



# Gewürztraminer

## Synonyms

Over 40 synonyms of Gewürztraminer exist, giving evidence of its worldwide popularity. Traminer, Rotclevner, Rousselet, Frenschler, and Edeltraube are used in France. It also has several synonyms in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Eastern Europe.

## Source

Gewürztraminer is an aromatic variety grown throughout the world, most notably in Alsace, France. However, the variety may have originated in what is now Italy. Once grown in many parts of California, Gewürztraminer is now predominately planted in coastal counties in cool locations.

## Description

**Clusters:** small; cylindrical with shoulders, often globular, compact; short peduncles.

**Berries:** small; short oval; unique tan-pink color and characteristic spicy “gewürz” taste.

**Leaves:** small; mostly entire with shallow lateral sinuses; closed V-shaped petiolar sinus with overlapping lobes; small teeth; bullate upper leaf surface; moderately dense, tufted hair on lower leaf surface.

**Shoot tips:** felty white with rose-pink margins; young leaves yellow-green with slight bronze highlights.

Gewürztraminer fruit is easily recognizable due to its pink to reddish color at maturity.

## Growth and Soil Adaptability

Gewürztraminer has a trailing growth habit, and if planted on deep, fertile soils it may be vigorous depending on training and pruning. It is prone to poor fruit set, and thus is considered to be low yielding. Widely spaced rows should be avoided if possible in order to increase planting density and yield per acre. Gewürztraminer’s early budbreak makes it sensitive to frost.

## Rootstocks

Rootstock experience is limited due to the low acreage replanted to the variety in the late 1980s and 1990s. Gewürztraminer’s vigor is site dependent, thus low- to moderate-vigor rootstocks should be considered in areas with deep, fertile soils. Soil conditions will help dictate the final rootstock choice.

## Clones

Clonal evaluation has been conducted in Germany and France for many years with an eye toward selections with intense spicy characters. Three registered selections are available: Gewürztraminer FPS 01 and 02 are derived from an Alsatian selection (456), and FPS 03 came from a vine in California. Gewürztraminer ENTAV-INRA<sup>®</sup> 47 is available as California certified stock. No formal evaluations of these clones have been made in California.

## clusters

*Small; cylindrical with shoulders, often globular, compact; short peduncles.*

## berries

*Small; short oval; unique tan-pink color, and characteristic spicy “gewürz” taste.*

## Production

Gewürztraminer is not a highly productive variety since it is prone to coulure. Yields can vary considerably from year to year.

## Harvest

**Period:** An early to midseason ripening variety, although winemakers often let the fruit hang for an extended period to develop more spicy characters.

**Method:** Gewürztraminer's short bunch stem makes hand harvesting difficult. Canopy shaking is easy to moderately easy. Fruit is removed mostly as single berries and some cluster parts, with juicing light to medium. Canopy shaking can cause moderate shoot breakage. Trunk shaking is easy to moderately

easy, with less MOG. Fruit is removed as single berries, but with more cluster parts than with canopy shaking. Juicing is light.

## Training and Pruning

Due to its small clusters and high vigor, Gewürztraminer should be head trained and cane pruned in order to leave an adequate number of buds. However, many Gewürztraminer vineyards in California are cordon trained and spur pruned. When cordon trained and spur pruned, shoot thinning may be minimal, making mechanical pre-pruning advisable.

## Trellising and Canopy Management

For low- to moderate-vigor sites, vertical-shoot-positioned systems are appropriate. On high-vigor sites, split canopy systems can be used to increase the yield potential and balance vegetative growth. Because fruit set is variable, shoot thinning is often delayed until after set or is not performed at all so that all shoots with clusters are kept in order to maximize yield. Leaf removal can be used to reduce the risk of Botrytis bunch rot.



## leaves

*Small; mostly entire with shallow lateral sinuses; closed V-shaped petiolar sinus with overlapping lobes; small teeth; bullate upper leaf surface; moderately dense, tufted hair on lower leaf surface.*



## shoot tips

*Felty white with rose-pink margins; young leaves yellow-green with slight bronze highlights.*

### Insect and Disease Problems

Gewürztraminer's small, tight clusters make it susceptible to Botrytis bunch rot. Older vineyards commonly carry virus disease.

### Other Cultural Characteristics

Gewürztraminer's early leafing habit makes it vulnerable to spring frosts. Varietal character develops late in the ripening period. Harvesting too early results in wines lacking in varietal character. Gewürztraminer should only be grown in cool regions due to its low acid content.

### Winery Use

Gewürztraminer produces distinctive wines with a spicy, floral aroma. Table wines are usually slightly sweet to offset its natural bitterness. Excellent dessert wines can also be produced from this variety.

—Rhonda J. Smith and Edward Weber