

New Varieties Will Help Clear Australian Wine Glut

The Australian wine industry is facing falling prices and oversupply after a decade of strong growth. Some grapegrowers and wineries are using varietal diversification to overcome some of the problems.

January 24, 2006 (FPRC) -- After a decade of massive new vineyard plantings some sections of the Australian wine industry are facing problems. There are reports that big wine companies are refusing to take mainstream varieties. One solution is to grow grape varieties that are more in demand.

Wine writer Mr Darby Higgs believes that new varieties will play a role in helping the wine industry work through the current problems.

Speaking at the publication of his new book on emerging varietal wines Mr Higgs said "The wine industry is driven by consumer choice, and the industry needs to adapt.

"Consumers are becoming more aware of these new varietal wines, and are demanding something different, Mr Higgs said.

"Winegrape growers are confronted with lower prices or no market at all for their 2006 vintage.

Growers of the pinot grigio, however have no such problems. This variety, relatively new to Australia, is in short supply.

Industry leaders like Casella Wines believe that pinot grigio will be the next big thing in Australia. Casella are planning to market Australian pinot grigio in a big way in the US, building on the success of its yellowtail brand.

Over the past decade some of the innovators in the industry have been introducing new varieties, and reviving some old favourites.

"There are now well over a hundred different grape varieties being used commercially in Australia. Some are obscure, and will probably remain so, but there are about two dozen that will make an impact in the next couple of years.

"While we will still see plenty of chardonnay, shiraz and cabernet sauvignon on our supermarket shelves, room will have to be made for pinot grigio, viognier and verdelho among the whites. Petit verdot, sangiovese and tempranillo will be pushing for space in the red wine section," Mr Higgs concluded.

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