

marks with its impressive 2001. More wines like that and the grape will definitely fire.

Its twin-under-the-skin, Italian-inspired pinot grigio, suffers in comparison – to the extent that wines more akin to grigio in style, such as the new Seppelt Cobarra from Drumburg, are being labelled pinot gris. Pinot grigio doesn't deserve it. The better examples embrace the variety's characteristic salty sea-breeze smells with hay and a touch of honeysuckle. Brisk acidity and grigio's clean finish should make it a lovely summer wine.

Viognier is a little like pinot gris. Every producer wants to treat it terribly seriously, making it terribly expensive into the bargain. Petaluma's represents the highest standard but wines such as the sub-20c Tahbilk and Zilzie viogniers will help the variety really take off. Tuning into the grape's lively floral side (Tahbilk) or bringing out its exotic ginger and apricot notes (Zilzie) is the way to make it more accessible. No one could accuse Yalumba, through Heggies, of not taking the grape seriously.

If critical mass and good product are important for next big things, then sangiovese looks the goods. We've been talking about it for years, admittedly mainly about its potential, with far too many producers treating it like shiraz rather than delivering something different and exciting.

With King Valley makers taking the lead, sangiovese is looking far more confident in style and is gradually moving out of its Italian pigeonhole to the mainstream.

That's when you know the next big thing is here – when you stop talking about it and just drink it.

Keep an eye on these

Pinot gris

The hot favourite this summer, but the style still tends to be all over the place. Shadowfax, Scorpo, Redbank Sunday Morning, T'Gallant, Delatite and Spy Valley (NZ) are strong performers.

Pinot grigio

A better wine for summer

drinking, especially in the hands of T'Gallant, Yarra Ridge, Brown Brothers, Scotchmans Hill and Italians such as Bortoluzzi.

Viognier

The patronage of such passionate believers as Petaluma and Yalumba may get it over the line. Problems with flabby wines and pronunciation

of the name continue to hold it back. Producers such as Tahbilk getting on board will help.

Sangiovese

After all the talk, this Italian variety is finally getting the runs on the board with consistent and savoury performances from Dal Zotto, Chrismont, Castagna, Neagles Rock, Crittenden

and Hamiltons Bluff, among others.

Tempranillo

Much early promise. Volume still low and wines generally hard to find. Exciting newcomers such as Mount Majura, Cascabel and Ponderow give hope for the future. Cabernet sauvignon

be ready for another star turn. Great performers include Penfolds Bin 407, De Bortoli Yarra Valley and Majella.

Semillon

At long odds, Mount Horrocks, Kilikanoon, Brokenwood and Moss Wood are among potential upset winners. If a wine deserves underdog status, it's semillon.

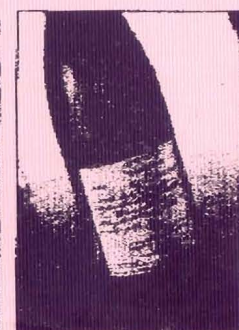


Photo: Marco Del Grande

Rising in stature: viognier in a Yalumba vineyard, left; Scorpo pinot gris, above.