

MENCIA

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BACKGROUND

Mencia (men-SEE-ah*) probably originated in Bierzo, Spain, in the province of Leon in the northern inland region of Castile (Castilla y Leon) where it is now mainly grown. It is also found in two other zones in the Galicia region, Ribera Sacra and Valdeorras. The global area in 2010 was 10,658ha: 77% in Spain and 22% in Portugal. It makes up almost 40% of the total planted area of both Leon and Asturias. Synonyms include Jaen, Loureiro Tinto and Mencía Pajalal. It has been shown by DNA profiling that Mencia is identical to the Jaen da Dao from Portugal, but the Jaen that is grown in southern Spain is a completely different variety. In Australia, there are at least four wine producers (in SA and Victoria) and 4ha planted in SA (McLaren Vale, Barossa Valley, Adelaide Hills).

VITICULTURE

Budburst is early to mid-season and maturity is mid-season. Vigour is moderate with an erect growth habit. Bunches are medium and well-filled-to-compact with medium berries. Yield is moderate. Spur pruning is used in Australia. Bunches are susceptible to bunch rot. Berry acidity is only moderate. Two clones are available in Australia.

WINE

In the Castile region, Mencia is regarded as a variety with good potential and diverse possibilities for winemaking, either for carbonic maceration wines or for those capable of ageing. It is also used in blends. Although not deeply coloured, it has good potential for high quality wines. Lighter styles of Mencia wine are fresh with intense fruit characteristics of blueberry, strawberries and raspberries, with some savoury notes. Medium to heavier bodied wine styles can vary from tannic oaky wines to softer, smooth styles, with strong berry fruit and herbal, savoury, gamey flavours.

**If you are in the habit of pronouncing place names in Spain in the Castilian manner; for example, Barcelona as barth-eh-lona, then you may prefer to pronounce this variety as men-THEE-ah.*

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.