

Sylvaner



Origin

With the translation of its official designation in German as “Green Silvaner”, it originated from a chance cross between Traminer and Österreichisch-Weiß, an old variety from the area around Vienna that is similar to Veltliner. In the seventeenth century, the variety presumably came from Austria to Germany. In 1659, it was mentioned for the first time in Franconia, which today is regarded as the center of Sylvaner. The variety arrived in Alto Adige in 1880. The first vineyards were planted in the Isarco Valley at the time at the recommendation of Edmund Mach, the director of the research center at San Michele all'Adige. Up to this day, the old spelling of “Sylvaner” rather than “Silvaner” has been maintained in Alto Adige.

Distribution

The variety has spread exclusively in Central Europe and is cultivated on around 6,700 hectares (16,556 acres). In Germany, it was the most important grape variety up until the 1950s, and today it is still planted there on 4,700 hectares (11,6154 acres), predominantly in Rheinhessen and Franconia. In France, it is cultivated primarily in Alsace (1,000 hectares/2,471 acres), while Switzerland has around 250 hectares (618 acres), primarily in Valais. They are followed by Slovakia (200 hectares/494 acres) the Czech Republic, Austria and Hungary (37 hectares/91 acres). In Alto Adige, Sylvaner is regarded as the leading variety in the comparatively cool cultivation area of the Isarco Valley and is grown only there (68 hectares/168 acres). The area of cultivation has declined slightly, since in 1994 there were still 106 hectares (262 acres) recorded.

Vines

The medium-sized bunches are cylindrical to shouldered. Depending upon the vigorousness of the growth, the grape structure may be more compact or looser. The yellowish-green berries have a thin skin and a mucilaginous berry pulp. The variety flourishes best in sunny locations at an elevation of 500 to 700 meters (1,600 to 2,300 feet) above sea level. At lower locations, the acidity levels often drop too low.

Wine

Sylvaner wines have aromas of ripe apples, white peaches, mint, and meadow hay. The wines from the Isarco Valley distinguish themselves through a good fullness and acidity structure. They can also turn out to be mineral-rich.