

# Corvina

By Peter Dry, Emeritus Fellow,  
The Australian Wine Research Institute



## BACKGROUND

Corvina (kor-VEEN-uh) is an old red grape variety, perhaps known since the early 17th century. It was first described in 1818 and said to be widespread in Veneto, its place of origin in north-east Italy. Its full name is Corvina Veronese — but in Australia it is mainly known as Corvina. In Valpolicella it is blended with the higher yielding Rondinella and Molinara (including Amarone and Recioto styles where Corvina is typically 40-80%). In Garda DOC, Corvina may be 100%. Main synonyms are Corvina Comune, Corvina Gentile, Corvina Nostrana, Corvina Reale and Cruina. DNA analysis has shown that both Corbina and Corvinone are different varieties to Corvina; and that it is related to Garganega, and is also a parent of Rondinella. Corvina is practically unknown outside north-east Italy. The global area (2010) was 7496ha, 60% higher than in 2000, close to 100% planted in the Veneto. There is a small area in Mendoza, Argentina. The area in Australia is tiny and there are currently just three wine producers (Hilltops, Southern Highlands).

## VITICULTURE

Budburst is late and maturity is late. In the Hilltops region, target ripeness is typically not achieved until mid-April or later. Vigour is moderate to high with a semi-erect growth habit. Bunches are small to large depending on the clone, with small berries. Yield is low to moderate. Cane pruning is mainly used in Italy, but spur pruning has been used in Australia. Susceptibility to downy mildew, sunburn and drought is high. The berries have thick skins that are ideal for drying and protecting the grape from rot.

## WINE

Corvina produces light to medium-bodied wines with moderate colour and fresh acidity. Tannins are low to moderate. Descriptors include bitter almond and sour cherry. In some parts of Veneto, barrel ageing is used to add more structure and complexity to the wine. It has been said that the growers in Valpolicella began drying grapes artificially to compensate for the lack of good ripening weather in autumn and thereby created the Amarone and Recioto styles.

*For further information on this and other emerging varieties, contact Marcel Essling at the AWRI ([marcel.essling@awri.com.au](mailto:marcel.essling@awri.com.au) or 08 8313 6600) to arrange the presentation of the Alternative Varieties Research to Practice program in your region.*