

Adobe Studio on Adobe Illustrator CS

Create distinctive packaging

In this tutorial, we will design a wine label for a bottle of merlot. We'll use Adobe® Illustrator® to do the layout, combining text, graphics, and an image (a photo that you'll finalize in Adobe® Photoshop®).

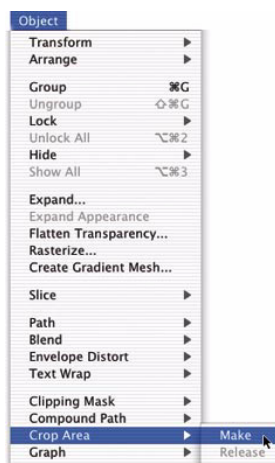
Before you begin your design work, it is vital to first study the subject, do some research, consider how the label will look on the shelf, and how it will be printed and fit the bottle. For merlot, a luscious red wine, I've chosen a rich color combination of autumn reds and yellows. The overall feel should suggest an elegant wine from an old winery.



Design the basic layout

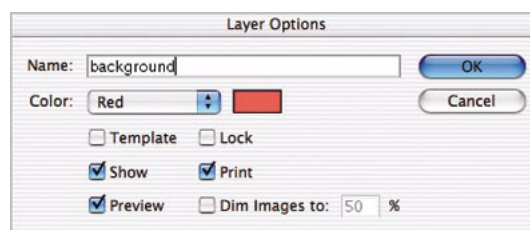
- 1 Start Illustrator.
- 2 Choose File > New > Document. In the New Document dialog, Select Letter from the Size pop-up menu, click the Landscape Orientation button, and choose CMYK Color Mode. Name the document winelabel.ai and save it into your working directory.
- 3 In the Toolbox select the Rectangle tool and click anywhere within the Artboard. Use the Rectangle dialog box to create a label 250 mm wide and 65 mm high. Drag the rectangle with the Selection tool so it all fits onto the Artboard.

- 4 Create crop marks by choosing Object > Crop Area > Make.



The bounding box that the artwork can be cropped to is called the crop area. Only one crop area can be created per document.

- 5 In the Layers palette rename Layer 1 Crop marks and create a new layer called Background.



It is always a good idea to work on different layers when a layout is made from several different elements.

- 6 On the Background layer use the Rectangle tool to create another rectangle the same size as the first one. Keep the fill black by setting the color to K100.
- 7 Place an image you want to use as the background by choosing File > Place. In the Place dialog box check Include Linked Files.

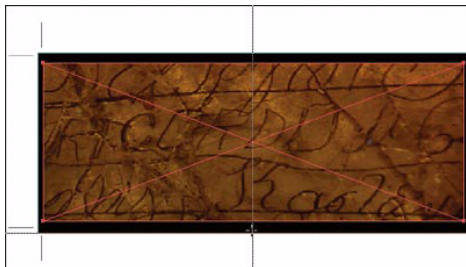
Tip: Linked artwork stays independent from the Illustrator document and results in a smaller file. Embedded artwork is copied to the document and as a consequence produces a larger file.



The picture is placed to the left and centered between the top and bottom of the label.

8 Save your file as winelabel.ai. The photo you just placed may need more work, but it should be perfectly adequate for judging color, size, and composition. In the meantime, you can concentrate on the main elements on the front of the label: the brand name, “Chalet,” and descriptor, “Merlot.”

9 Create a new layer and call it Graphics. Make sure the rulers are showing (Command-R/Ctrl-R). Using any tool, start dragging in the ruler along the left-hand side of the document window and drag to the right. This creates a vertical guide. Continue dragging until the guide is centered over the placed image.



The diagonal lines on the photo intersect at the label’s center point.

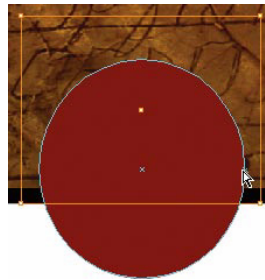
Before you start to add type to your label, consider carefully what sort of typeface will work best. For “Chalet,” we used Voluta script to evoke the feel of a noble, old winery steeped in tradition. If you don’t have Voluta script, select another appropriate font. For the product descriptor “Merlot” and the body text, balance the Voluta (or the substitute font you’ve chosen) with an elegant serif face: Palatino, which is based on classical Italian Renaissance letterforms.

Both the winery name and descriptor are set reversed out of a burgundy-colored round shape. “Chalet” picks up the golden color from the background image, and “Merlot” will be in plain white to set it apart.

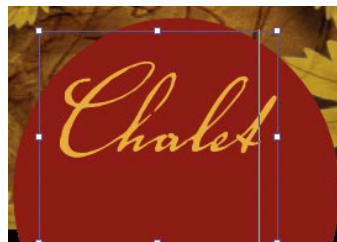
With the graphics layer activated, choose a burgundy (C25M100Y90K25) for the square box that shows the Fill color. Specify None for the stroke color.

10 Double-click the Ellipse tool in the toolbox and type in a 70-mm diameter. Center the circle on the front label and move it down by 2.5 cm.

11 To cut off the part of the red circle that extends beyond the label area, make a mask. Create a new rectangle covering the width of the circle with no fill or stroke and place it flush with the bottom of the label. Select it together with the circle, then choose Object > Clipping Mask > Make.



12 Create a new layer and call it Type. Choose a golden color for Fill (C0M25Y80K4), select the Type tool (T) and type 70 point as the size in Voluta Script, then type Chalet.



13 With the Pen tool selected draw a 2.5-point line below the name stroked with the same golden color



The underline makes the brand name stand out and serves as a divider for the product descriptor.

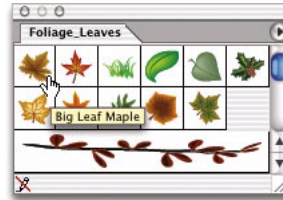
14 For the word “Merlot,” use the font Palatino Bold in upper case, plain white, 18 point. The tracking (spacing) between the characters has been set to 150 in order to make it look more elegant



Refine Illustrator elements in Photoshop

Now the background photo needs some refinements to give it a special look for the wine label. For this you can take advantage of Illustrator’s newly expanded brush libraries, which include a vast selection of objects, symbols, patterns, and brushes. I’ve chosen some maple leaves to embellish the photo and evoke an old, natural feel.

1 Select Window > Brush Libraries > Foliage_Leaves to open the Foliage_Leaves palette. Choose Big Leaf Maple, which will also be added to the Brushes palette.



2 Create a new layer and name it Leaves. With the Ellipse tool and Big Maple Leaf selected, create an ellipse around the name “Chalet”. You can control the placement of the leaves on a closed path by selecting the Scissors tool and splitting it.



The Brush library works on closed paths like a rectangle or an ellipse.

Illustrator comes with filters and effects, such as texture filters and transparency effects. However, to make the maple leaves an integral part of the background image (more photo-realistic than drawn looking), I prefer to import the file to Photoshop and refine it there.

3 Copy the selected ellipse with the maple leaves, start Photoshop, and create a new file. With the copied leaves in the clipboard, the dimensions and color mode will automatically be the same as in Illustrator, so just hit OK in the New dialog box.

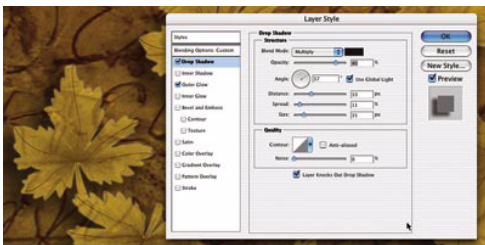
4 Open the file you used as a background image and paste the leaves as pixels into it. You can adjust the position and size by grabbing its anchor points until the leaves in the photo look like the basic layout in the Illustrator file.



To keep the proportions, it's important to hold down the Shift key while positioning the leaves.

5 Select Layer > Layer Style > Blending Options. In the Layer Style dialog box there are a lot of different effects to choose from. But to keep a more realistic feel, click only on the Drop Shadow and Outer Glow options, and lower the Opacity so that the leaves blend better with the background.

The effects can be further refined by double-clicking on them. The screen shot shows the Drop Shadow effect with the Drop Shadow pane of the Layer Style dialog box. Once you're satisfied with the size and position of the leaves, press Return/Enter.



Playing with the angle, distance, spread, and size of the drop shadow makes the leaves an integral part of the background image.

6 Select Image > Adjustments > Hue/Saturation to make the leaves stand out by slightly altering the Hue by +2 and Saturation by + 10. Click OK.

7 The last step of the refinement is to slightly blur the image to get rid of the "drawn" look of the original Illustrator leaves and make them appear more realistic. Select Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur with a radius of 1 pixel. Click OK.

8 You will be greeted with a dialog box asking if you would like to update the links to modified files; click Yes. The background image in your Illustrator file will be updated to match the work you did in Photoshop.

9 Now you have two sets of leaves. You no longer need the original ellipse with the stroked-on leaves, so select the object and press Delete/Backspace. The more refined version of the background image is now visible in position on the label.

10 Click OK in the upcoming dialog for replacing the modified file and you'll see the refined photo in the right position of the label.



With the final image in place, the front of the label is almost finished, and it's easy to finalize the entire label.

Only a few things remain to be done: designing the layout for the back label, and doing minor refinements to the front.



The overview of the finished label clearly shows the relationship between the front and back of the label.

In packaging design, it's helpful to stick with a few selected fonts and a specific color scheme. This way, the different elements don't compete with each other. This also helps to establish a hierarchy of information. On this label, for example, you would first read the brand name, followed by the product descriptor, and then the year. Another advantage is the possibility of brand extension. Should the Chalet winery decide to produce a sauvignon wine, you could create a label for it simply by changing the color coding, and replacing the burgundy-colored circle and top line with another color. That way, Chalet would retain its established look while building recognition.

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