

Petit Manseng

By Peter Dry

Viticulture Consultant, The Australian Wine Research Institute



AWRI

BACKGROUND

Petit Manseng (pronounced peh-TEE mah-SONG) is used for both dry and sweet wines in the foothills of the Pyrenees, in the south-west of France. There is also a small area in the Languedoc. The total planted area in France in 2006 was 907 hectares, up from 574ha in 1999. It is the main white variety of quality in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques department with 25% of total vineyard area, and is best known for the wines of Jurançon and Pacherenc du Vicbilh. It is distinct from the variety Gros Manseng, which has larger berries and is used more for dry wines—but they are often grown together. There has been increased planting of both Mansengs in recent times in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques at the expense of other white varieties. Petit Manseng has been grown in Uruguay for many years—it was taken there by Basque settlers along with Tannat. There are also new plantings in California and Virginia (USA). In Australia, there are currently at least 12 wine producers in hot to cool regions. It has many synonyms including the following: Escriberou, Ichiriota Zuria Tipia, Mansein, Mansein Blanc, Mansenc Blanc, Mansenc Grisroux, Manseng Blanc, Mausenc Blanc and Petit Mansenc.

VITICULTURE

Budburst is early (similar to Chardonnay) but maturity is late. Bunches are small and loose. The small berries are thick-skinned. Petit Manseng is vigorous with semi-erect growth habit. Cordon training and spur pruning can be used, but it is generally cane pruned in France. Yield is moderate at best. It is moderately susceptible to downy and powdery mildews, but very tolerant of botrytis bunch rot. It is renowned for its ability to hang on the vine until late in the season (in France it may be picked as late as December) with good acid retention.

WINE

Wines can be made in sweet or dry styles. In France, sweet wines are produced by allowing fruit to hang on the vine—high sugar concentration can be achieved without the need for development of noble rot. In Australia, it is more commonly used for dry aromatic wines with some similarity to Riesling and Gewürztraminer. Wines have a firm acidity and good structure. Flavour descriptors include citrus, peach, pineapple, mango and cinnamon. Excellent wines have been produced in both cool and hot regions.

This is an extract from the manual developed for the Research to Practice on 'Alternative varieties: emerging options for a changing environment' (Tassie, L.; Dry, P.R. and Essling, M. 2010). For further information on this and other emerging varieties, contact Marcel Essling (marcel.essling@awri.com.au; tel. 08 8313 6600) at The Australian Wine Research Institute to arrange the presentation of this Research to Practice program in your region.