

# ROUSSANNE

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## BACKGROUND

Roussanne (roo-SAHN) originated in the northern Rhone but has spread to other parts of France. It was first mentioned in the late 18th century. Its name is said to derive from the French word roux in reference to the russet colour of its ripe berries. DNA evidence has revealed a parent-offspring relationship with Marsanne. The global area planted in 2010 was 1746ha, close to 100% in France where the area has doubled since 2000. Synonyms include Barbin, Bergeron (Savoie), Fromental, Fromentau (Isere), Martin Cot (Savoie, Isere) and Petite Roussette (Hermitage). It is often blended with Marsanne in the still white wines of Hermitage, Crozes-Hermitage and Saint-Joseph; and in the still and sparkling wines of Saint-Péray. Roussanne is also permitted in the white wines of Chateauneuf-du-Pape and Cotes du Rhône and recommended in Languedoc, Roussillon, Provence, Loire and Savoie. There are small areas in Italy (Liguria, Tuscany), Portugal, Greece and USA (California, Oregon and Washington). Currently there are at least 64 wine producers in Australia, spread over more than 25 regions, mainly in Victoria and South Australia (25ha in 2015)—Barossa Valley, Canberra District, Yarra Valley and Rutherglen have the most producers.

## VITICULTURE

Roussanne is reputed to be a difficult variety to grow. Budburst is mid-season and maturity is mid-season to late (relatively late for a white variety). Vigour is low with an erect growth habit. Bunches are small to medium and well-filled with small berries. Yield is relatively low and irregular. Spur pruning is most often used in Australia. It is very susceptible to Oidium, Botrytis bunch rot and wind damage. Although bunches are sensitive to sunburn, some exposure is said to be necessary to ensure even ripening.

## WINE

Roussanne wines are medium- to full-bodied with crisp acidity and finesse. A textural palate is a common feature irrespective of source. Descriptors include 'peach', 'quince', 'apricot blossom', 'lime peel' and 'savoury'. With age, wines can develop 'honey' and 'butterscotch' characters. It is mainly used for varietal wines in Australia but can also be a useful blending partner with Marsanne and Viognier.

*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.*