

# If the grape fits then you can grow it

THE AWRI OFTEN fields queries about alternative varieties and how they might suit Australian winemaking conditions. Some advice on how to source suitable alternative varieties is provided.

**While recently travelling in Portugal, I came across a winegrape variety that I think will have great potential in my region. How can I determine if this particular variety is already in Australia and if it would be available to me for propagation?**

There are many varieties in Portugal that have great potential for Australian conditions and have yet to be introduced.

In the first instance, check the current edition of the Australian and New Zealand Wine Industry Directory (WID) published by Winetitles, to determine if any wine producer has listed this variety – in which case it should already be in the country. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that it will be available to you in the short-term because it may have been imported privately and currently be subject to a non-propagation agreement. Also, don't assume that the information in the WID is entirely accurate because there have been instances of invalid naming in the past. For example, there are two producers in the 2013 edition of WID who have assumed, incorrectly, that Godello is a synonym of Verdelho. True Godello is in the CSIRO collection but not known to be yet commercially grown in Australia. Also, just because a variety is grown commercially in the eastern states does not mean that it can readily be imported into WA because that state has its own quarantine regulations.

Also check with CSIRO, South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) and other government agencies to determine if the variety of interest is already here in existing germplasm collections. However, if it is, this may not be much use at present because these agencies have imposed a freeze on distribution from their collections until such time as the 'Review into Grapevine Germplasm Collections in Australia' has been completed (see GWRDC website for summary of the report).

The next ports of call are the vine improvement organisations and nurseries. For example, the Riverland Vine Improvement Committee Incorporated has lists on its website of recent imports and varieties in their source blocks. Some recent imports from Portugal and Spain that are new to



**New taste:** These vines are Albarino (Portuguese name Alvarinho) from the Vinho Verde region in northern Portugal. Photo courtesy of PR Dry.

Australia include Arinto, Azal, Viosinho (whites) and Alfrocheiro and Prieto Picudo (reds). Also, Yalumba Nursery has several varieties in quarantine and source blocks of new imports of clones of Albarino, Tempranillo and Vermentino.

There is also a possibility that your variety of interest has already been imported privately and is either in quarantine or in the ground. In Australia, unlike the USA, information on private imports is not in the public domain and the first that is known about a given variety being in the country is when a producer lists it for the first time in the WID or makes a public announcement. For example, the following varieties have appeared for the first time in the WID in recent years: Bianco d'Alessano, Blaufränkisch, Colorino, Lambrusco Maestri, Tintilia and Zweigelt. As an example of the latter, Jim Barry Wines at Clare announced in 2011 that they had imported the white variety Assyrtiko from Greece (the first small crop was harvested in 2013). Also, some importers of germplasm such as Chalmers Wines have been very willing to share information: for example, they are in the process of importing Falanghina, Grechetto, Pecorino, Ribolla Gialla and Ansonica from Italy.

Finally, check out the synonyms of

your variety of interest in a reference such as Robinson et al. (2012) *Wine Grapes* (Harper Collins). It might be that it is already here but under a different name. For example, Tinta Caida is a recent import but it has already been here for many years as Bonvedro.

Of course, this might not deter you from importing what might be a better clone of this variety if a suitable overseas supplier can be found. Some other recent 'discoveries' as a result of DNA research, described in 'Wine Grapes', that might be pertinent to Australian importers include: Malvasia Nera (Tuscany, Basilicata) is actually Tempranillo; Greco Bianco from Calabria is not the same as the Greco of Campania; and the Fiano of Puglia (now renamed Minutolo) is not the same as the Fiano of Campania.

Before going down the path of private importation, producers should be aware that it is an expensive and complicated process because of quarantine regulations.

Producers are well advised to consult someone who has experience in this field. The AWRI is able to provide details of such people in Australia and a potential supplier of germplasm in Portugal.

For further information, contact the AWRI Viticulture team, [viticulture@awri.com.au](mailto:viticulture@awri.com.au) Phone: 08 8313 6600. 