

## **SYRAH/SHIRAZ**

### Introduction

One of the so called noble black grapes and one of the oldest, whose origins and spiritual home were in the Northern Rhone. Today the vineyards of this area are still small and mainly family owned. They are etched into the steep valley sides on narrow terraces and the region's most famous wines are the deep flavoured and long lived reds, Hermitage and Cote-Rotie.

### Grape Production

Syrah is sensitive to heat (both too much and too little). The grape is late budding but early ripening so a hot climate will push the grapes into a state of over-ripeness very quickly. Drought can be a problem in Australia and older vines with deeper roots produce the best wines. Vigorous vine that requires rocky well drained soils. Barossa has sandy soils which have helped keep the vines phylloxera free.

### Countries of Production

The vine was taken to Australia, probably in 1832 and rapidly made itself at home there where it became known as 'shiraz' and now makes some of the most desirable wines, particularly from McLaren Vale, the Barossa and the Hunter Valley. Often in Australia it is blended with cabernet sauvignon. It is now also grown in South Africa, South of France, USA (Washington State from the 1970s), Chile and Argentina, in fact just about any wine producing country where a warm climate will support it.

Viticulturally syrah and shiraz are the same but the resulting wine can taste very different. For instance the Australian reds can taste much sweeter and riper and more 'chocolaty' than the Rhone syrah which can have aromas of pepper and spice. The wine lends itself to ageing in oak and bottle.

### The Wine

#### 1. Appearance

Purple, rich colour, 'black as night'

#### 2. Nose

Smoky, fruity, slightly spicy, ripe berries, chocolate, mulberry, blackberry, liquorice, burning rubber

#### 3. Taste & Aromatics

Spicy, note of freshly ground black pepper, mulberry, blackcurrants, blackberry, liquorice, burning rubber, salty. Dry and Medium dry (Australian)

#### 4. Blending qualities

Great asset is its ability to blend with other wines giving them a welcome lift. In the Rhone valley a blend produces Chateauneuf-du-Pape and it also blends with white grapes such as Viognier, Marsanne for example to soften the tannins.

5. Suggested suitable accompanying foods

Rich foods such as venison, roast beef, smoked and barbeque meals