

## CORTESE

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### BACKGROUND

Cortese (kor-TAY-zay) has been grown in Piedmont, in north-east Italy, since the 17th century. Today it is the fifth most important variety of Piedmont and mainly grown in the south-eastern part of the province. It is best known in the DOCG Cortese di Gavi (Gavi di Gavi) and also used as a varietal in several DOCs: Cortese del Alto Monferrato and Cortese Colli Tortonesi. Synonyms include Bianca Fernanda, Corteis, Courteis, Courtesia, Cortesi and Raverusto. Cortese is also grown in Oltrepo Pavese (Lombardy) and Garda (Veneto). Garda Cortese DOC is produced in the hills near Lake Garda. Cortese may also be a minor component of DOC Bianco di Custoza, a blended white wine of the Veneto region mainly comprising Trebbiano Toscano, Garganega and Friulano. There were 2953 hectares planted in Italy in 2010. In Australia, there are currently at least three wine producers, in SA and Victoria.

### VITICULTURE

Budburst is mid-season and maturity is early to mid-season. Vigour is moderate with a semi-erect growth habit. Bunches are medium and well-filled with medium yellow-gold berries. Yield is good and regular. Cane pruning is used in Italy. Cortese has average susceptibility to downy and powdery mildews, but higher susceptibility to bunch rots. There is clonal variation in Italy with differences in wine flavour and structure, and suitability for sparkling wine—but there appears to be just the one clone available in Australia. Some reports suggest that yield control is necessary to avoid wines lacking in character. Also, acidity may be excessively high in cool sites.

### WINE

Cortese is used for both still and sparkling wine styles that are rarely of exceptional quality. Wines are pale lemon-white in colour, light with good acidity, crisp and elegant. The aroma is delicate, ranging from neutral to citrusy to notes of honey and stone fruit. The best wines have good structure and body. Some producers use malolactic fermentation to mitigate the variety's high acidity, but it is usually produced in a crisp, dry style.

*For further information on this and other emerging varieties, contact Marcel Essling ([marcel.essling@awri.com.au](mailto: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.*