

SCHÖNBURGER

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AWRI

BACKGROUND

Schönburger (pronounced SHERN-burger) is the result of a cross between Pinot Noir and Pirovano 1 (Chasselas Rose x Muscat of Hamburg) at the Geisenheim research centre in Germany. It was originally known as Geisenheim 15-114. It was released in 1979 and renamed after the town of Schönburg in the Mittelrhein. Mainly grown in the Rheinhessen, the planted area in Germany is very small. It has been adopted more enthusiastically by the English wine industry where it has done well in their cool climate. There might be as many as 50 ha in the UK. It is also grown in British Columbia (Canada), Washington and Oregon (USA) and South Africa but the areas are small. There are at least six producers of Schönburger wine in Australia, mostly in Tasmania.

VITICULTURE

Budburst is early and maturity is early to mid-season. Growth habit is upright and vigour is moderate. Bunches are medium and well-filled with medium, pink-coloured berries. Yield is low to moderate (similar to Riesling) and regular. The lack of acceptance of Schönburger in Germany is said to be due to its low yield, being much less than Bacchus, Kerner or Reichensteiner. Cane pruning is most common. It is tolerant of powdery mildew, downy mildew and botrytis bunch rot. The strong skin of the berries is said to give good protection against Botrytis so the harvest can be late. It is winter-hardy but prefers sheltered sites.

WINE

Acidity is relatively low but this is not usually a problem in cool climates. Wines are finely aromatic, Gewürztraminer-like, spicy and soft. If the wine lacks acidity, the muscat-like flavour becomes more dominant. Wines are said to be best with some residual sweetness.

For further information on this and other emerging varieties, contact Marcel Essling (rtp@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.