



**WHAT IF YOU COULD FIND AN ALTERNATIVE WINE**, which would offer you as much, or even more, than your usual choice of Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio? There is a grape variety that would match up perfectly with spring's bounty of asparagus, fiddleheads or artichokes. My choice would be for the fresh and complex style of Grüner Veltliner from Austria.

What does it taste like? Well, it's crisp with herbaceous notes and a slight hint of white pepper on the finish, and it tends to be a light- to medium-bodied dry wine. (You wouldn't want to serve a heavy-bodied, high-alcohol white wine with, let's say, asparagus.)

Some people may have a little difficulty pronouncing Grüner Veltliner, so it was sometimes called "GruVe." These wines pair well with Chinese cuisine such as Peking duck, or with curries, seafood salads and of course Austria's famous wiener schnitzel; it is also ideal with chicken or smoked meats and fish. The grape is now grown on a small scale in British Columbia, California, Oregon, Washington State, Maryland and Virginia, as well as Australia. But home sweet home is Austria.

The Danube River runs through the regions of Wachau, Weinviertel, Kamptal and Kremstal, where most of it grows — located in the northeastern corner of the country. Grüner Veltliner accounts for 30 percent of all Austrian plantings and is grown in a climate that is well suited to this fresh, aromatic wine. These vineyards are on the same latitude as Burgundy and, surprisingly, their area is only half the size of Bordeaux. The clay and loam soil imparts creaminess and length into these tasty wines, while Grüner Veltliner grapes are grown on granite and slate soil, giving them their minerality and zip. Be sure to chill your bottle prior to drinking.

**WINZER KREMS GRÜNER VELTLINER "13ER" 2012 (\$12.95)**

Medium-bodied, well-balanced acidity with a subtle finish of spice, light herbs and some minerality.

**GROONER GRÜNER VELTLINER 2013 (\$14)**

Bone-dry; tropical fruit notes with crisp balanced acidity.

**EDITION CHREMISA GRÜNER VELTLINER 2012 (\$24.95)**

Luscious and full-bodied with lots of extract; long, opulent finish with the typical peppery minerality and mild spiciness.

**DÜRNBERG GV RABENSTEIN DAC RESERVE 2011 (\$22.95)**

Good extract. Spice on the palate with a long mineral finish.

**RABL GRÜNER VELTLINER KITTMANNSBERG 2012 (\$14.95)**

Medium-bodied, dry; excellent structure; spice with some stone fruit notes and minerality on the finish.

**LAURENZ V GRÜNER VELTLINER FRIENDLY 2012 (\$18.95)**

Soft stone fruit; juicy palate with a touch of spiciness, white pepper and good acidity.

**SALOMON GROOVY GRÜNER VELTLINER 2013 (\$13.95)**

Very long finish with good acidity; will age well. ▣