



The International Wine Review

November/December 2013

Report #39: The World of Grenache

Introduction



Grenache is undergoing a significant transformation from its previous reputation as a work-horse grape used to produce inexpensive field blends and Port-like wines. Today growers and winemakers around the world are taking a new look at the grape, and many are now producing outstanding Grenache-based blends, ultra-premium single varietals, and high quality rosés. Exciting old vine Grenache wines are also being crafted from revitalized vineyards in several countries. Today the principal

growing areas of Grenache include Australia, California, Washington State, the southern Rhone and, of course, Spain, Grenache's original home.

In our 2006 **Report #3 Grenache** we noted that the grape was not well known to most wine enthusiasts, despite its widespread plantings. Since that time, the quality transformation of Grenache has continued to advance, and that is the focus of this new report. We explore the history of Grenache, beginning in Spain, and its rise in popularity after Europe's phylloxera epidemic at the end of the 19th century. We examine the challenges of growing Grenache and making the wine. We present the different styles of Grenache emerging in each of the major growing regions and the principal varieties used in Grenache blends. We also review over 300 single varietal and Grenache blends, identifying a cadre of producers at the top of their game. In virtually all the wines tasted for this report, Grenache is either the sole variety or the principal grape in the blend.

While traditionally grown as a blending grape, today one finds both single varietals and high quality blends of Grenache with Carignan, Cinsault, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Tempranillo, and other varieties. Some of today's most red wines are made of mostly Grenache, including wines made by

In this Issue

Introduction.....	Cover
History of Grenache.....	3
Grenache Today.....	3
In the Vineyard.....	4
In the Winery.....	7
Styles and Flavor Profiles.....	9
Food and Wine Pairing.....	10
Wine Reviews and Ratings.....	12
• France.....	12
• Spain.....	24
• United States.....	31
• Australia.....	34

Chateau Rayas in Châteauneuf du Pape, Clos Erasmus in Priorat, Clarendon Hills in Australia, Saxum and Tablas Creek in Paso Robles, and Betz in Washington State.

While under the right conditions Grenache can make a superb single varietal, it is still most commonly found as part of a blend. As a consequence, Grenache takes on many different characteristics, depending upon the percentage of Grenache in the blend, its blending partners, and its origin. Grenache is somewhat of a chameleon, changing its expression based on where it's grown. In our tastings, Grenache has usually played a leading role and has given many of the wines a vibrant and often spicy, red fruit character that adds charm to most blends along with alcohol. In other cases, it plays more of a support role in which darker fruit varieties, earth and herbal notes define the character of the wine. Syrah, for example, contributes purple and black color to Grenache and adds structure, density and power that often dominates the Grenache. On the other hand, Mourvèdre contributes acidity, which Grenache often lacks in sufficient quantities, and adds

Continued on page 2

Introduction

Continued from page 1

definition, color and aromatic complexity. Cinsault contributes suppleness, perfume and fruit when blended with Grenache.

Grenache likes heat and does well in hot dry growing conditions. It grows on rocky, clay, sand and granitic soils, as well as on limestone. Grenache is a vigorous variety and a prolific producer of fruit. When over cropped it produces thin, astringent dilute wines lacking in charm and character. But, if managed effectively in the vineyard and skillfully crafted in the winery, Grenache produces outstanding wines of real character, especially when made from the fruit of old vines.

People around the world are passionate about Grenache in all its forms. In addition to single varietals and blends Grenache makes delicious sweet wines (Vin Doux Naturel) in Banyuls and Rivesaltes in France's Roussillon region and in Catalonia. It also makes soft, fruity rosés in Navarra and excellent sparkling rosés in the Cava appellation of Utiel-Requena in Mediterranean Spain. In preparing this report, we had the opportunity to taste the many expressions of Grenache, and we present 350 of these in the tasting notes and ratings at the end of the report. The wines of Grenache Blanc, a mutation of Grenache Noir, are reviewed in a separate article at www.iwinereview.com.

Grenache Statistics Reports on Grenache plantings are notoriously unreliable. It's not uncommon to read about there being 300 thousand hectares of vines in the world and 200 thousand in Spain alone. Part of the explanation, aside from sloppy research, is the rapidity with which old vines have been ripped out in several countries. In addition, France, the largest producer of Grenache, does not usually report plantings by grape variety. In this report, we have mostly relied on primary data sources on Grenache plantings: In Spain, the Ministry of Agriculture's *Encuesta de Cultivos and Datos de las DOPs de Vino* and, especially, the *Informe Vitícola*, published by ENESA, as well as the web sites of the Denominaciones de Origen (DOs). In France, the websites of the various Appellation d'origine Contrôlée (AOCs), the AOC entries in the French Wikipedia, and the website vins-rhone.com. In California and Washington, the USDA *Crop Reports* for 2011 and 2012. And, in Australia, the *Vineyard Estimates* of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Since this is a worldwide report, all plantings are reported in terms of hectares (1 ha = 2.47 acres).

Acknowledgements. This report could not have been written without the collaboration and support of many individuals across the globe who were more than willing to share with us their knowledge and experience of Grenache. In particular, we would like to thank Bob Betz, MW, Joel Butler, MW, Christopher Cannan, Mark Davidson and Patrick Mata. for reading and commenting on drafts of the report. We also deeply appreciate the rich information and data on Grenache provided by Sean Boyd, Neil Collins, Andrew Holod, Alain and John Junguenet, Lucas Paya, Jens Riis, Angela Slade, and Matthew Stubbs, MW. We are most indebted as well to the many importers and distributors, large and small, who made samples of Grenache wines available for our tasting. Without their help we could not have fully appreciated the exciting Grenache-based wines being produced around the world today.

Mike Potashnik and Don Winkler

The i-WineReview is published by the International Wine Review, LLC. Our office is located at 6625 Old Chesterbrook Road, McLean, VA 22101. Our email is: info@iwinereview.com Rates for one-year subscriptions are \$69 for the online edition and \$99 for 1 year combined online and print subscriptions. Commercial subscriptions are also available for \$149/year. Subscriptions include exclusive access to all online resources of i-winereview.com. Special group rates are available to wine clubs and wine schools. Contact us about eligibility and rates. Subscriptions may be purchased online at www.i-winereview.com Individual reports are also available for \$20. Reproduction of the material contained herein, including copying, without written permission is prohibited by law. Media, wine importers, distributors and retailers may use brief portions of this material in its original form if attributed to the International Wine Review.

Previous Wine Reports

Issue 1	California Petite Sirah
Issue 2	Red Table Wines of Portugal
Issue 3	Grenache Wines
Issue 4	Syrah
Issue 5	Malbec: Argentina's Magnificent Malbec
Issue 6	The Wines of Southern Italy: From Quantity to Quality
Special Report	Portugal: The Douro Boys and Barca Velha
Issue 7	New Zealand's Exciting Pinot Noirs
Issue 8	The Wines of Ribera del Duero
Issue 9	Champagne
Issue 10	Unoaked Chardonnay: It's More Than Wood
Issue 11	2005 Bordeaux Crus Bourgeois
Issue 12	California Petite Sirah - Syrah Update
Issue 13	The Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave
Special Report	Introduction to Sherry
Issue 14	The World of Sparkling Wines and Champagne
Issue 15	The Wines of Chianti Classico
Issue 16	Oregon Pinot Noir
Issue 17	Sauvignon of the Loire
Issue 18	Wines of Navarra
Issue 19	Wines of Greece: Assyrtiko and Santorini
Issue 20	The Santa Lucia Highlands
Issue 21	The Chilean Wine Revolution
Issue 22	Grapes and Wines of the Western Loire
Issue 23	Ribera del Duero Revisited
Issue 24	The New Wines of Portugal Double Issue
Issue 25	The Wines of Austria
Issue 26	The Diverse Wines of Argentina Double Issue
Issue 27	Sweet and Dessert Wines of the World
Issue 28	The Wines of Priorat
Issue 29	The Wines of Monterey County
Issue 30	The Wines of South Africa Double Issue
Issue 31	Brunello di Montalcino
Issue 32	The New Wines of Israel
Issue 33	The Wines of Paso Robles
Issue 34	Champagne Revisited
Issue 35	The Wines of Soave
Special Report	South African Chenin Blanc
Issue 36	The Wines of Santa Barbara
Issue 37	The Wines of Sicily
Issue 38	The Wines of Washington State



These reports are available online at www.iwinereview.com