

Savagnin

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BACKGROUND

Savagnin (*suh-vuh-YAN*) is a very old variety with place of origin likely to be Jura (north-east France). Based on DNA analysis, Savagnin is a parent of several well-known varieties including Sauvignon Blanc, Grüner Veltliner, Chenin Blanc and Verdelho; and thus grandparent of others; for example, Cabernet Sauvignon. Most intriguing is the discovery in c. 2000 that Savagnin and Pinot have a parent/offspring relationship.

Savagnin is known for its distinctive wines in Jura, particularly *vin jaune* (= yellow wine), an oxidised style similar to flor sherry (but not fortified). It is also used for conventional dry white wines in the Jura.

The global area in 2010 was 1989ha (with the largest area c. 500ha in the Jura). It is also grown in Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia and Czechia. Savagnin has many synonyms including Weisser Traminer (Germany and

Austria), Heida (Switzerland) and Traminer Bianco (northern Italy). Savagnin is a member of Traminer family and, unlike the other forms with aromatic and/or reddish berries, it is both non-aromatic and has white fruit.

It was planted in Australia from the late 20th century in the mistaken belief that it was the Spanish variety Albariño. After its true identity was determined in 2009, the number of producers declined. Currently, there are more than 80 wine producers in Australia, mainly in South Australia and Victoria, with McLaren Vale, Barossa Valley, Yarra Valley and Riverland being the main regions.

VITICULTURE

Budburst is mid-season and ripening is early. Vigour is moderate to high with semi-erect growth habit. Bunches are small to medium, well-filled to compact with small berries. Yield can be moderate. It is suitable

for spur pruning. Savagnin has average susceptibility to fungal diseases, is considered to be quite hardy and performs well in hot regions with good acid retention.

WINE

Savagnin has proven to be a versatile variety in Australia, with appealing dry and aromatic white wines in fresh styles with crisp acidity. Descriptors include citrus, white stone fruit and spices. It has great potential but suffers from similarity of name with the much better-known Sauvignon Blanc.

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.