

Côte-Rôtie

LE VIOGNIER

Description

Recognizable by:

- the yellow end of the young branch that has a medium-to-high density of hairs
- the green leaves when young with slightly browned areas
- Light green or green mature leaves, small or medium in size, rounded with three to five lobes, an open petiolar sinus sometimes, shallow lower lateral sinus, medium teeth with straight or convex edges, an anthocyanic pigmentation of the veins, a bubbled limb with curled edges and lower side, low to medium density, thick erect hair.
- round grapes.

Phenology

- bud break: like Chasselas.
- ripe age: 2nd age, or 2.5 weeks after Chasselas.

Cultural and agronomic aptitudes

This variety is often tied (it is sometimes sensitive to high winds) and is of a moderately long length with a high plantation density. Traditionally grown in acidic terroirs, it has adapted well to southern regions with soil that is sufficiently deep but not too fertile, to avoid risk of drought. Its early bud break exposes it to spring frosts.

Sensitive to disease and parasites

Viognier is not especially sensitive to disease. It is not too susceptible to grey rot.

Technological potential

The grapes and bunches are small with a golden hue. The varietal characteristics of Viognier, in the right conditions, produce highly fragrant wines (apricot, peach, etc.), that are complex and robust, and of a high quality. It makes warm wines (potentially high in sugar) that are unctuous but perhaps lacking in acidity and occasionally slightly bitter. It may also be used to make sweet, sparkling wines or be blended (5-10%, sometimes more) with other varieties (especially Syrah) to give a refined, fragrant touch to red wines.

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Clonal selection

Only three approved clones exist today, one of which has become a lot more widespread in recent years. A major selection programme has been relaunched in order to produce more healthy vine stock. With support from the ENTAV (Etablissement National Technique pour l'Amélioration de la Viticulture) and the Chamber of Agriculture, the Condrieu union has created a conservatory to isolate and protect the oldest, most interesting stock. The conservatory was set up in 2001 and contains only stock untouched by viruses. It can be used to produce either new clonal selections, or for healthier breeding.