

Riesling



Origin

White Riesling originated from a cross between Gouais Blanc, a wild vine (*Vitis sylvestris*), and Traminer. It was mentioned in writing for the first time in 1435 in Rüsselsheim near Mainz and spread after 1500 to all of Germany. The first vines had already come to Alto Adige by 1840. The corresponding plant material originated from Rheingau. The first noteworthy vineyards came into existence around 1850 in Bressanone and Merano, and in 1860 in Bolzano. After the First World War, things regarding this variety were quiet again until after 1950 when, in the false belief that it was frost-resistant, it was planted on around 40 hectares (99 acres) in the southern Bassa Atesina. Today, it has also nearly disappeared from these locations as well. But around 2000, winegrowers in the Val Venosta and the Isarco Valley rediscovered Riesling once again. In Alto Adige, the variety also carries the name “Rhine Riesling”, presumably in order to distinguish it from “Italian Riesling” which, in any case, has in the meantime disappeared.

Distribution

Today, the variety is planted worldwide on nearly 64,000 hectares (158,147 acres). The unchallenged leading country for Riesling is Germany, with a current area of cultivation of 24,000 hectares (59,305 acres). The next places are held by Romania (6,200 hectares/15,321 acres), USA (4,600 hectares/11,367 acres), France (Alsace 4,000 hectares/9,884 acres), Australia 3,200 hectares/7,907 acres, South Africa (3,000 hectares/7,400 acres), Ukraine 2,500 hectares/6,178 acres, followed by Austria, and then Moldova (1,400 hectares/3,500 acres) and New Zealand (1,000 hectares/2,500 acres). In Italy, Riesling is only found in Lombardy, with

200 hectares (494 acres), followed by Alto Adige with 108 hectares (267 acres) and Trentino with 46 hectares (114 acres). The vineyards in Alto Adige are located in Oltradige, the Isarco Valley, the Val Venosta, and the area around Merano.

Vines

The bunches are small to medium-sized, for the most part shouldered and, with newer clones, with loose berries. The greenish-yellow berries have black dots. When grown at higher elevations (550 to 800 meters/1,800 to 2,600 feet above sea level), this late-maturing variety requires sunny and, at the same time, well-ventilated locations. At lower elevations, the aromas do not develop to their full potential. Soils with a great deal of shale lend the wines their mineral-rich tones. With the espalier training, attention must be paid that the grapes are not exposed to direct sunshine.

Wine

Riesling wines distinguish themselves through their fruity acidity. The aromatic qualities lie between citrus fruits (grapefruits and oranges) and stone fruit (peaches and apricots), and from time to time passion fruit can also be made out. Notes of geraniums and lilies of the valley are typical. The juicy wines will sooner or later demonstrate so-called “oily tones”. In contrast to other regions, Alto Adige Riesling is not defined by residual sugar. Also, no late-harvest wines have thus far been produced from it here. There are only occasional locations in Alto Adige that produce expressive Riesling wines.