

PROSECCO

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BACKGROUND

Prosecco (pro-SEKK-oh) has been known in north-eastern Italy since at least the 18th century. However, there is now good evidence supporting an origin in the Istrian peninsula of Croatia. Previously it was thought that there were at least three different clones but recent DNA research has revealed that vines known as Prosecco comprise three distinct varieties now known as Prosecco, Prosecco Lungo and Malvasia Bianca Lunga. Prosecco and Prosecco Lungo have a strong genetic relationship. Prosecco was renamed as Glera in 2009 to distinguish the variety from the eponymous appellation. Synonyms include Briska Glera (Slovenia) and Teran Bijeli (Croatia). Prosecco is one of the main varieties of the Veneto region of north-eastern Italy, mainly grown in the province of Treviso (10,000ha) to produce sparkling wines in various appellations: Prosecco di Conegliano-Valdobbiadene DOCG, Colli Asolani Prosecco DOCG and Prosecco DOC. The total vineyard area in Italy has been estimated as 16,500ha (2010) but both Prosecco and Prosecco Lungo are included. Nevertheless, the proportion of Prosecco Lungo appears to be small. There are also small areas in Slovenia and Argentina. Prosecco is a relatively recent introduction to Australia. There are currently at least 21 wine producers in Australia, mainly in cool regions. King Valley has the most and the remainder are found in at least 11 other regions. There are 14ha planted in SA (Wrattenbully, Adelaide Hills, McLaren Vale and Currency Creek).

VITICULTURE

Budburst is early and maturity is late (although because it is often harvested at 9-10° Be it may be said to be mid-season). Vigour is high with sprawling growth habit. Bunches are medium to large and loose with medium thin-skinned golden yellow berries. Yield is moderate to high and regular. Because fruitfulness is high, bunch thinning may be required. There is clonal variation for both yield and vigour. Cane pruning is used in Italy but both spur and cane pruning have been successfully used in Australia. In Italy, Prosecco is said to be susceptible to fungal diseases, drought and millerandage but the Australian experience suggests that disease susceptibility is only moderate.

WINE

Wines are relatively neutral (particularly if yield is high) with light body. The best wines have a pleasing slightly lemony note and are lightly floral (Prosecco Lungo is spicier). Other descriptors include jasmine, citrus blossom, apple and pear. Clones differ in their degree of floral and fruity characters. Both still and sparkling versions are made. In Italy, Prosecco may be blended with Verdiso, Verdicchio Bianco or Garganega. Australian experience indicates that Prosecco loses acid rapidly during ripening and is more floral in cooler climates.

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