

MARZEMINO

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AWRI

BACKGROUND

Marzemino (pronounced marz-amino) is an old variety that may have originated in Veneto and subsequently spread to Trentino, Lombardy, Friuli and Emilia-Romagna. It is now grown mainly in Trentino where it is used in several Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC) areas, particularly in the Val Lagarina. There is also some in adjacent parts of Lombardy, particularly near Lake Garda, where it is often blended with other varieties; and in Emilia-Romagna and Veneto. The total area in Italy has declined in recent times from 1000ha in 2000 to 600ha in 2010. DNA profiling indicates that Marzemino and Lagrein are siblings; the parents being Teroldego and an unknown variety. Synonyms include Balsamina, Barzemin, Berzamino, Marzemina Cenerenta, Marzemina Nera and Marzemino Gentile. There are at least three producers of Marzemino wine in Australia, mainly in the King Valley, and one in New Zealand.

VITICULTURE

Budburst is early mid-season, and maturity is mid-season to late. Growth habit is erect and vigour is high. Bunches are medium, winged, and well-filled with blue-black medium berries. Flesh is slightly pink with neutral taste. The skin is said to be thin, but strong. Yield is good and regular with a tendency to overcropping. In Italy, cane pruning is most common but Marzemino is also reportedly suited to mechanised spur pruning. It performs best on low potential sites and expansive trellis systems that spread out the canopy. Both shoot thinning and bunch thinning are common. It is susceptible to powdery mildew and botrytis bunch rot—with variable reports on susceptibility to downy mildew and lime-induced chlorosis. There is clonal variation for bunch shape and sensory characteristics.

WINE

Marzemino is used for still and sparkling wines in Italy and Australia. Wines can have intense colour and aroma with good body and full flavour. Tannins are not high. The aftertaste can be slightly bitter. Descriptors include fragrant, fresh, grassy, herbal, red fruits, violets and sour cherry. Wines do not require long ageing but extended maceration can give long-lived wines. In Italy, Marzemino is usually blended with other varieties such as Sangiovese, Merlot and Barbera for DOCs of Trentino, Lombardia, Veneto and Emilia Romagna, e.g. Botticino, Cellatica, Garda, Garda Rosso Classico, Colli di Scandiano e di Canossa. It is also made as a stand-alone varietal for other DOCs, e.g. Trentino Marzemino, Merlara Marzemino, Refrontolo Passito and Breganze Marzemino.

For further information on this and other emerging varieties, contact Marcel Essling (viticulture@awri.com.au; tel. 08 8313 6600) at The Australian Wine Research Institute to arrange the presentation of the Research to Practice program on Alternative Varieties in your region.