

Author: Olaf Rudolfson - Oslo - Norway: 2025-12-06

## *Best Red Grapes for Rubavu*

### **No. 01: Pin Noir**

- Excellent match for cool nights + volcanic soils.
- Produces high-value wines.
- Already successful in other volcanic highlands (Etna, Chile, Oregon)
- Top recommendation for premium red wine.

### **No. 02: Syrah (Cool-Climate Syrah / Shiraz)**

- Thrives on volcanic soils.
- Performs well in mild climates at elevation.
- Produces elegant, peppery wines.
- Strong commercial and viticultural choice.

### **No. 03: Tempranillo (High-altitude clone)**

- Adapted to cool nights (grown in Rioja Alavesa at 700–900 m).
- Handles volcanic and Andosol mixtures.
- Reliable productivity.
- Good for stable yields and structured wines.

### **No. 04: Gamay**

- Highly suited to granite & volcanic soils.
- Naturally high acidity → good in warm days/cool nights.
- Resistant and productive.
- Ideal for Rubavu's moderate heat and fertile soils.

### **No. 05: Cabernet Franc**

- Better than Cabernet Sauvignon in cool or variable climates.
- Performs well on volcanic soils.
- Good disease tolerance.
- A smart, climate-resilient red choice.

## *Best White Grapes for Rubavu*

### **No. 06: Sauvignon Blanc**

- Excellent match with high altitude + volcanic soils.
- Keeps acidity even in warm days.
- Already successful in Kenya & Ethiopia highlands.
- Top white recommendation.

**No. 07: Chardonnay**

- Performs extremely well on both volcanic soils and cool climates.
- Allows premium wine styles.
- Highly adaptable.
- Reliable cornerstone variety.

**No. 08: Riesling**

- Thrives in cool climates.
- Loves volcanic soils (Alsace, Germany's slate & volcanic regions).
- Built for high acidity environments.
- Premium high-altitude white.

**No. 09: Chenin Blanc**

- Superb drought tolerance.
- Thrives on volcanic and mixed soils.
- Extremely versatile for winemaking.
- Very well suited to Andosols with good water retention.

**No. 10: Viognier**

- Excellent aromatic expression on volcanic soils.
- Handles mild humidity with proper canopy management.
- High-value niche wine.
- A strong option for unique premium products.

## *Based on Scientific Knowledge*

Rubavu's volcanic Andosol soils, cool nights, reliable rainfall, and high-altitude climate make the region well suited for a select group of red and white grape varieties known to perform strongly in volcanic and mountain environments. Drawing on global viticulture research, tropical high-altitude studies, and early trials already conducted in Rwanda, the most promising grapes for Rubavu include Pinot Noir, Syrah, Tempranillo, Gamay, Cabernet Franc, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling, Chenin Blanc, and Viognier.

These recommendations are based on scientific evidence of grape performance in volcanic soils, their tolerance to humidity and disease pressure, and their proven success in similar regions such as Ethiopia's highlands, the Canary Islands, and Mt. Etna.

The next step is to establish small trial plots in Rubavu to evaluate growth, disease resistance, and wine quality, followed by scaling up the best varieties. This approach provides a solid, research-based foundation for developing a modern and sustainable wine industry in Rubavu.