

Grenache Blanc

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BACKGROUND

Grenache Blanc (a stable mutation of Grenache Noir) is an old variety that probably originated in Catalonia in north-east Spain, close to the region of Terra Alta. It is this region that has the greatest diversity of Grenache Blanc today and there is a long history of its use, particularly in Empordà near the border with France.

The largest planted areas are in France (4976ha in 2010) and Spain (approximately 2100ha); in the latter, Terra Alta (350-1000m elevation) has 33% of the world's Grenache Blanc. It is recommended in southern France including the Rhone (approximately 5000ha) and Roussillon where it is used as both a varietal and blender. Grenache Blanc is also grown in Portugal, Croatia, USA (California) and South Africa. Synonyms

include Alicant Belyi, Alicant Blanca, Belan (Croatia), Belan, Bernacha Blanca, Feher Grenache (Hungary), Garnatxa Blanca, Grkenas Mplan, Lladanor Blanca and Sillina Lanc. Grenache Blanc is a recent arrival to Australia (released from quarantine in the early 2010s) and there are currently fewer than 10 wine producers.

VITICULTURE

Budburst and maturity are mid-season (earlier than Grenache Noir). Vigour is moderate to high with erect growth habit. Bunches are large and well-filled to compact with medium berries. Yield is moderate to high. Like Grenache Noir it is pruned to spurs and reported to be both drought and heat tolerant — but leaf cover of bunches is desirable to protect from sunburn. Grenache

Blanc is susceptible to downy mildew and bunch rot, but less so to oidium. It is less sensitive to coulure than Grenache Noir and has good resistance to wind. In Europe it is often grown as bush vines.

WINE

Grenache Blanc is known for full-bodied, rich wines that age well. Because it is a low acid variety, it is often blended with other more acidic varieties such as Macabeu in Spain or Picpoul and Clairette in France. If used for a single variety wine, it should be picked early to achieve adequate freshness. In South Africa, it is used for a 'Cape White' blend with Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc. It has good potential in warm to hot regions in Australia.

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