

Alternative Varieties

- Sourcing key viticultural, wine and market information

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INTRODUCTION

The examples of sources have focused on those varieties originally from Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Greece because those countries are more likely to provide varieties suitable for a hot dry climate than those from northern Europe. Potentially, other Mediterranean countries offer a wealth of genetic material. Also, I have focused on sources in the English language. With regard to spelling, I have deleted all accents for convenience of data entry – as has been standard practice for many English-language sources. However, pronunciation should be based on an assumption that they are present, e.g. ‘al-bah-rin-yo’ not ‘al-ba-ri-no. The exception that I have employed relates to the *umlaut* because this can be legitimately replaced by an “e”, e.g. Müller Thurgau = Mueller Thurgau, Gewürztraminer = Gewuerztraminer, Spätburgunder = Spaetburgunder, and Schönberger = Schoenberger.

What is an ‘alternative’ variety?

The Australian Alternative Varieties Wine Show (AAVWS) definition is any variety other than Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Colombard, Grenache, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, Shiraz, Riesling and Verdelho. Even though this definition could be considered to be too narrow – e.g. varieties such as Ruby Cabernet, Petit Verdot, Muscat Blanc and Muscat Gordo are not “alternative” in that they have more tonnes produced than some of the ‘non-alternative’ varieties above – I will use the AAVWS definition in this presentation.

Why do we need ‘alternative’ varieties?

- Too much uniformity at present time
- Greater range of flavours etc
- Better suited to particular wine styles, e.g. rosé
- Better suited to climatic conditions
- Better adapted than existing varieties in terms of heat and drought tolerance?
- Better marketing and promotional opportunities

A new variety - How to go about it

A. Assume that you tried a wine from a particular variety in Greece, for example.

Is it already in the country? It may be difficult to determine because there is no complete record of all varieties, including private imports, in the public domain at the present time. You can only find out if a particular variety is in Australia by hearsay or when it first appears as wine, e.g. AAVWS or Wine Industry Directory.

Nicholas, P. (ed) (2006) National Register of Grapevine Varieties and Clones is a list of varieties and clones in Australian germplasm collections. It includes all ‘public’ introductions but the presence of a particular variety on this list does not necessarily mean that it is available for distribution. Nicholas, P. (ed) (2006) Grapevine Clones used in Australia has information on planting material available from “increase” blocks (typically 1/3 ha) through vine improvement programs in each state. There have been 300 clones selected for the National Register. Other sources are Australian Vine Improvement Association AVIA and Wine Industry Directory

(only those varieties that have been made into wine and listed by those producers who are in WID). The AAVWS list is accessible by wineshow entrants only.

Note: as at November 2009, there is a proposal to consolidate the CSIRO and SARDI collections under the control of a curator and that there be a list of all varieties and clones in Australia (including private importations if volunteered) in the public domain.

B. Alternatively, you have no particular variety in mind - but you wish to try something new. Climatic matching, e.g. homoclimate analysis, is a good start. Read Smart, R.E. and Dry, P.R. (2004) Vineyard Site Selection. In: Viticulture Volume 1. Resources. Second edition. Eds. P.R. Dry and B.G. Coombe (Winetitles), pp. 196-209.

If importing, it can take at 10+ years before wine is available to test the market.



Greco di Tufo bunch.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Sources: monographs (books, bulletins etc)

1. All varieties

Amerine, M. and Winkler, A. (1944) Composition and quality of musts and wines of Californian grapes. *Hilgardia* 15(6), 493-673 ^{vw}

Key: v - viticulture, w - wine, m - marketing

Anon. (1999) Commercial grape varieties in Virginia (Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 463-019)^{vw}

Clarke, O. (1995) Oz Clarke's Wine Atlas (Little Brewster and Co., USA)^{vw}

Clarke, O. and Rand, M. (2001) Grapes and Wines (Websters)^{vw}

Dry, P.R. (2004) Grapevine Varieties. In: Viticulture Volume 1. Resources. Second edition. Eds. P.R. Dry and B.G. Coombe (Winetitles), pp. 132-149^v

Higgs, D. (2005) Emerging varietal wines of Australia (BookSurge)^v

Hughson, A. (2008) World Wine. The Imported Wine Handbook (Longueville Books, NSW)^w

Iland, P., Gago, P., Caillard, A. and Dry, P. (2009) A Taste of the World of Wine (PIWP Ltd)^{vw}

Johnson, H. and Robinson, J. (2007) The World Atlas of Wine 6th edn^{vw}

Kerridge, G. and Antcliff, A. (1999) Winegrape Varieties (rev. edn) (CSIRO Publ)^v

Kennison, K. and Fennessy, R. (2009) Evaluation of Alternative Wine Grape Varieties in Manjimup, Western Australia. Preliminary Variety Report 2009. Dept. Agric. & Food, WA^{vw}

Kissler, J. et al. (1973) Evaluations of winegrape varieties for Lodi county. Bull 865, California. Ag. Exp Sta., Univ. of California^{vw}

Orffer, C. ed. (1979) Wine Grape Cultivars in South Africa (Human and Rousseau, Cape Town)^v

Ough C. et al. (1973) Evaluations of winegrape varieties for Madera, Fresno, Tulare and Kern counties. Bull 863, California. Ag. Exp Sta., Univ. of California^{vw}

Robinson, J. (1986) Vines, Grapes and Wines (Mitchell Beazley)^{vw}

Robinson, J. (ed.) (2006) Oxford Companion to Wine 3rd edition (OUP)^{vw}

2. Spanish and Portugese varieties

Boehm, J. et al. (year?) The Grapevine Varieties from Alentejo (CVR Alentejana)

The recommended and authorized varieties in the 8 sub-regions of Alentejo (Portugal)^{vw}

Cardoso, M. (1985) Castas Recomendadas – Vinho do Porto (Casa do Douro) (in Portuguese)^v

Lopez-Miranda, S. et al. (year?) La Poda del Verdejo. Fundamentos y Aplicaciones. (Instituto de Castilla y Leon) (in Spanish)^{vw}

Radford, J. (1998) The New Spain (Mitchell Beazley)^w

Rubio, J. et al. (2008?) Clones certificados de las principales variedades tradicionales de vid en Castilla y Leon (Instituto de Castilla y Leon) (in Spanish) Source: Yalumba Nursery^{vw}



Corks from Rioja, Spain.

3. Italian varieties

Anon. (year?) Catalogo Generale Vitis Rauscedo (in Italian)^{vw}

Bastianich, J. and Lynch, D. (2005) Vino Italiano – The Regional Wines of Italy (Clarkson Potter/Publishers, USA) Source: Yalumba Nursery^{vw}

Belfrage, N. (1999) Barolo to Valpolicella. The Wines of Northern Italy (Faber and Faber)^w

McKay, A. et al. (1999) Italian Winegrape Varieties in Australia (Winetitles)^{vw}

4. French varieties

Anon. (2006?) Catalogue des varieties et clones de vigne cultives en France (2006?) Institut Français de la Vigne et du Vin (INRA Montpellier) (in French)^{vw}

Boidron, R. et al. (eds) (1995?) Catalogue of selected winegrape varieties and certified clones cultivated in France (ENTAV-INRA-ENSAM-ONIVINS Source: Yalumba Nursery)^{vw}

Galet, P. (1979) A Practical Ampelography – translated by L. Morton (Cornell Univ. Press)^v

5. German varieties

Anon (circa 1985) Evaluation of German Grape Cultivars and German Viticultural Techniques in Okanagan Valley, BC (Vitic. Comm. of Association of British Columbia Grapegrowers)^{vw}

Eggenberger, W. et al. (1978) Weibau (Verlag Hubert Co., Switz.) (in German)^{vw}

Vogt, E. and Goetz, B. (1987) Weinbau (Ulmer, Germany) (in German)^{vw}

6. Other varieties

Lazarakis, K. (2005) The wines of Greece (Mitchell Beazley)^v

B. Sources: websites

1. Australia

www.chalmersnurseries.com

Good source of information with detailed notes on both viticultural and oenological characteristics.^{vw}

www.dpi.qld.gov.au/cps/rde/dpi/hs.xml/26_11447_ENA.html

The Viticultural Challenges of Alternative Varieties. Presentation by Mark Walpole at Qld College of Wine and Tourism June 2008.^{vw}

www.aavws.com

Australian Alternative Varieties Wine Show. Use this site to 'identify' emerging varieties with potential and watch trends over several years. You can contact producers of these varieties to learn more and to source wines of varieties of interest.^m

www.vinodiversity.com

A useful site with information on many wine industry topics - contains notes on many varieties. You can sign up to receive Vinodiversity News – the latest alternative variety news.^{vw}

www.winecompanion.com.au^w

www.yalumbanursery.com

www.vinefinders.com.au^{vw}

www.brownbrothers.com.au and other wine producers^{VW}

2. Germany

www.vivc.bafz.de/index.php

The Vitis International Variety Catalogue is an extensive searchable database maintained by the Institute for Grapevine Breeding, Geilweilerhof. The site contains mainly viticultural information (and some pictures) of thousands of grape varieties used internationally.^V

3. USA

www.ablegrape.com

An excellent site with "... 23 million pages of trustworthy wine information". It is a search engine and once a key word is entered, it provides links to many other sites. It also includes a help page with advice on searching.^{VWM}

www.vines.org

Self-described as "The Complete Encyclopedia and Database of Wines and Tastings, Grape Varieties, Viticulture and Vinification, Producers, Auction prices, Books and Weblinks. Named as one of the best 10 wine sites of the Web by the Wine Report".

Contains viticultural and wine information on 16 major and 127 minor wine varieties from many countries.^{VWM}

www.iv.ucdavis.edu

Videotaped seminars and events^{VW}

www.fps.ucdavis.edu

Foundation Plant Services FPS newsletters^{VW}

www.ngr.ucdavis.edu

National Grape Register (USA): information on hundreds of varieties that are available in both private and public collections in the USA. Also, the site includes the following:

- A list of commercial grapevine nurseries with links to their sites, many of which also have information on the varieties that they sell.
- A list of public grapevine collections in the USA with links to their sites.
- Links to many other sites concerned with variety evaluation, germplasm collections etc^{VW}

nimss.umd.edu/homepages/home.cfm?trackID=4034

Multi-state Evaluation of Winegrape Cultivars and Clones^{VW}

berrygrape.oregonstate.edu/fruiotgrowing/grapes/phy Nursy.htm

Information network covering grape and wine production in NW states with direct links to viticulture and oenology recommendations from Oregon State Univ., Univ. of Idaho, Wash. Sta. Univ. and USAD-ARS^{VW}

www.ars-grin.gov/npgs/searchgrin.html

The Genetic Resources Information network (GRIN) is a USDA-ARS database containing 4000 accessions^V

www.ngwi.org/

The National Grape and Wine Initiative (NGWI)^{VW}

4. UK

www.jancisrobinson.com

Jancis Robinson: useful information; some is free, need to become a subscriber in order to access most. Good for marketing information on future trends.^{VWM}

www.wineanorak.com^{VWM}

www.thewinedoctor.com^{WM}

www.decanterwines.co.uk^{WM}



5. Spain and Portugal

www.winesfromspain.com

Notes on 134 varieties – fairly brief but many varieties included here that are not found in other sources. Also wines and wineries and links to producer's sites.^{VW}

www.provedo.com

Spanish nursery site with brief notes on viticultural characteristics of < 20 winegrapes.^V

www.infovini.com

Useful site for information on grapes and wines of Portugal. Contains information on many varieties not found in other sources. Both viticultural and wine characteristics in note form with pictures of bunches and mature leaves. Also has brief notes on climate and soils of regions, and cultural practices.^{VW}

6. Greece

www.greekwinemakers.com

www.allaboutgreekwine.com/varieties

Good sites with useful information, eg. where varieties grown, climatic range, phenology, wine style and type, descriptors, body and colour, susceptibility to oxidation, how used in blends, degree of skin contact for whites, use of wood, potential quality, some comments on composition, change in popularity over time, best producers.^{VW}

www.elloinos.com/grape-varieties^{VW}

www.wineroads.gr^W

www.wine-searcher.com^W

www.thegreekwine.com/variety_index^{VW}

7. Italy

www.vivairauscedo.com

Italian nursery site with good notes on many Italian, Spanish and Greek varieties.^{VW}

www.enoteca-italiana.it (*mixture of Italian and English language*)

A very useful site with information on 260 varieties (mostly Italian varieties). Many varieties described that are not found in other sources. Information on viticulture (synonyms, ampelography, time of maturity, suitability for climate/soils, yield etc), oenology (evolution of wine styles, how used, wine types etc), distribution in Italy. Also, for each appellation in which variety is grown, there is information on the wine regulations of that appellation with links to sites of wine producers. ^{vw}

www.lavinium.com (*Italian language*)

www.vinoe.com (*Italian language*)

Information on 190 varieties (mostly Italian) - similar information to Enoteca Italiana. ^{vw}

8. Austria

www.winefromaustria.com ^{vw}

C. Sources: periodicals (journals, magazines, newspapers etc)

1. Refereed journals

- Useful sources of good quality (i.e. non-anecdotal) information from experimental methodology and results. ^{vw}
 - Viticulture: climate, soil, rootstocks, pruning method, trellis, spacing, yield components, phenology, fruit composition etc
 - Oenology: processing methods, wine chemistry, sensory evaluation

American Journal of Enology and Viticulture

Australian Journal of Grape and Wine Research

Bulletin de l'OIV

HortTechnology

Journal of American Pomological Soc.

Journal International des Sciences de la Vigne et du Vin

Vitis

2. Non-refereed technical and industry journals (English examples only) ^{vw}

Australian and NZ Grapegrower & Winemaker

Aust NZ Wine Industry Journal

Australian Viticulture

Wine Business Monthly (Australia)

Practical Winery and Vineyard (USA)

Vineyard and Winery Management (USA)

Wine Business Monthly (USA)

3. Consumer magazines ^{wm}

Decanter (UK)

Wine Spectator (USA)

Winestate (Australia and NZ)

4. Newspapers ^{wm}

5. Conference Proceedings ^{vw}

e.g. Rose, L. (2007) Creating our future - new varieties and styles. Proc. 13th Aust. Wine Ind. Tech Conf. pp. 134-141.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Development of new varieties requires investment in resources, time, money and energy and intellectual capacity.
- Ensure that you are evaluating the 'correct' variety. Get the DNA checked.
- If possible, import/evaluate more than one clone of the chosen variety.
- Wine assessment from locally-grown fruit is a critical tool for assessing new varieties.
 - micro vinification conducted under conditions as close as possible to large scale fermentations is a very useful guide
 - style assessment can take several years
 - ensure that the winemaker knows how to make the wine
- Traditional winemaking practices in region of origin may not allow full potential of variety to be expressed, e.g. Verdejo was originally made into a sherry-style wine because it is prone to oxidation. It wasn't until it was processed with non-oxidative techniques that it could produce a high quality table wine.
- Don't be biased against variety by past evaluation in Australia. It may have been assessed in the 'wrong' climate or from a poor clone. It only takes one excellent wine to indicate potential.
- A particular variety may be more suited to blending with other varieties than being used alone. In this case, evaluation of the variety as a 'varietal wine' may undervalue its potential. For example, many of the Portuguese red wine varieties probably fall into this category.
- When designing a marketing program, keep in mind that the X and Y generation are likely to be more adventurous and prepared to try new varieties than the more conservative older generations .
- A good story may be useful, e.g. Savagnin.
- Similarity of style or aroma/flavour with existing standards will assist marketing. A new variety will be easier to sell if you can say it tastes like... Shiraz, for example.
- There may be a few challenges with regard to marketability of the name.

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