

Pecorino

Synonym: Arquitano, Greco Bianco, Pecorello Bianco, Norcino, Pecorina Arquetanella, Pecorino di Osimo, Promotico, Uca delle Pecore, Vissanello

Commonly mistaken for: none.

Origin: Planted widely in the Marche region in the nineteenth century, it faded into obscurity in the twentieth century before being revived by several far-sighted individuals in the 1980s. The name Pecorino derives from the Italian for sheep – pecora – and does not refer to a cheesy taste but to the shepherds who would eat the grapes.

Agronomic and environmental aspects: A rather unproductive variety, which has a sterile basal bud so pruning systems such as guyot or the traditional Abruzzo pergola is commonly used. Best suited to clay-based soils; dislikes high lime content. High vigour rootstocks that are lime tolerant are preferred. It is an early ripener

Diseases, pests and disorders: The variety offers high disease resistance thanks to its thick skins.



Description:

Growing Tip:	open, slightly bristly, yellowish-green and can have a bronze tinge around the edges.
Leaf:	Small to medium, orbicular, round or three-lobed, closed lyre petiolar sinus with very overlapping edges.
Bunch:	medium-small, cylindrical and sometimes with one wing, compact.
Berry:	Medium-small, spherical, slightly bloomy, medium thick skins which are very astringent and bitter. Juicy pulp with intense flavour.
Vegetation growth habit:	semi-erect
Vigour:	medium-low
Average bunch size:	180-230g (Italy) 200g (Merbein 2017/2018)
Average bunches per shoot:	2

Growth stages:

Time of budburst:	medium
Time of flowering:	early
Time of veraison:	medium
Time of harvest:	early

Wine characteristics:

Pale yellow coloured wine. Dry, medium to full bodied wine that is delicately aromatic, offering aromas of apple, pear and spice. It offers great structure and high, crisp acidity but can often be high in alcohol (14-14.5% alcohol). Pecorino can make very high quality still wines capable of ageing. It also has potential for making sparkling of undoubted quality.

Australian Experience:

Pecorino is a completely new variety to Australia so this is the first data recorded on the grape and wine. Pecorino VCR 417 and VCR 485 were selected in 2011 and released from quarantine in 2015, the mother rows were planted in 2015 and 2016 on single bi-lateral cordon VSP with 4 foliage wires at the Chalmers Merbein Vineyard in the Murray Darling region.

Viticulturally very sound, easy to handle in the vineyard. Sprawling but fairly low vigour, even canopy. Yields are high and fruit zone is low hanging and can be congested so it benefits from bunch thinning. Bunches are very compact on both clones at the Merbein vineyard. Incredibly full flavoured grapes - the most intense tasting grapes ever encountered by any of the team at Chalmers. Juice is delicious. Skins are thick and very bitter/astringent tasting. It was difficult to taste for flavour ripeness because of the skin bitterness. We picked later when the bitterness subsided but in the end the wines were high alcohol. In future we may pick earlier as we have pick and whole bunch press so the skin bitterness won't have a lot of time to leach. If machine picking this could be an issue in warmer areas where sugar creeps up before physical ripeness.

Juice a nice green colour from the press, medium to low oxidation, VCR 485 juice tasted fine and delicate, VCR 417 tasted broader, with no acid adjustment required for either wine.

Ferments produced some sulphides with some acceptable sulphides remaining in the finished wines. Resulting wines are both full-bodied, rich and intense with characters of honey, white flowers, fleshy yellow fruit, mealy and pine notes too. Great potential for production here. High natural acid so good for warm climates, also massive flavour intensity so higher yields not causing a quality problem which is a bonus for the bottom line.

Available Clones:

Pecorino VCR 417

- Cluster: medium-big size, cylindrical, elongated, with a very protruding wing (almost like a second cluster), semi-loose
- Berry: medium size, thick and consistent skin, golden yellow with greenish hues
Agronomical features: good fertility (as well as the basal fertility). This gives a good-to-excellent productivity.
- the must has an excellent content in sugar and a very good total acidity,
- this biotype gives straw-yellow wines with greenish hues, intense fruity-floral bouquet, fresh, slightly spicy in the mouth the high acidity is outstanding, supported by the excellent structure, which gives a sensation of softness
- very persistent aftertaste, thanks to a slight fruity-floral echo that recalls the olfactive sensations, with a delicate and very agreeable almond tail.

Pecorino VCR 485

- Good vigour
- Cluster: medium-to-small, cylindrical-pyramidal, slightly elongated, semi-loose, with 2-3 medium-to-short wings, seldom with one more developed wing
- Berry: small, thick and consistent skin

Maturity Data Clonal Comparison: Chalmers Merbein Vineyard

	6/2/17	13/2/17	20/2/17	27/2/17	6/3/17	13/3/17
Pecorino VCR 417						
Baume	9.4	12.1	12.8	13.6	15.0	15.4
pH	3.08	3.4	3.32	3.58	3.70	3.81
TA	15.1	9.1	8.1	8.5	6.2	6.2
Pecorino VCR 485						
Baume	10.3	12.0	12.8	13.2	14.0	15.4
pH	3.15	3.3	3.54	3.59	3.7	3.73
TA	14.8	10.3	7.5	9.6	6.8	6.5