

HARSLEVELU

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AWRI

BACKGROUND

Hárslevelu (harsh-leh-veh-loo) is an old white grape variety from Hungary (its earliest mention was in the mid-18th century). DNA analysis has revealed that it is an offspring of Furmint. Harslevelu literally means 'linden leaf' in Hungarian. Global area in 2010 was 1856 hectares, up 43 percent from 2000. More than 90 per cent of the area is found in Hungary where it is widely grown but perhaps best known for its blend with Furmint in the sweet Tokaji Aszu wines made from botrytised grapes. Approximately two-thirds of the Hungarian planted area of Harslevelu is found in the north-eastern Tokaj region. It is also important in the regions of Eger (eastern Hungary) and Somló (western Hungary). Main synonyms are Budai Feher, Feuille de Tilloul (France), Harslevelue, Harzevelu, Lindenblättrige (Germany, Austria), Lipolist (Croatia) and Lipovina (Czech Republic, Slovenia). Harslevelu is also grown in Slovakia, Romania and South Africa. The planted area in Australia is tiny; there are at least four wine producers, in Western Australia (Perth Hills, Geographe) and New South Wales (Hilltops and Southern Highlands).

VITICULTURE

Budburst is early to mid-season and maturity is mid-season (relatively late for a white variety). Vigour is low in WA but moderate elsewhere and growth habit is erect. Bunches are large and loose with medium berries. Yield is high and yield control may be necessary to achieve adequate ripening. Spur pruning is used in Australia. It is moderately susceptible to both powdery mildew and sunburn. Experience in WA suggests that Harslevelu is more suited to warm than cool climate regions.

WINE

Harslevelu is suitable for both dry and sweet wines—but it is now more often used for the former, even in Hungary. Wines are aromatic, light to full bodied and delicately spiced. Descriptors include 'linden honey' (in Europe), 'peach' and 'pear'. Acid retention in berries is good and consequently wines typically have a crisp finish. Harslevelu contributes perfume and spice to blends, notably with Furmint in Hungary. Wines have had good consumer acceptance in trials in WA.

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.