

*A country shaped like a bunch of grapes  
The highest density of vineyards in the world  
The largest cellars in the world  
Grape varieties nicely named Feteasca Alba, Feteasca Regala, Rara Neagra ...*

# WINE OF MOLDOVA

## A SUCCESS STORY FROM EASTERN EUROPE

Moldovan wine today brings a fresh modern face. Its new generation wines are actually rooted in a rich and complex history, giving the authenticity that so many wine drinkers are looking for today. At the same time, it can offer unique and sometimes surprising wines, especially blends of international and indigenous grape varieties, a true expression of Moldovan terroir. "Wine of Moldova" today is the very real result of this country reinventing its approach to wine - focusing on quality, consistency and 'enjoyment-in-a-glass' as its priorities.

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## MOLDOVA'S GEOGRAPHY AND KEY FIGURES

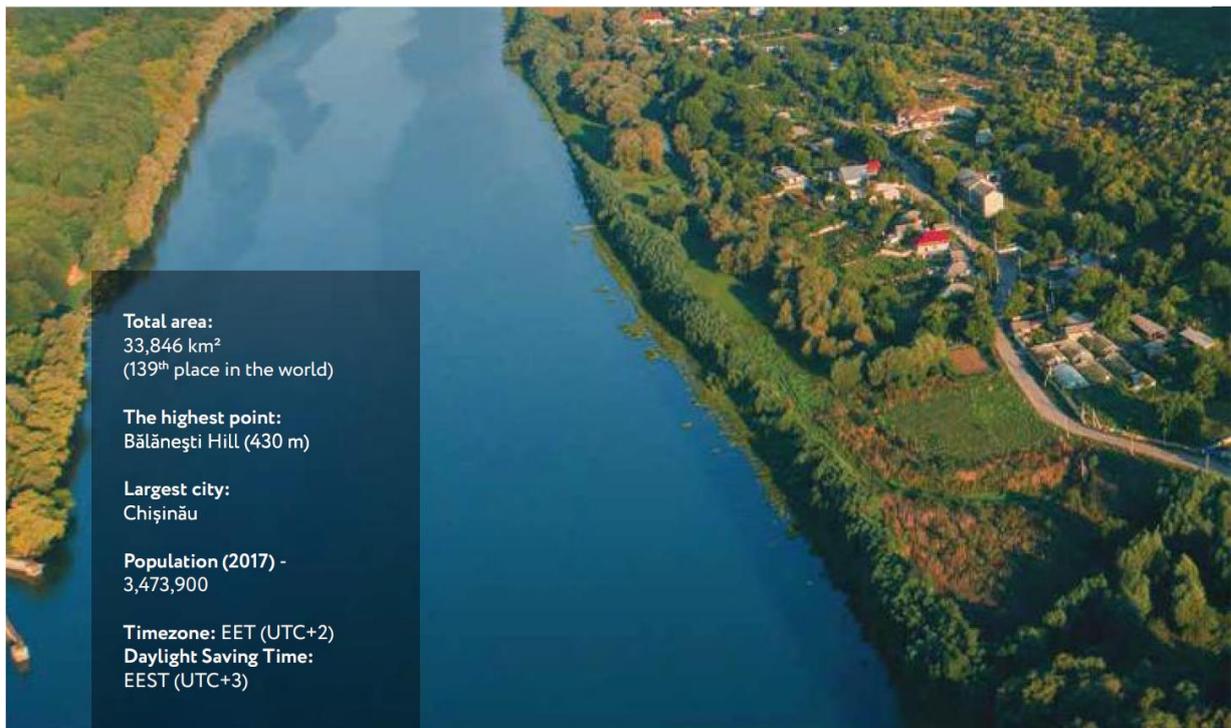
### Geography:

The Republic of Moldova is a country located in Eastern Europe, bordered by Ukraine to the east and Romania to the west. Its geographic location means that the country has a moderate continental climate with short (though sometimes very cold) winters and long summers. Moldova's landscapes vary considerably from endless steppes of the east, to forested hillsides of the central zone, and on to the vast Bugeac plain in the south.

15% of the active population is implicated in the wine production.

### A major wine producing country:

- 15% of the active population is implicated in the wine production.
- Total vineyards area: 128 000 ha (it comes in 6th position amongst European winemaking countries by the size of its vineyards)
- 225 total registered wineries
- Over 30 types of technical varieties: 85% European grapes; 10% Black Sea Basin grapes, 5% local grapes
- White wines represent 60% of the production from the following varieties: Chardonnay, Sauvignon blanc, Muscat ottonel, Aligoté, Pinot gris/blanc, Feteasca alba/regala. Red wines (40% of the production) are made from Merlot, Cabernet sauvignon/franc, Pinot noir, Rara neagra, Feteasca neagra, Saperavi.
- In 2020, the bottled wine market attests a 5% increase in volume and a modest increase of 0.2% in value for the first half of the year.



## A KEY ACTOR: ONVV

The National Office for Vine and Wine (ONVV) is the main body that manages the Moldovan wine sector. It was created with government support in 2013, organized through a public-private partnership, and, ever since, it has undertaken to support increasing exports of quality wines to more and more markets around the world.

The ONVV's scope is to develop and implement state policies in the wine sector, contribute to legal and regulatory reforms, bring its expertise and technical assistance to vine and grape growing and vinification, and embrace promotion and marketing of quality wines. The moldovan wine industry owes the ONVV the creation of the Protected Geographical Indications regions and the precious national wine and vine register.

### **Step 1: Protected Geographical Indications**

The National Office for Vine and Wine worked with wine producers to set up a quality system of protected geographical indications (PGI) on the EU model. Based around research into differences in climate and growing conditions, these cover the three winegrowing regions of Valul lui Traian, Ștefan Vodă and Codru as well as a category of Divin for the country's wine brandies. By 2018 there were more than 9600 hectares registered for PGI wines by 49 producers. A multi-stage monitoring system covers the entire production process and authorized professional tasters carry out organoleptic certification.

### **Step 2: Moldova is the most appreciated of Eastern wine countries on international contests**

Moldovan wine has undergone a complete revolution in improving wine quality over the last decade, with clear proof shown by 740 medals awarded to Moldovan wines in 2019 at renowned international wine competitions such as: Decanter World Wine Awards, Mundus Vini, Concours Mondial de Bruxelles, International Wine Challenge and more. Discover Moldovan wines of the future, the most awarded wines in the "[Golden Wines Catalog 2019](#)".

Moldova wineries regularly unite under the umbrella of the national wine brand "Wine of Moldova" to take part in a large number of trade fairs in Europe, North America and Asia Pacific. As a result, Moldovan wines are now sold to 63 countries, mostly in high-value European Union markets, registering steady growth over the last 5 years. "Our wine has been crafted by generations of winemakers in the largest cellars in the world, appreciated by consumers in both east and west ... The National Office for Vine and Wine is proud of its contribution towards helping the wine industry to rethink and reform, and to ensuring its wines meet international quality standards".

Dr Gheorge Arpentin, Director, National Office for Vine and Wine, Republic of Moldova



## MOLDOVA WINE REGIONS

### **VALUL LUI TRAIAN (Trajan's Wall) – Covers 16 113 ha including 3 300 under PGI**

This region lies in Moldova's south west, where you can still see remnants of two fortified walls built by Roman Emperor Trajan to protect his lands from barbarian invaders. The climate is Mediterranean, with warm, dry summers and mild winters moderated by the Black Sea and protected by the forests that grow on the Tigheci hills. The soils are leached and carbonated chernozems, with some areas of sand and clay, with low fertility, providing very good conditions for viticulture. The region is divided into 3 sub-zones: the hills of Tigheci, the Bugeac plain and the Prut terraces, surrounded by forests, steppe, plains and plateaux. This is the warmest and driest part of Moldova but also the highest with altitude going up to 310 metres, helping to retain freshness and balance in the wines. The region is particularly noted for red wines which make up 60% of production, but it is also famous for its sweet fortified wines (now called Pastoral) and full-flavoured whites.



### **ȘTEFAN VODĂ – Covers 6 415 ha including 1 217 under PGI**



This wine region is situated in the south east of Moldova, at an average altitude of 120 metres, which includes terraces along the Dniester river, plains and slopes. The climate here is moderate continental, influenced by the Black Sea. Typical soils are podzolized and carbonated chernozems with clay in some areas. The region is particularly noted for red grapes. Rară Neagră is particularly notable here - an indigenous variety to the region (it grows as Băbească Neagră in eastern Romania). Whether it's the particular clones found in Moldova, or the growing conditions, this grape offers its best expression here and it is also a key ingredient in one the country's most renowned wine blends: Negru de Purcari. Other local and European varieties which perform well in this region include Merlot, Fetească Neagră,

Saperavi, Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Chardonnay.

### **CODRU – Covers 11 838 ha including 2 548 under PGI**

This is Moldova's central region, extended in 2016 to include Bălți and vineyards in Transnistria. It is Moldova's coolest zone, full of wooded hills and slopes around many small river valleys. Oak and linden forests cover 25% of the landscape protecting the vineyards from northerly winds and frost. Soils here are typically grey forest soils and chernozems. Winters are long, but usually not extreme, while summers and autumns are warm and altitude above sea level is 100–150 metres. The region is noted for white grapes, especially Fetească Albă, Muscat Ottonel, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay, and also suitably crisp base wines for sparkling wines. Red varieties can also be grown in warmer microclimates, especially for the noted Codru blend. The famous underground wine cellars Cricova and Mileștii Mici are located in this region.



### **DIVIN – Covers the whole country including 2 507 under PGI**

This PGI covers the whole of the Republic of Moldova and is for spirits distilled from wine through double distillation and aged for at least 3 years in contact with oak. Divin is produced from a range of both international and local grape varieties, which must be grown within the country. Most typical varieties include: Aligoté, Chardonnay, Fetească Albă, Luminita, Pinot, Riton, Rkatsiteli, Sauvignon and blends of these varieties. Divin is appealing and clear to look at, with colour ranging from pale gold to amber, a bouquet of flowers and fruit when young but with further ageing it gains notes of vanilla, chocolate, sandalwood, coconut and coffee beans.

## INDIGENOUS GRAPE VARIETIES

Moldova has the highest density of vineyards in the world. Viticulture in Moldova includes cultivation of Western European, Black Sea Basin and indigenous grape varieties. Vineyards of wine varieties of the noble *Vitis Vinifera* cover a total area of 64 000 hectares, 70% of which are white varieties (especially Rkatsiteli, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Aligoté) located predominantly in the Codru region, and 30% are red varieties (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Saperavi and more), typically grown in the southern regions. Indigenous varieties are becoming increasingly important as a point of difference and to offer something with real Moldovan character. These currently account for an estimated 5% of vineyards though this is growing every year due to increasing international interest. Perhaps the most unique are the blends where Moldovan winemakers can express their individuality and the Moldovan landscape.

### **FETEASCA ALBA**

This variety has been cultivated for centuries in this region and appears to be a very ancient grape. The wines of this variety are fine and delicate, with floral aromas and a light and fresh body. It's one of the parents of Fetească Regală (along with Frâncușă) which comes from Transylvania in Romania but has been grown in the Moldovan region for decades.

### **FETEASCA REGALA**

This semi-aromatic grape variety is the result of a natural cross, found near Sighișoara in Romania in 1920s. It has typical floral and grapefruit aromas and flavours of fresh pear and citrus but is usually more full-bodied and textured than its parent.

### **FETEASCA NEAGRA**

With a history of over 2000 years, this variety probably originates from Prut river valley located in the south west of Moldova, and there are claims it may even have been cultivated directly from the wild. It is capable of producing high quality reds, with typical aromas of wild cherry and violets, concentrated berry fruit and good structure.

### **RARA NEAGRA**

This is an old variety local to the region, possibly cultivated as early as Geto-Dacian times, in south east Romania and what is today's Republic of Moldova. It is relatively pale in colour with gentle soft tannins and spicy berry fruit. It seems particularly well suited to the sunny slopes of southern Moldova.

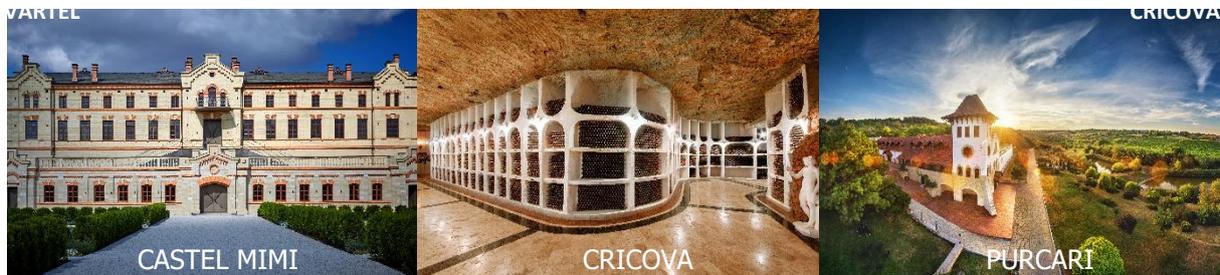
### **VIORICA**

A local cross developed in Moldova in 1969 from Seibel 13666 and Aleatico. It was originally bred for distillation and cold resistance, but it is proving well suited to making aromatic but very fresh crisp white wines and a number of wineries are now producing this.

## A RICH HISTORY, A MODERN OENOTOURISM

Moldova's long history of winemaking began around 3000 BC, and the first traces of grapevines in these lands have been dated back to around 7000 BC. Throughout its history, wine and grapes have been deeply rooted in the culture, myths, folklore and legends of Moldova. Even the map of today's Republic of Moldova is shaped like a bunch of grapes. The white stork, with its leading role in so many local legends, has been chosen as the symbol of the Moldovan wine industry and of the continual rebirth of Moldovan wine. That is why a stylised image of a stork carrying a bunch of grapes is part of the national wine brand image – "Wine of Moldova. A legend alive".

**The Republic of Moldova is a new booming destination of wine tourism**, for its diversity of natural and cultural sites, its vineyards and wines and its warm hospitality built on ancestral traditions and customs. Major tourist attractions include several medieval fortresses where visitors can take a journey into the Moldova's past and the historic monasteries that reveal the spiritual side of this nation. Wine is also Moldova's trump card in the development of tourism as the country's attractions include a fascinating variety of wineries.



The vast underground cellars at Cricova and at Mileștii Mici were established in former limestone quarries with more than 200 kilometres of tunnels which can be driven through. Mileștii Mici holds the biggest wine collection in the world, registered in the Guinness Book of World Records, with more than 1.5 million bottles (growing every vintage). It is stored in Gothic-style niches at a depth of 80 metres in the underground galleries just 10 kilometres away from Chișinău. Another striking symbol of Moldovan winemaking is the underground wine city of Cricova, which has galleries stretching over 70 kilometres. Castel Mimi is a beautiful architectural masterpiece and has built a reputation for its unique gastronomy. The tourist complex of the winery includes a royal courtyard with evergreen gardens, a wine spa, a swimming pool, a summer terrace and picnic areas, and overnight accommodation is available in seven chalet-style cottages. In recent years the number of wineries open to tourists and visitors has doubled, offering a wonderful opportunity to get close to Moldovan wine, with a personal connection to the winemakers and their very human stories. Wine tastings are often accompanied by a taste of homemade local food, based on locally sourced flavoursome ingredients: at Atu Winery, the first urban winery, in Chisinau, owner and winemaker Victor greets visitors and explains all about his wines ; at Château Vartely an excellent gastronomic experience at the winery's restaurant follows a professionally guided wine tasting ; tourists visit Mihai Sava to live the authentic local experience in the village of Costesti... And many other wineries propose experiences!

**The National Wine Day is the main wine event in Eastern Europe**, taking place every year (2021 will celebrate the 20th edition) and attracting on the first week-end of October tens of thousands of tourists and amateurs in search of authentic experiences. Visitors have a unique opportunity to get to know the Wine of Moldova, to learn its legends, but also to get acquainted with the local culture and gastronomy. Large- and small-scale wine producers, as well as producers of "Divin" gather at the Piața Marii Adunări Naționale (main square of the capital), where they propose tastings. The purpose of the event is also an educational one. The National Wine Day offers tastings, master classes, expert meetings and wine tours, so that participants can learn how to assess high-quality wine, and discover the people that stand behind the Wine of Moldova. Wineries over the whole country open their doors and welcome visitors with special offers.



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