

Bourboulenc

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

BACKGROUND

Bourboulenc (*boor-boo-lunk*) is an old white variety from Vaucluse (Provence), first mentioned in the early 16th century. Some have claimed a Greek origin, but this is not supported by DNA analysis. It is authorised or recommended in many departments in the south of France.

The area planted has declined significantly since the 1950s, with 597ha planted globally in 2010 (mainly in France). Bourboulenc is permitted in many AOC wines, such as Chateauneuf du Pape, Costieres de Nimes and Tavel in southern Rhone, and Bandol in Provence, but rarely makes up more than 20-30% of the blend. It is listed as the principal variety in some white blends of the Languedoc, Corbieres and Minervois (along with Grenache Blanc, Macabeu, Marsanne or Clairette).

The main synonyms include Blanquette (southwest France), Clairette à Grains Ronds (Gard), Clairette Dorée (Var, Herault), Malvoisie (Aude), Picardan and several spelling variants of Bourboulenc. Recent DNA analysis in Portugal has shown that it is the same as the local variety Pé Comprido.

In Australia, Bourboulenc appears four times under different names in James Busby's imports of 1832. It can be found as odd vines in old vineyards in Great Western, Rutherglen and perhaps elsewhere. The planted area is very small. There are at least two wine producers.

VITICULTURE

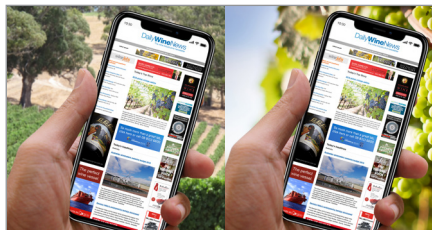
Budburst is mid-season with medium to late maturity. Vigour is moderate to high with semi-erect to spreading growth habit. Bunches are medium to large and loose to well-filled,

with medium thick-skinned berries. Yield is moderate to high. It may be spur-pruned and is reported to be both drought- and heat-tolerant. It is susceptible to oidium and downy mildew, but less so to bunch rot.

WINE

Bourboulenc has good acid retention under hot conditions. The best wines are aromatic, combining fruity and floral characters, with fresh acidity and firm structure. Descriptors include citrus, tropical fruit and apricot.

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.



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