

TASTE AND TALK #3 – WORKHORSE VARIETIES

What are Workhorse varieties?



WHAT IS A
WORKHORSE
VARIETY?

Workhorse - unglamorous but hardworking, steady, reliable

High yielding

Large areas planted but rarely appears on label

Some formerly used for fortified wines or distillation

Most winelovers have never heard about them

Many are on the decline - replaced by “international varieties”

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Airen: Global Rank 4

Spanish white variety

Until recently covered largest area globally of any variety

380,000 ha in 2000, now ~200,000 ha

Vineyards are being pulled out and replaced with Tempranillo

Can make light bodied, neutral whites

Blended with Tempranillo for lighter red wines

Used for bulk whites, distillation

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Grenache /Garnacha: Global Rank 8

Spanish origin but largest area planted in France

216,000 ha in 2000, now ~150,000

Long history in Australia, mostly SA

*High yielding - “Port”, basic reds, Vine pull,
Old vine classics, GSM*

Is McLaren Vale GSM the best Low -mid priced option?

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Carignan - Mazuelo

From NE Spain, but mostly grown in France

Globally 127,000 ha in 2000, 47,000 ha in 2016

Main Culprit in 'European wine lake'

Carignan Renaissance

Can make fine wine from older vines

Most Aussie 'Carignan' is actually Bonvedro

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Malbec Cot

From Cahors, SW France, now best known in Argentina

Globally 26,000 Ha in 2000, 52,000 ha in 2016

Long serving workhorse of Argentina

Gained attention in export markets as cheap red

Now recognised as making superior reds when handled carefully

Used in Australia for blends and varietals

Popularity dropped away by end of 20th Century

Now on the rebound

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Chenin Blanc

From the Loire Valley, formerly largely grown in S Africa

45,000 ha in 2000, 32,000 ha in 2016

Fall mainly in S Africa

High yielding in hot irrigated conditions

Swan Valley ‘white burgundy’

Can make age-worthy whites, dry off dry, sweet

Vouvray, Coriole

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