

*thinkabout*

# Viognier: The New Cult Grape

*Summer Fling Or Long-Term Romance?*

## Viognier

### VIOGNIER ON THE VINE

Small, conical bunches with small oval shaped grapes. Usually a golden yellow in color.

### VIOGNIER IN THE GLASS

Clear bright yellow that deepens in color with age

### VIOGNIER IN YOUR NOSE

Honeysuckle, citrus blossoms, peaches, and ripe pears .

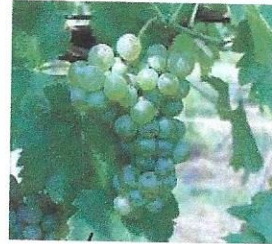
### VIOGNIER IN YOUR MOUTH

Typically described as having peach and apricot flavors. When aged in oak it expresses a toastiness with a nice tail-end finish.

One of the white Rhone varieties, Viognier (pronounced VEE-ohn-yay"), produces full golden wines with an elusive bouquet. It announces itself with one of the largest aroma-rushes of any wine, with intense apricots, floral perfume and may-blossoms.

Originally found only in France's Rhone valley in small plantings, Viognier is now being grown in Australia, South America, Italy and Canada. In the

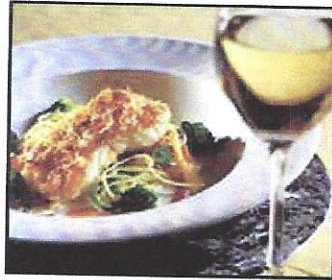
US, the largest plantings are currently in California, but it is increasingly being grown in Colorado, Virginia, Washington, Oregon, New York and Texas.



*As It Looks On The Vine*

Your first taste of Viognier will be a memorable experience, described by some true Viognier-lovers, as equal to their first sexual experience! Your nose will tell you that your tasting a sweet wine, but when properly made, the wine offers the palate a dry nectar that resembles a mixture of lemon-citrus, spice, peaches and apricots, with more body than a Chardonnay.

Viognier should not be made like Chardonnay, a fact that a number of wineries in California are discovering as winemakers across the New World experiment with the grape. Though it does well with a little time in older, neutral oak barrels to highlight its floral components, too much time in new-oak overwhelms it, making it 'Chardonnay-ish'.



*Great with Seafood,  
Chicken & Asian Cuisine*

Becker Vineyards has garnered an enviable array of awards with their 1998 and 1999

Viognier releases. The wine-maker prefers to blend Viognier with a little Chardonnay to make it a little more interesting and introduce other flavors. The wine has been so well received that they plan to increase the

existing 2 1/2-acre Viognier-vineyard by 6 more acres this year. The winery manager told us they will be bottling the 2000 release next month, so look for it soon.

### **Texas Viognier**

Two Texas wineries currently offer Viognier: Alamosa Wine Cellars and Becker Vineyards. The 1999 Viognier Tio Pancho Ranch, made by Jim Johnson at Alamosa Wine Cellars is 100% Viognier and features a wonderful nose with a palate of dried apricot, nectarine and melon. With a nice acid-balance and an oaky finish, the limited production wine will disappear quickly. We spoke with Karen Johnson, who said she is happy with results of the 2-acres they have planted: "Our 2000 will be released soon and it is wonderful. We find it really loves the hot weather and continues to ripen while maintaining acid levels even in very hot times." Look for the new release soon.

### **VIOGNIER ORIGINS**

**Traditionally associated with the northern Rhone region of France, especially around Condrieu.**

**Believed to have been one of the grapes brought by the Romans.**

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Of course, not everyone is in love with this French mistress, Viognier. Joshua Greene, editor of Wine & Spirits magazine points out that this low-yielding grape is one of the most difficult to grow, and the taste and smell may be too distinctive for general consumption. "it requires a certain time and place," Greene says.

#### OTHER RHONE VARIETALS

##### RED WINES:

Syrah,  
Mourvedre,  
Grenache  
Cinsault.

##### WHITE WINES:

Marsanne,  
Roussanne