



Gabrielle Chablis 2024, Burgundy, France: \$27.99

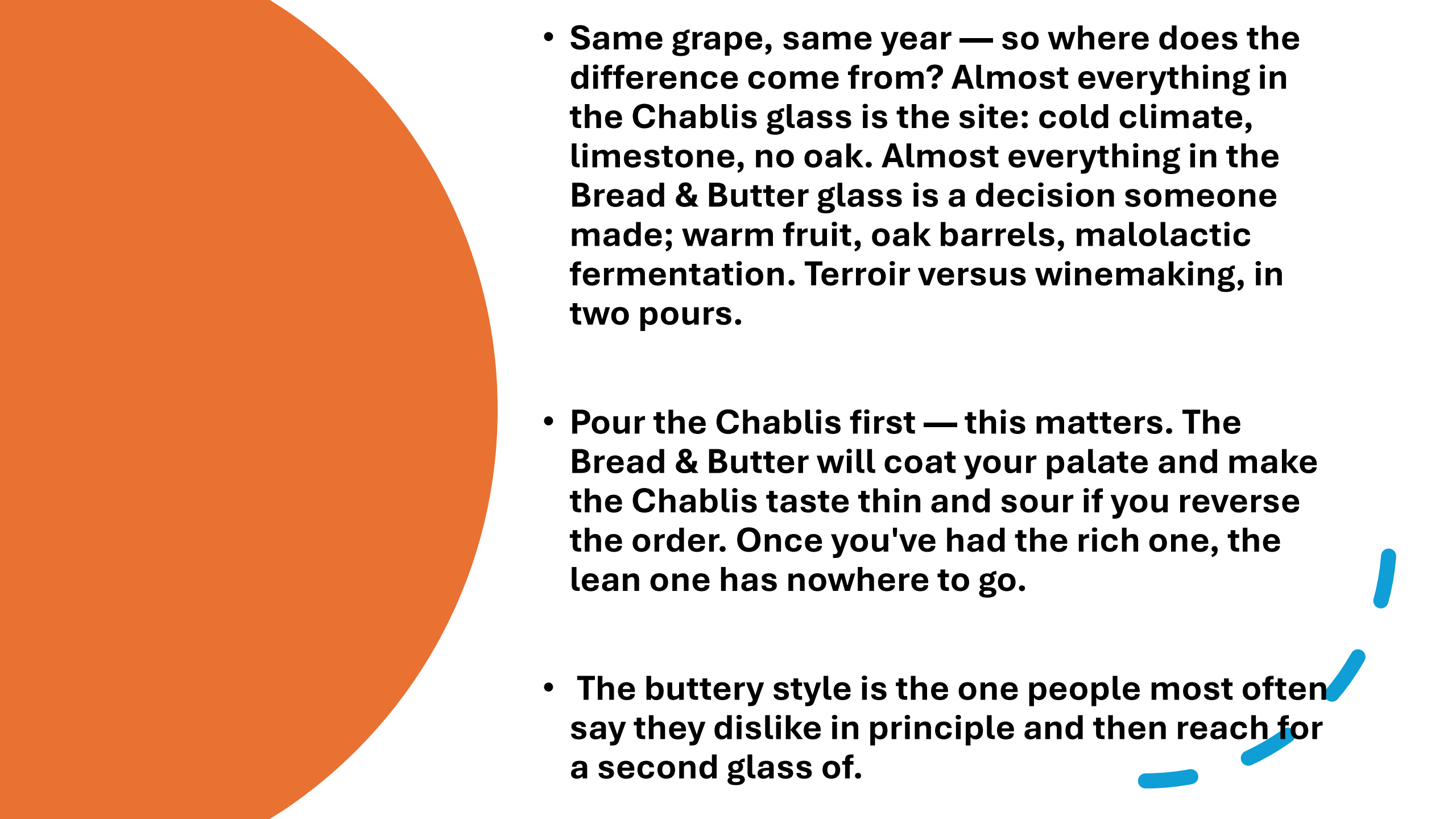
- Chablis is northern Burgundy, France — 100% Chardonnay, essentially always unoaked. Every character below comes from the place, not the cellar.
- Look: Pale straw, often with a faint green cast. Noticeably lighter than the California bottle — worth holding them side by side against something white.
- Nose: Green apple, lemon and lime zest, white flowers. Then the signature: a struck-flint, wet-stone, almost oyster-shell smell, telltale mineral edge. Chablis sits on Kimmeridgian limestone packed with fossilized marine shells, and people genuinely taste the sea in it.
- Palate: Bone dry, high acid, lean and taut. Citrus and tart orchard fruit over a chalky, faintly saline finish. No vanilla, no butter, no cream — if you find those, it isn't this glass.
- Food Pairing: Brie/Apple Tart



Bread & Butter Chardonnay

2024, California: \$12.57 HEB

- **California, 13.5% ABV per the label. The name is the mission statement — this is the buttery style, made unapologetically.**
- **Look: Medium gold, visibly deeper than the Chablis.**
- **Nose: Vanilla, butterscotch, toasted oak, baked apple, ripe pear, a whiff of coconut or caramel.**
- **Palate: Full-bodied, rounder, richer, creamier, soft. Low perceived acidity and a creamy, almost slippery texture. Reads faintly sweet even though it's technically dry — that's ripe fruit and oak, not sugar. Long, buttery finish.**
- **Where the butter comes from — malolactic fermentation converts sharp malic acid (think green apple) into softer lactic acid and throws off a compound called diacetyl. Diacetyl is literally what's sprayed on movie-theater popcorn. Chablis producers suppress this conversion; Bread & Butter leans all the way in.**
- **Food Pairing: Shrimp Bisque**

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- **Same grape, same year — so where does the difference come from? Almost everything in the Chablis glass is the site: cold climate, limestone, no oak. Almost everything in the Bread & Butter glass is a decision someone made; warm fruit, oak barrels, malolactic fermentation. Terroir versus winemaking, in two pours.**
 - **Pour the Chablis first — this matters. The Bread & Butter will coat your palate and make the Chablis taste thin and sour if you reverse the order. Once you've had the rich one, the lean one has nowhere to go.**
 - **The buttery style is the one people most often say they dislike in principle and then reach for a second glass of.**



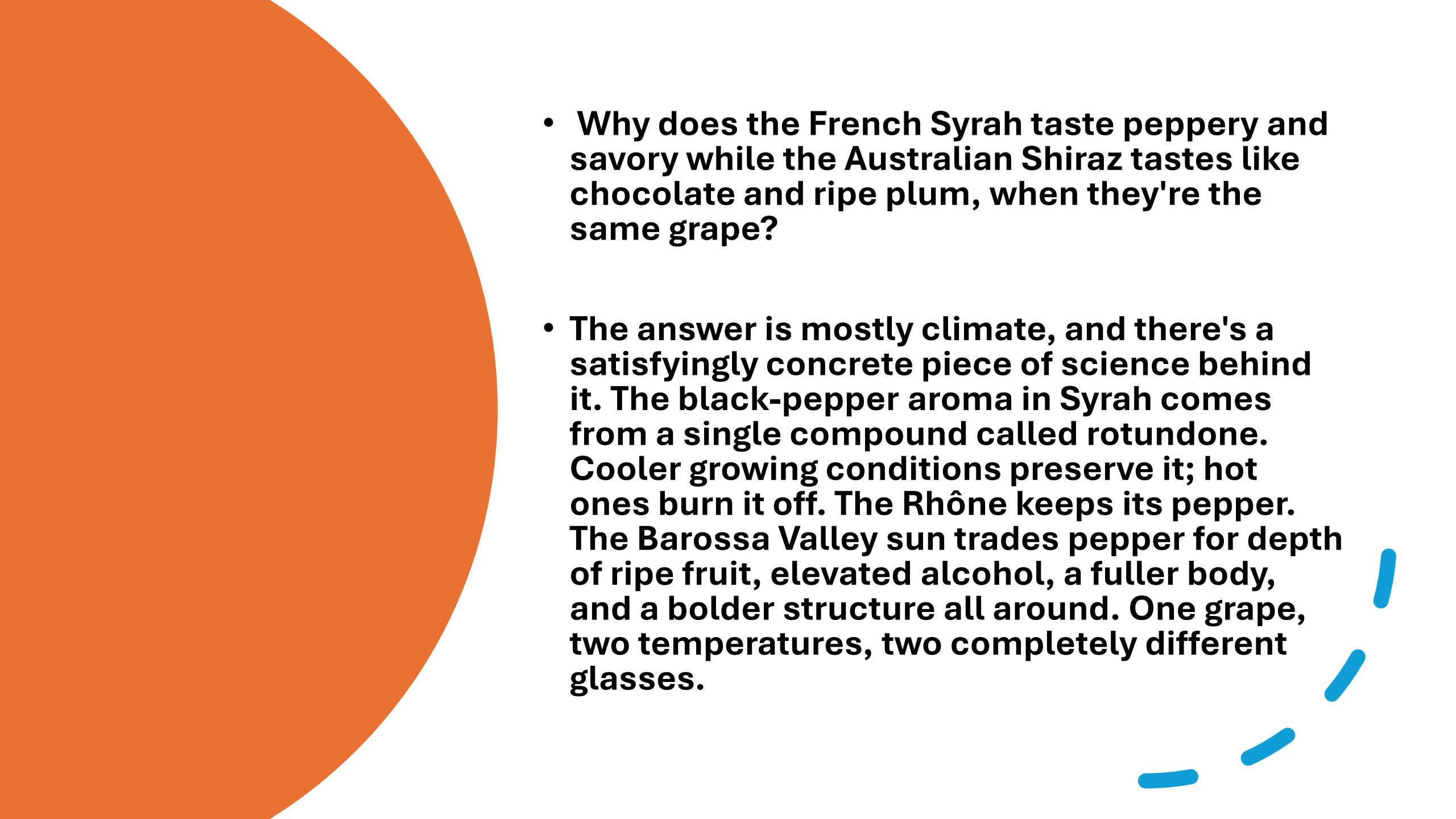
Halos de Jupiter Syrah 2023— Famille Gassier, Costières de Nîmes: \$16.19

- **Look:** Deep ruby with violet edges. Dark, but you can still see through it at the rim.
- **Nose:** Violets, red and black berries, blackcurrant, red plum — then the savory side that defines French Syrah: black pepper, smoked bacon fat, cured olive, dried herbs, earthy nuances.
- **Palate:** Medium to full body with fresh acidity. More savory than sweet, peppery through the middle, tannins fine and firm rather than plush. Finishes dry and lifted.
- **Food Pairing:** Marinated Pork Skewer



Victoria Park Shiraz 2022, Barossa **— "Cellar Release": \$17.09**

- **Made by Yalumba, Australia's oldest family-owned winery, in the Barossa Valley of South Australia. "Cellar Release" means the wine was held back and given extra bottle age before hitting shelves, so it arrives softer and more integrated than a fresh release.**
- **Look: Deep, near-opaque purple-black. Hold it next to the Rhône bottle — the difference is visible before you smell anything.**
- **Nose: Ripe plum, blackberry, cassis. Then dark chocolate, mocha, sweet baking spice, and a graphite-and-smoke undertone. Vanilla and toast from oak.**
- **Palate: Full-bodied and plush. Generous, sweet-fruited, jammy spectrum of ripeness, mouth-filling, with well-structured but rounded tannins. Chocolate and mulberry on a long finish.**
- **Food Pairing: Chicken Mole Taco**

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- **Why does the French Syrah taste peppery and savory while the Australian Shiraz tastes like chocolate and ripe plum, when they're the same grape?**
 - **The answer is mostly climate, and there's a satisfyingly concrete piece of science behind it. The black-pepper aroma in Syrah comes from a single compound called rotundone. Cooler growing conditions preserve it; hot ones burn it off. The Rhône keeps its pepper. The Barossa Valley sun trades pepper for depth of ripe fruit, elevated alcohol, a fuller body, and a bolder structure all around. One grape, two temperatures, two completely different glasses.**

12 e Mezzo Primitivo 2023, Salento IGP

— Varvaglione: \$14.98 HEB

- **Puglia, the heel of Italy's boot. The name means "twelve and a half" — it's the alcohol level, and it's the whole point of the wine. Primitivo normally lands at 14–15%; this is deliberately built at 12.5%. Made from organic grapes, rich, full-bodied red.**
- **Look: Ruby red, bright rather than opaque.**
- **Nose: Ripe plum, cherry jam, cocoa, a little spice. Cassis, vanilla, and a lick of licorice underneath.**
- **Palate: Soft and rounded, juicy red and dark fruit, acidity is mouthwatering, smooth tannins, long easygoing finish with a hint of vanilla.**
- **One thing to know before you pour: it's technically off-dry — about 9 grams per liter of residual sugar. Not dessert-sweet, but most people will notice a touch of sweetness. That's deliberate, and it's why the wine tastes plusher than its modest alcohol suggests.**
- **Food Pairing: Stuffed Shells**



ED "Edmundo" Zinfandel 2023, Lodi, California: \$8.99

- **Look:** Deep ruby to purple, noticeably darker than the Italian.
- **Nose:** Brambly blackberry and raspberry, black cherry, black pepper, sweet baking spice, vanilla and toast from oak.
- **Palate:** Full-bodied and ripe, jammy fruit, moderate tannins, and a warming finish. Zinfandel is typically 14.5–15% — expect this to feel noticeably bigger and hotter than the Primitivo.
- **Vintage note:** 2023 was an unusually cool, wet, late year in California — heavy rains broke the drought, and harvest ran among the latest on record. Wines from that year tend to have brighter acidity and fresher fruit than the classic sun-baked Lodi profile, sometimes with slightly lower alcohol, in this case 14.3%.
- **Food Pairing:** Brisket



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- These are the same grape, DNA-identical — so why does one taste like 12.5% and the other like 14.3%?
 - The answer is almost entirely the winemaker's choice of when to pick. Grapes accumulate sugar as they ripen, and fermentation converts that sugar to alcohol. Pick earlier and you get a lighter, fresher wine. Pick later and you get the jammy, high-alcohol style California made famous. Puglia's producer picked early and stopped fermentation with a little sugar left. Lodi's let it hang. Same vine, opposite decisions.
 - There's a nice twist to land on: the wine that tastes sweeter is the lighter one. People routinely assume sweet means heavy. Here it's exactly backwards, and having both glasses in front of you is the easiest way to prove it.
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