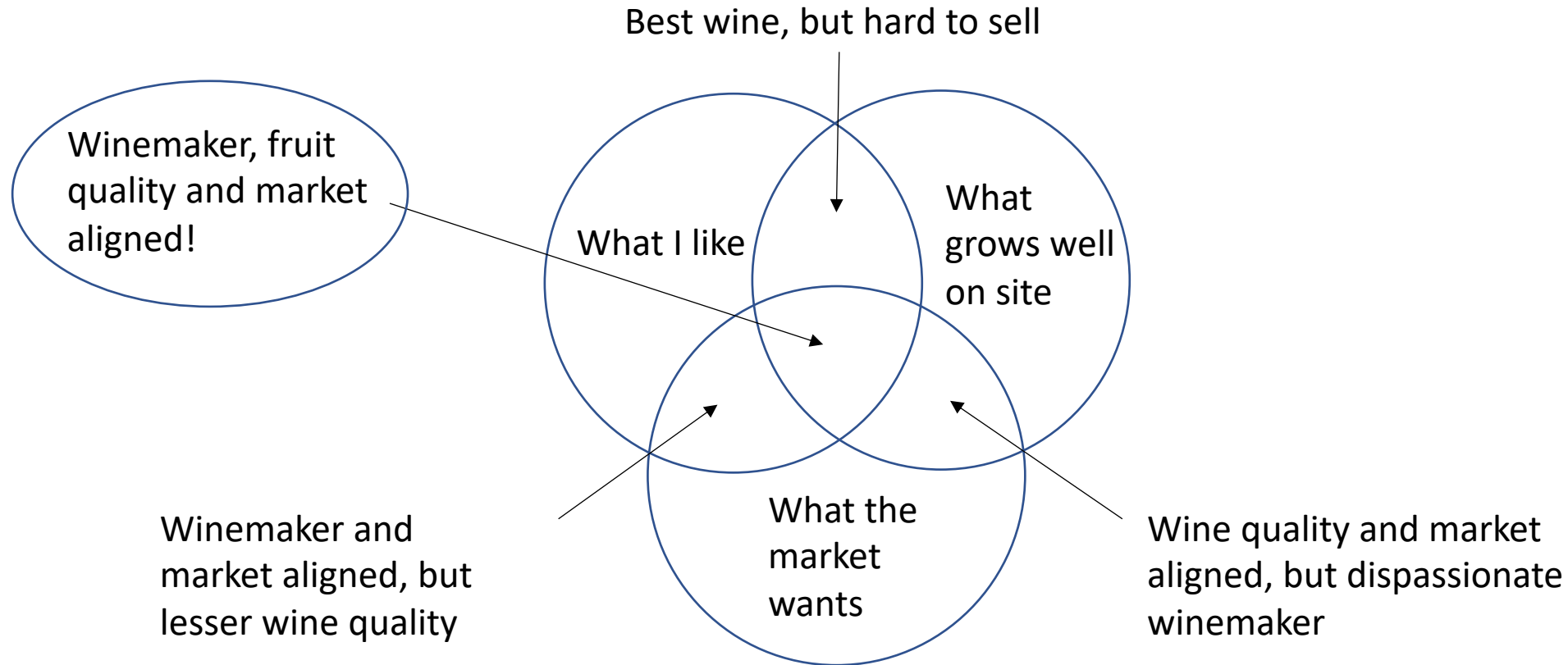
Assess Your Market

- Look at logical extensions of your brand
- Evaluate market trends
- Consider what style of wine will appeal
- Gather input from key buyers
- Assess what others are already doing
- Determine how much being “first” or “new” matters to you
- Based on the assessment, create a list of varietals that match the market and where you want to play in it

Consider What Appeals to You

- What gets you interested?
- What keeps work fresh and fun?
- What might you have a connection with?
- Based on the assessment, create a list of varieties that match what you like most

Find the Varietals that Fall in the Sweet Spot



Challenges and Opportunities

- Challenges

- Sourcing material can be hard to find or non-existent
- How much do you plant?
 - Plant too little and you might hamper growth of a successful program
 - Plant too much and may have grapes you can't sell
- Different varieties have different farming needs

- Opportunities:

- Grafting can allow nimble changes in just one year
- Can often purchase fruit to test the market and learn nuances of winemaking

A Strategy for Winemaking with Alternate Varietals

1

Set
stylistic
goals

2

Build a plan

3

Innovate,
Iterate &
Improve

Set Stylistic Goals

- Start with the idea that you can make good wine from anything if you have good fruit to work with
- Taste examples of other producer's wines, including global benchmarks
- Tie back to what you think the market is looking for
- Determine your own preferences
- Evaluate what your site is capable of delivering
- Set your stylistic goals
- Communicate with grower to deliver fruit best able to meet your goals

Build a Plan

- Discuss nuances of a grape with other experienced winemakers
- Evaluate barrel options (if relevant) including new coopers and different grain/forest/toast combinations
- Determine desired fermentation temperature curve to achieve style
- Consider alternative fermentation methods and vessels
- Keep good records

Innovate, Iterate & Improve

- There is always a learning curve with a new varietal, both in the vineyard and in the winery
- Evaluate new wine at every step, from vineyard through finished product
- Determine what worked and what didn't
- Share wine with other professionals to gather input
- Come up with new ideas to improve the next version
- Repeat process, likely over many years (if not forever)

Challenges and opportunities

- Opportunities:
 - Experimentation leads to continued learning
 - Keeps winemaking interesting
 - May provide learnings applicable to other wines
 - Alternate varietals may blend with other wines in your portfolio
 - To solve chemistry problems
 - To create unique new blends
- Challenges:
 - There may be failures mixed with successes
 - Long cycles can slow learning and ability to dial wines in quickly
 - Have to learn new winemaking techniques variety by variety
 - You become a winemaking “generalist” as you work with more and more alternate varietals
 - Added complexity

Contact

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