

## **Blaufränkisch – origin and current importance**

Blaufränkisch is the second most commonly planted red grape variety in Austria and the most commonly planted red variety in Burgenland. Blaufränkisch is so popular in Burgenland that one wine growing area has even named itself “Blaufränkischland”.

Blaufränkisch has a long history of cultivation in Austria but nobody really knows where the grape variety originates from. There are a number of theories regarding its origin.

On the one hand, the name Blaufränkisch suggests a link to Franconia, but the variety is known as Lemberger in Germany and isn't grown in Franconia. Another theory is that the variety has its origins in France (fränkisch) during the period of Charles the Great. At this time noble and superior French grape varieties were referred to as “fränkisch” while less highly prized grape varieties from Eastern Europe were known as “hunnisch” or “hunnic”. The name of the grape variety “Heunisch” reminds us of this distinction even today.

Blaufränkisch is thought to have been brought to Austria towards the end of the 10th century. From here the grape variety spread to Germany, Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary.

During the course of the 19th century, research was carried out on the origins of Blaufränkisch. It is assumed that the terms “Frühschwarzer“, “Schwarzgrober“, “Schwarzer Muskateller“ or “Schwarz Fränkisch“ actually refer to Blaufränkisch. In Hungary (note: Burgenland was part of Hungary until 1921) Blaufränkisch was called “Groß-Burgunder“.

What we do know is that the International Ampelographic Commission adopted Blaufränkisch as an officially sanctioned and registered name in 1875 in Colmar, France. Towards the end of the 30s Blaufränkisch started receiving acknowledgement and won its first international awards. The grape variety was also responsible for starting the red wine boom in Austria during the 80s.

Today Blaufränkisch is extremely popular in Austria and in Austria's neighbouring countries, however it can be found under a variety of different names. The most important synonyms for Blaufränkisch are:

- Germany: Lemberger or Limberger
- Hungary: Kékfrankos
- Italy: Frankonia
- Czech Republic: Frankovka
- Slovakia: Frankovka modra
- Slovenia: Modra Frankinja

### **Results of modern vine research - Blaufränkisch = *Heunisch X Fränkisch***

Over the past few years, modern viticulture research has delivered many results regarding the parentage of certain grape varieties. When it comes to Blaufränkisch, experts agree that it is a cross between Heunisch and Fränkisch.

It has already been established that one parent is “Weißer Heunisch”, but experts are still unsure about the second parent variety.

According to Dr. Regner from the Education and Research Centre for Viticulture and Pomology in Klosterneuburg, the missing parent variety could be “Blauer Grober”, “Blauer Zierfandler”, “Grobschwarzer” or even a currently unknown variety. It seems that the exact parentage and origin of Blaufränkisch will remain a mystery for some time.

It has been scientifically proven that Blaufränkisch is closely related to “Blauer Wildbacher”, both genetically and in terms of the colour spectrum. In that sense, there are a number of facts which point towards it being an Austrian grape variety.