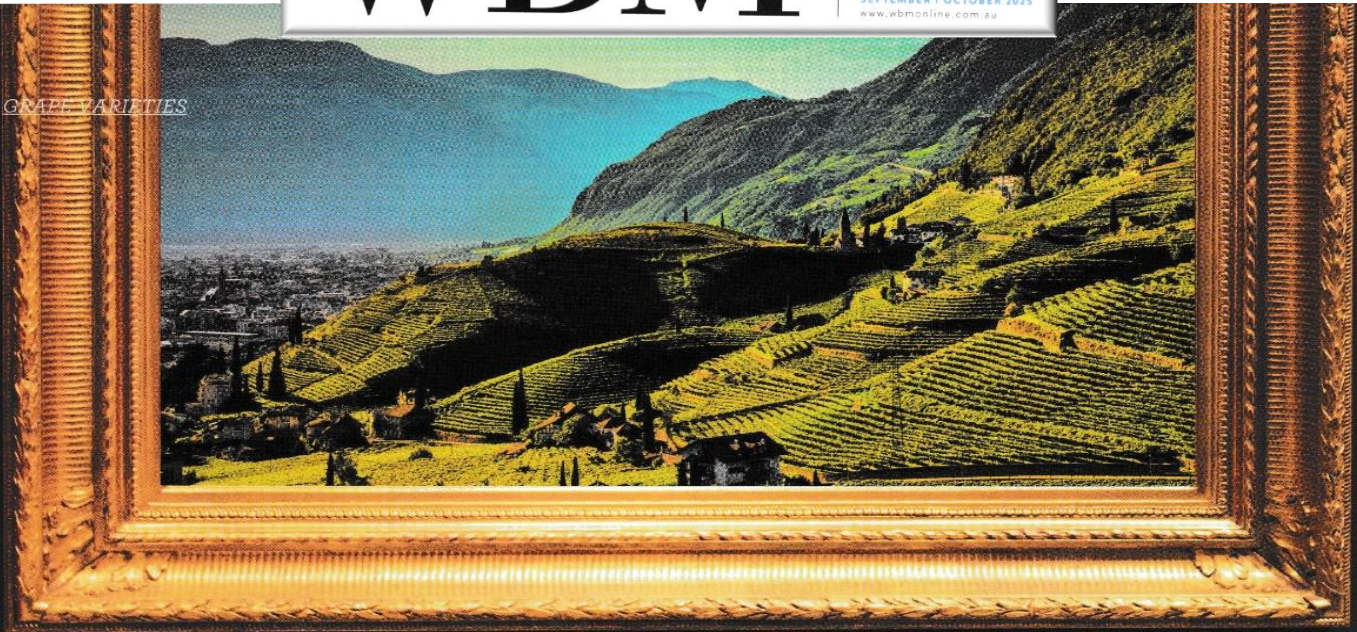


GRAPE VARIETIES



MARZEMINO MASTERPIECE

WORDS DAN TRAUCKI

Australian wine drinkers – with very few exceptions – will not have heard of the native Italian red grape variety Marzemino, as there are only four producers of this variety here. In its native Italy it comes from the northern part of the country around Trentino and Alto Adige. It is also grown to a lesser extent around the Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Veneto wine regions. It is often used as a blending grape, in a minor role as such, in Lombardy.

Which Wine Grape Varieties Are Grown Where? by Kym Anderson records that there are a mere 1,090 hectares of Marzemino planted globally, with almost all of it being in Italy, making it very much a minor Italian red variety. As usual there is a degree of confusion in Italy as the variety has at least fourteen different names across the country.

Marzemino is one of very few wines ever mentioned by name in the arts. In Mozart's Opera *Don Giovanni*, just before he dies, the main character calls for a glass of Marzemino ("Versa il vino! Eccellente *Marzimino!*"). Apparently it was Mozart's favourite tippel.

Unlike many Italian native variety reds that have spread their wings across the wine growing world, so far the only countries Marzemino has spread to, in extremely small pockets, are Australia, New Zealand and Slovakia.

Marzemino is quite susceptible to most fungal diseases and unless properly pruned/controlled, overcrops, producing high yields of light, acidic, bland wines. It has a longer than most growing season and ripens rather late. When planted in the right cool region sites and properly controlled, Marzemino produces elegant, exciting wines.

The wines have plenty of black and red fruit flavours. While they are deep and inky in colour, they are mid-weight in palate with dried herbs and spice notes somewhat like top end Pinot Noir. They have juicy fruits on the palate with elegant, soft tannins. Pinot and Gamay fans will likely be drawn to Marzemino for its elegant flavours.

Tonon Wines 2021 Perth Hills Sparkling Marzemino

A truly magnificent sparkling red – deep, densely purple, heading towards black in colour. A subtle bouquet of ripe plums and dried herbs with a great mousse. A juicy palate of plums, cherries and blackberries with notes of herbs and spices all wrapped up together to delight the palate. A brilliant sparkler for Christmas celebrations. \$50.

Michelini 2023 Italian Selection Alpine Valleys Marzemino

Deep and densely purple, nearing black. There are blackberries with a hint of violets and spice on the appealing bouquet. The palate is big and juicy with lashings of divine

flavours leading to a slightly tight, grippy finish. A fabulous food wine made to go with hearty Italian dishes like osso bucco. \$30.

Soumah 2024 Single Vineyard Hexham Yarra Valley Marzemino

Deeply purple with fragrant aromas of plums, fresh herbs and a hint of spice. The palate is mid-weight – lighter than the deep, dense colour would suggest, yet succulent with delightful flavours of plums, raisins, a hint of earthiness and a dash of dried herbs. The finish is very classy and quite long-lasting. A superb wine that is just as comfortable on its own or with all but the richest/spiciest food. \$40.

All three wines were outstanding with mountains of delightful flavours, which begs the question: why aren't more cool climate growers getting on the bandwagon and growing this truly superb variety? Come on, Tasmania, Canberra, Granite Belt and Adelaide Hills, have a crack – you won't be disappointed by this Italian masterpiece.

It would also be interesting to see Marzemino trialled in some of our warmer regions. All the other cooler climate Italian reds that have been planted in warmer regions produce richer, riper, more open and accessible versions than the original Italian wines. Different in style but more appealing to the current 'drink now' wine scene, whereas the Italian reds almost always require a fair degree of cellaring to open up and show at their best. ♦