

Picolit

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BACKGROUND

Picolit (*pee-coh-LEET*) is an old variety, originally grown in Udine, Treviso, Bassano and Vicenza provinces in north-east Italy. Its wines were known in western Europe from the 18th century. The planted area of Picolit declined significantly from the late 19th century due to phylloxera. Although revived somewhat since the 1960s, the area grown today is very small, mainly located in Friuli (121ha in 2016). Other than Italy there is a tiny area in neighbouring Slovenia (syn. Pikoliti). In Hungary, Picolit has been confused in the past with the varieties Balafant and Kéknyelű; but DNA analysis has confirmed that they are different. There are fewer than 10 wine

producers in Australia, located in King Valley, Bendigo, Heathcote, Gippsland, Mudgee and Adelaide Plains.

VITICULTURE

Budburst and maturity are mid-season. Vigour is high. Bunches are small and loose with small berries. Yield is low. Fruitset is poor due to infertile pollen, therefore this variety is best grown together with other varieties with more fertile pollen. According to a CSIRO reference, the clone available in Australia has moderate yield.

WINE

In Italy, Picolit is used almost exclusively

for sweet wines such as DOCG Colli Orientali del Friuli Picolit. The grapes are picked late and either dried on mats or racks or semi-dried on the vine. It is also used in blends in dry wines (e.g. Colli Orientali del Friuli Bianco) or sweet wines (e.g. Colli Orientali del Friuli Dolce). In Australia, most producers appear to be using Picolit for sweet wines. Descriptors include floral, apricot and peach.

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.