

White wine varieties for the  
Foothills: How far off the beaten  
trail can we go?

# Foothill Grape Day 2012

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# A Short History of Varieties

- Historically many varieties
- In the modern industry, the number of varieties was reduced dramatically, particularly in the 70s and 80s
- Now, only 10 varieties comprise 80% of the varietal wine business
- In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, more diversity is being sought

# Why Diversify?

- Alternative varieties:
  - Blending - provides an opportunity to blend with major varieties
    - Improve color, tannin, mouth-feel, flavor
    - Stay under 25%, no name recognition challenges
  - Stand-alone – provides excitement in the tasting room
    - Tells a “new story”
    - Engages the consumer
  - Wine club perk “exclusive”

# Conditions are right for Diversity

- People say ABC
  - “Anything but Chardonnay” (not true but...)
- Millennials are curious
  - “Equal opportunity” consumers
- Imports are emphasizing indigenous varieties
  - Help to tell the story (BevMo, Trader Joe’s, Cost Plus)
- Shipping laws assist “distribution”

# Grower Criteria

- Budburst not too early
  - Ripening not too late
  - Rot manageable
  - Fruitset not too unreliable
  - Yield is acceptable
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- Some of these indigenous varieties are being grown in small regions so specific conditions of adaptation are not known

# 4 Categories of “New” Possibilities

- What is old is new again
- Recently inducted into the “Made It” club
- Newly released
- The coming flood

# Second chance

- Riesling, Gewurzt
- Chenin blanc (esp in the Delta)
- Green Veltliner = Gruner Veltliner (voila!)
- Aleatico
- Pinot blanc

# Made It to the “Bigs”

- Pinot Gris/Grigio
- Viognier
- Marsanne
- Roussanne
- Grenache blanc



# Waiting in the Wings

(planted at Kearney Research Extension Center)

Arneis

Albillo real

Bianchetta Travigiana

Coda di Volpe

Cortese

Erbaluce

Falanghina

Fiano

Forastera

Greco di Tufo

Moscato Giallo

Parellada

Petit Manseng

Picolit

Ribolla Gialla

Viozinho

# More Waiting...

- Albariño
- Auxerrois
- Biancu Gentile
- Verdejo
- Verdelho
- Vermentino

# Applying for a Visa

- Carricante
  - Catarratto
  - Grecanico
  - Grillo
  - Inzolia
  - Fiano Minutolo
  - Verdicchio dCdJ
  - Vernaccia di San G
- Loureira
  - Godello
  - Timorasso
  - Moschofilero
  - Assyrtiko
  - Torrontes

# The Future

- Opportunities
  - Wealth of material in the U.S.
  - Wealth of material waiting to be imported
  - Wine drinkers are willing to give them a try
- Challenges
  - Sorting out the “best”
  - Gaining enough confidence to invest financially

# Two Suggestions

- **A database of wines indicating who is making what**
  - Help consumers locate varieties of interest
  - Labeled variety vs blending
- **A wine tasting event dedicated to Alternative Varieties**
  - Aussies have the Australian Alternative Varieties Wine Show
  - Not focused on a variety or region
  - Only criterion for inclusion is the lack of importance (acreage/tonnage) of a variety

# Sources of Variety Information

- *Wine Grape Varieties of California* –
  - UC Ag & Natural Resources
  - <http://iv.ucdavis.edu>
- *Vines, Grapes and Wines*
  - Jancis Robinson
- *Catalogue of Selected Wine Grape Varieties and Clones Cultivated in France* (in English)
  - French Government Offices (UC FPS)
- **Various variety books**
  - Australia, South Africa, Italy

# Information on “Alternative” Varieties

- Bastianich, Joseph and David Lynch. 2002. *Vino Italiano: The Regional Wines of Italy*. Mitchell Beazley, London, 528 p.
- Belfrage, Nicolas, 1999. *Barolo to Valpolicella: The Wines of Northern Italy*. Faber and Faber, London, 368p.
- Belfrage, Nicolas. 2003. *Brunello to Zibibbo: The Wines of Tuscany, Central and Southern Italy*. Mitchell Beazley, London, 493 p.
- Mayson, Richard. 2003. *The Wines and Vineyards of Portugal*. Mitchell Beazley, London, 354 p.
- Radford, John. 1998. *The New Spain: A complete guide to contemporary Spanish wine*. Mitchell Beazley, London, 224p.
- All available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)