

Viognier - A rising white star?

We are starting to see great interest in this relatively new variety, so perhaps it is time to give potential growers some background.

Pronunciation - it goes something like this: Vee-on-yay

Way back in 1986 Jancis Robinson described it in one breath as "a variety that works a magic of its own", and in the other "as having a capricious nature".

There is no doubt that this wonderfully aromatic and alluring wine has caught the imagination of the wine drinking public. If you haven't tried Viognier yet, shout yourself a bottle and enjoy it with your feet up on a Sunday afternoon. You will understand why it's catching on!

The Down Side

- Bud break is early with Viognier. Very early. It's right up there with Chardonnay as the earliest variety to burst forth in spring. So frost protection is essential in frost prone areas.

- Viognier is quite sensitive to wind. The shoots are rather floppy, making tucking tricky, and the flowers are sensitive to cold wet weather to the same degree as Gewürztraminer. So site selection is an important consideration.

- This variety ripens in late season, around the same time as Merlot or Syrah. This gives it a long growing season requirement that needs to be considered before planting.

- Yields are capricious and variable, according to the season - again, just like Gewürztraminer

The Up Side

- There are numerous references attesting to its excellent disease resistance, in particular its resistance to Botrytis. So whilst hang time might be long, Viognier seems to have the natural ability to go the distance.

- There's not much doubt that Viognier is fashionable and in high demand, both locally and in our export markets.

- It is one of the highest priced white table wines in world markets.

Clones

There are three commonly available clones in New Zealand. UCD 1 and 642 are two different selections from the same French vineyard. Early work suggests that 642 might be a little more productive than UCD1, but this could just as well be a site influence.

Clone HTK has recently been released here from Australia. This old Australian clone has been cleared of virus with heat treatment, and is now the most popular clone in Australia. To our knowledge the first commercial crops have yet to be harvested, so we will bring you more information on this clone when it comes to hand.

We are pleased to offer a selection of these clones for planting in 2006, and as always, Rex is happy to share his knowledge and provide expert advice if you are considering planting Viognier.

Varieties Available

Varieties available for delivery 2006.

Cabernet franc
Cabernet sauvignon
Chardonnay
Dolcetto
Flora
Gamay noir
Gewurztraminer
Malbec
Merlot
Montepulciano
Nebbiolo
Petit verdot
Pinot blanc
Pinot gris
Pinot noir
Pinotage
Riesling
Sangiovese
Sauvignon blanc
Semillon
Syrah
Tannat
Viognier

Can I take the opportunity to thank you all for your support during 2005 and wish you warm sunny days for Vintage 2006.

Rex.



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