

Mourvèdre is native to Spain, where it is known as Monastrell and is second only to Grenache (Garnacha) in importance. From the Spanish town of Murviedro, near Valencia, Mourvèdre was brought to Provence in the late Middle Ages where, prior to the phylloxera invasion at the end of the 19th century, it was the dominant varietal.

For decades, Mourvèdre was found in France almost exclusively in the sandy (and phylloxera-free) soil of Bandol, on the French Mediterranean coast, where it is bottled both as a red wine (blended with Grenache and Cinsault) and as perhaps the world's most coveted dry rosé.

Mourvèdre came to California as Mataro (a name taken from a town near Barcelona where the varietal was grown) in the mid to late 1800s. In California it was probably first established in Santa Clara County, although the oldest surviving vineyards are in Contra Costa County. It also found a home in Australia in the Barossa Valley. Until recently, the grape was rarely bottled by itself, and was instead generally used as a component of field blends. The increasing popularity and prestige of Rhône varietals, the importation of higher-quality clones and a return to the French Mourvèdre name has given the varietal a new life. Currently about 400 acres are planted in California.



Mourvèdre is a late-ripening varietal that flourishes with hot summer temperatures. As such, it is beautifully suited to our southern Rhône-like climate at Rabbit Ridge, where its lateness in sprouting makes it less vulnerable to late spring frosts. In the vineyard, Mourvèdre is a moderately vigorous varietal that does not require a great deal of extra care. The vines tend to grow vertically, making Mourvèdre an ideal candidate for head-pruning (the method traditional to Châteauneuf-du-Pape), although vines can also be successfully trellised. When head-pruned, the weight of the ripening grapes pulls the vines down like the spokes of an umbrella, providing the ripening bunches with ideal sun exposure. It is typically our last varietal to be harvested, often not coming into the cellar until early November.

Mourvèdre berries are moderate in size, medium-dark in color, with very thick skins. These thick skins are important because with its extremely late ripening, Mourvèdre is often still on the vines at the time of the first rains of the fall. Its thick skins protect it from the swelling and splitting that thinner-skinned grapes (such as Grenache) are susceptible to.

Mourvèdre is relatively easy-going in the cellar, and can be successfully fermented both in open-top fermenters with punch-downs, and in closed-top fermenters with pump-overs. In Bandol, it is typically fermented in whole clusters. In California, the stems of Mourvèdre often remain green into November.

Mourvèdre is a wonderful blending component; its structure and mid-palate richness complement the openness, warmth and brighter acids of Grenache and the mineral, spice and tannin of Syrah. It blends successfully both in a leading role (as in Bandol), or in our blended wine such as Allure de Robles Rhone red and Allure Rose’.

Wines made from Mourvèdre are intensely colored, rich and velvety with aromas of red fruit, chocolate/mocha, mint and earth. They tend to be high in mid-palate tannin, and are well-suited to aging, although they are also often approachable when younger.