

Counoise

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BACKGROUND

Counoise (koon-wahz) is a very old red grape variety from southern France, known since the early 17th century. It is mainly grown in the southern Rhone. It is recommended in the southern Rhone and authorised in other departments to the east and west. It is permitted in appellations such as Chateauneuf du Pape (along with 12 other varieties), Cotes du Rhone Villages, Gigondas, Ventoux and others. Although just a minor variety in Chateauneuf du Pape, some producers prefer to include Counoise in the blend to add both spice and complexity. Synonyms include Coneze, Connoges, Connoise, Counese, Counoueiso, Guenoise, Quenoise and Rivier.

Counoise has been confused with Aubun but DNA analysis has confirmed that they are different varieties. Global area planted in 2010 was 443ha, mostly in France, with the area having declined from 845ha in the late 1980s. There are small areas planted in the USA: California and Washington. In Australia, the planted area is tiny with just five or so wine producers in regions including Canberra District, Frankland River and McLaren Vale.

VITICULTURE

Counoise has late budburst and mid to late ripening. It is vigorous with semi-erect growth habit. Bunches are medium with large berries. Yield is low to moderate. It is suitable for spur pruning and performs well in hot and

dry conditions. Although susceptible to botrytis bunch rot, it has low susceptibility to mildews.

WINE

Counoise wines tend to be low in colour, light bodied and with good acidity. Descriptors include fruity and spicy (pepperness). It is perhaps best in blends and in Australia is generally partnered with Shiraz and Grenache.

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.