AUGUSTIMPORTS
WINES · SPIRITS · INNOVATIONS

MAJOR SOIL TYPES

Most producers will tell you that fine wine is made, first and foremost, in the soil—and at August Imports we quite agree! While countless types exist in the world, there are several key players you may see referenced as you peruse our portfolio. Here, then, is a list of important soil types, along with insights into the stylistic impact they often have on wine.

ALLUVIAL: This term refers to highly fertile soil transported by a river (similar in this regard to *Morenico*, which has been transferred via glacier). Largely composed of gravel, sand, and silt, alluvial enjoys good drainage. As a warmer soil type, it helps to hasten ripening when found in southern climes. In cooler zones (such as NE Italy), it helps to create elegant wines with high aromatics, pale color and low tannins.

(CALCAREOUS) CLAY: Sedimentary, rock-based soil composed largely of calcium carbonates and often containing tangible shell material. Clay typically has high water retention and poor drainage, making it ideal for grapes like Sangiovese. It's also a cooler soil type which promotes a longer ripening period, higher acidity, strong tannins, high extract, and rich color. Marl, to name one type, is the rich, crumbly clay composite prevalent in both Tuscany and Piedmont. The Right Bank of Bordeaux is also dominated by clay soils, as a more specific example.

LIMESTONE: Soft, very alkaline soil, in turn promoting the absorption of nutrients. Like clay, limestone has a carbonate base (fossilized seashells), meaning it's a cooler soil type. This encourages later ripening and higher acidity in wines and is one of the primary contributing factors behind the structure of Friuli's esteemed whites. Unlike clay, limestone also provides good drainage.

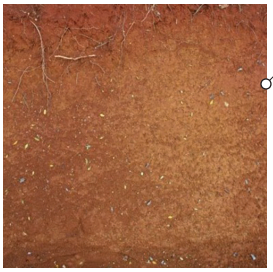
LOAM: A crumbly soil type with (close to) equal parts sand, silt, and clay. Loam is high in organic matter and tends to work best when blended with other soils. On its own, loam is extremely fertile and can cause vines to over-produce, yielding wines of diminished flavor and color. When mixed with other, poorer soil types that curb abundance (as in the case of sandy loam) and coupled with rigorous pruning techniques, loam can offer more successful, balanced results.

LOESS: A windblown soil type dating as far back as the Ice Ages, loess retains both water and heat and lends itself to smooth wines with balanced acidity. Like other silt-based soils, it possesses a very fine grain, making it hard for roots to gain purchase and develop. In an ideal circumstance, therefore, loess merely forms a layer of topsoil with a more substantial baseline (ie limestone or clay) underneath. In Austria's Weinvertal DAC, Gruner Veltliner has the nickname *pfefferl*, which translates to 'little peppery one', exhibiting the light, spicy notes that derive from loess and help define the region.

QUARTZ: Often found in sandier soils, the high pH of quartz can sometimes help reduce the acidity of wines. Quartz's heat-retaining and/or light-reflecting properties can also increase ripening and promote higher alcohol content.

SAND: Sandy soils are well-drained and simultaneously retain heat. In cooler climate regions, this combination contributes to highly aromatic wines and overall elegance. In warmer zones, concentrations of sand tend to lighten a wine's color, acidity and tannin. Sand is also more resistant to pests (including phylloxera), potentially making it ideal for organic farming.

SCHIST: Flakey, crystalline rock derived mostly from clay. Schist generally retains heat and promotes riper-style wines. It's also breakable, and therefore easier for roots to penetrate than other, harder rock types. Rich in magnesium (an important element of chlorophyll) and potassium (promotes root development and vine metabolism), schist is poor in other nutrients. Pockets of this soil type are sometimes found at higher altitudes in Tuscany, including Chianti Classico and Montalcino.



TERRA ROSA: Sedimentary soil formed after all the carbonates have been leached from limestone over vast stretches of time. This process leaves iron deposits (good for photosynthesis), which then oxidize, turning the soil its telltale, rustic red. Terra rosa drains well, is relatively high in nutrients, and is a warmer soil type, promoting ripeness. Prevalent on the Salento Peninsula of Puglia and elsewhere along Mediterranean coasts.

VOLCANIC: There are two types of volcanic soil, both of which are warm and promote ripeness. Vent-based material is ejected into the air and then settles, while lava-based spreads by land and is mostly comprised of basalt. They are high in iron (promotes photosynthesis), calcium (helps neutralize soil pH levels), and magnesium (an important element of chlorophyll). While ancient deposits span the globe, there are also dynamic, ever-changing sites we can study, like Mt. Etna in Sicily!