

DURIF

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BACKGROUND

Durif (dew-RIFF) was discovered in the 1860s in Isère (eastern France) in the experimental vineyard of Francois Durif, botanist and breeder. It was first mentioned in 1868 by ampelographer Victor Pulliat under the name 'Plant du Rif' as a variety propagated by said Durif. It is likely that Durif was an open-pollinated selection of Peloursin. DNA analysis in California in 1999 confirmed Peloursin as the female parent with Shiraz as the male. Durif seems to have been grown together with Peloursin from the time of its first commercial use, i.e., since the 1870s onwards. Since the 1960s, when there were approximately 400 hectares, Durif has virtually disappeared from France and is no longer recommended. The global area in 2010 was 3557ha, 80 percent of which was in the US, mainly California. In 1999, DNA analysis revealed that the majority of vines called 'Petite Sirah' in California were actually Durif, and a small proportion were Peloursin. There are also small areas of Durif in Mexico, Brazil, Chile and Israel. Synonyms are Dure, Duret, Gros Noir (Savoie, France), Petite Sirah (US), Serine des Maures and Sirane Fourchue; however, there is no officially recognised synonym in Europe. In the US, the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau allows Petite Sirah to be used as a synonym for historical reasons—but they do not allow alternative spellings, e.g. Petit/Syrah. Durif was imported in 1908 to Rutherglen, Australia by Francois de Castella. Peloursin may have been inadvertently introduced at the same time because some Durif vineyards have a significant proportion of Peloursin vines. All clones imported to Australia since the 1960s have proved to be Durif. There were 625ha planted in 2016 (up 25 percent from 2012) with 114 wine producers in more than 30 regions, mainly Rutherglen, Riverina and Barossa Valley.

VITICULTURE

Budburst is mid-season and maturity is mid to late season. Vigour is high with a spreading growth habit. Bunches are medium and compact with small berries. Yield is moderate. Spur pruning is used in Australia. Berries are susceptible to bunch rot, sunburn and shrivel. Durif is tolerant of mildews (not 'resistant' as claimed in some references).

WINE

Durif wines are well-coloured, full bodied and tannic with good ageing potential. Descriptors include dark fruits, black pepper and liquorice. It is mainly used for varietal wines in Australia and California—but is also useful as a blending component.

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.