

Grillo

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

BACKGROUND

The earliest record of Grillo (*grill-YOH*) was in 1873 in Sicily. DNA research has revealed that it is the natural offspring of Catarrato Bianco (an old Sicilian variety) and Muscat of Alexandria (syn. Zibibbo in Sicily). For this reason, Grillo is most likely to be Sicilian in origin. After phylloxera reached Sicily in the 1880s, Grillo was used to replace Catarrato Bianco. It is mainly restricted to Sicily and principally grown in the north-west, particularly in the province of Trapani where it is the main component of DOC Marsala. Grillo is used as a single variety in the DOCs of Alcamo, Contea di Sclafani, Delia Nivolelli, Erice and Monreale; and as a component in

blends in other DOCs. In recent times DNA research has revealed that Rossese Bianco grown in Liguria is actually Grillo. Other synonyms include Ariddu and Riddu. The global area (2016) was 6295ha (98% in Italy). Grillo is a relatively recent import to Australia and there are currently fewer than 10 wine producers (Adelaide Hills, McLaren Vale and Barossa Valley).

VITICULTURE

Budburst is early and maturity is mid-season. Vigour is moderate to high with erect growth habit. Bunches are medium, loose to well-filled with medium berries. Yield is moderate. It is reported to be both drought

and heat tolerant but more susceptible to oidium than average. There is clonal variation in both vigour and bunch size.

WINE

Table wines are crisp and savoury with good structure. Lighter styles have citrus blossom and peach notes, while more aromatic types may have passionfruit, grapefruit and herbs.

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.