

GRACIANO

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BACKGROUND

Graciano (grass-ee-AH-no) is an old variety of likely Spanish origin. The global area is relatively small with more than 70% found in Spain, particularly in the northern regions of Rioja and Navarra. It is very widespread around the Mediterranean with many synonyms: Bovale, Bovale Saro, Bovaledau, Cagliunari, Caldareddhu and Calda Recio (Sardinia, Italy), Courouillade and Morastell (Languedoc, France), Minustellu (Corsica, France), Monastrell Menudo (Spain), Tintilla de Rota (Jerez, Spain) and Tinta Miuda (Alentejo, Portugal). It is only in recent times that some of the above synonyms have been shown to be the one and same variety as a result of DNA analysis. Some other varieties have also been mistaken for Graciano, including Paraletta (which itself has been mistakenly called Carignan in Australia). Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that Graciano is related to Carignan (syn. Mazuelo). Graciano was more widely planted in Spain before the advent of phylloxera but it has since declined, probably a result of its low yield. A more recent appreciation of its contribution to Rioja blends has led to a modest expansion—but it still only makes up 2% of the total vineyard area of Rioja. It was also more widely planted in the Languedoc in the past. After Spain, the largest area of Graciano is found in southern Portugal. In Australia, Graciano has been grown at Milawa, Victoria, by Brown Brothers since the 1920s. Newer clones were introduced from Spain and California in the 1960s. The total area in Australia has always been very small with little prospect of significant expansion. Nevertheless, there are currently at least 42 wine producers in Australia (in more than 18 regions), mainly McLaren Vale, Barossa Valley, Margaret River and the Riverland of SA.

VITICULTURE

Budburst and maturity are late. Vigour is high with an erect growth habit. Bunches are medium to large and compact with small tough-skinned berries. Yield is usually low (half that of Tempranillo) and variable. It is normally spur pruned. Graciano is tolerant of powdery mildew and is also said to be drought tolerant.

WINE

Graciano wines are deeply coloured and rich in tannins. Must acidity is high and this is one reason why it is found in blends with lower acidity varieties such as Tempranillo. Wines have light to medium body unless picked very ripe. Wine descriptors include minty, spicy, dried herbs and dark fruits. In Europe, Graciano is usually blended with other varieties, for example, it adds freshness and aromatics to the Rioja blend with Tempranillo and Carignan. In Sardinia and Corsica, it is usually blended with Grenache or Carignan. In Australia, Graciano is used as a single variety or in blends with Tempranillo.

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.