

Yalumba and Viognier

Australia's Viognier Pioneers

Viognier first caught Yalumba's eye in the early 1970's. Although growing only in the tiny appellations of Condrieu and Cote Rotie in France, Viognier was (and is) regarded as the Rhône Valley's flagship white variety. Given that the Rhône's flagship red variety, Syrah (Shiraz) was also the Barossa's most prolific red variety, the possible Barossa synergy was compelling.

In 1980 1.2 hectares were planted on a grower's vineyard - the Vaughan property - in Angaston. This was the first significant planting of the variety in Australia. At the time Viognier was virtually unknown outside France. Today is a different story with Viognier planted in many countries around the world, and in most wine regions in Australia. Yalumba has increased its own plantings in the Eden Valley, and as far as Oxford Landing and Wrattenbully. Yalumba is now the leading player on the Australian Viognier scene, and one of the most influential producers in the world.



The original vine source material was imported into Australia from Montpellier in 1968 and this clone has been used almost exclusively in Australian vineyards. The Yalumba Nursery currently has eight clones in quarantine or being propagated - sourced from selected material in France and America, as well as another three clones from interstate. The fruit from the first of these clones will be available within four years - and soon after all twelve clones will be able to be evaluated side by side.



Yalumba and Viognier Today

Twenty years ago, most Australians would never have heard of Viognier. Today, Viognier receives an inordinate amount of press and attention. And why not! A challenging variety to grow, Viognier produces amazingly full-flavoured wines with exotic flavours of musk, apricots, peaches and lychees – to name a few. Yalumba has the most significant Viognier resource in the Southern Hemisphere and has earned a reputation as a pioneer and specialist producer, with Viognier wines featuring throughout the Yalumba portfolio.

Yalumba makes four Viognier white wines, the fresh and citrusy Y Series Viognier and the Eden Valley Viognier which is made in an upfront style with immediate varietal expression for early drinking. 'The Virgilius' is Yalumba's 'super Viognier', a benchmark wine utilising grapes from the older vines with the ability to benefit from some bottle maturation, and the newly released Yalumba Hand Picked Botrytis Viognier which combines the intense flavours of Viognier with the richness of botrytis.

In 1998, Yalumba once again drew on the winemaking traditions of the Rhône and released a Shiraz and Viognier blended wine (usually 5-10% Viognier) in the style of Côte-Rôtie. There is also a 'splash' of Viognier in Yalumba's Barossa Shiraz which adds a sweet floral lift on the nose and contributes a richer mouth-feel and silky texture. Co-fermenting the two varieties adds an extra dimension to the palate and nose as well as an incredible brilliance of colour. The process involves some extremely complex chemistry which is currently being researched.

Reviews

"Yalumba consistently demonstrates a deft touch for producing high quality, elegantly-styled Viognier..."

Robert M. Parker Jr., The Wine Advocate (USA), 31 October, 2005

"As the years go by this wine (Yalumba Eden Valley Viognier) beds in more and more and shows that Australia can rival the greats with this flamboyant variety."

Matthew Jukes (UK), The Matthew Jukes 100 Best Australian Wines 2005

In August 2002, Yalumba hosted Australia's, if not the world's first Viognier Symposium.