



Terroir Rising in the New World? Varietal Distinctiveness of Australia's Wine Regions

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It has been argued that part of the reason Australia was able to contribute to and respond so successfully in the 1990s to the growth in demand for commercial bottled wine was because of its freedom (relative to European producers) to blend wines across the full range of varieties and geographic regions, so as to be able to reproduce year after year a consistent style for each label. Over time, however, that has led some buyers in the 'Old World' to believe Australian and other 'New World' winemakers do not respect or exploit regional differences in terroir or, worse still, that the 'New World' is incapable of making high-quality geographically distinct wines. This paper examines the changing extent to which Australian wine regions do in fact vary in their choice of winegrape varieties and in the average quality of those winegrapes. In doing so the study provides some new quantitative indexes that may be helpful for other purposes too, such as providing a base for simulating the potential impacts on different regions of climate change. The study focuses on Australia's 30 winegrape regions (GIs) that together accounted in 2006 for 93 percent of the Australian winegrape crush, and on the top 12 red and 10 white winegrape varieties which together accounted in 2006 for 94 percent of Australia's wine. And it compares those crush numbers with 2001, the first year for which price and quantity data were compiled nationally by GI region and variety.