

PLANT SCIENCES

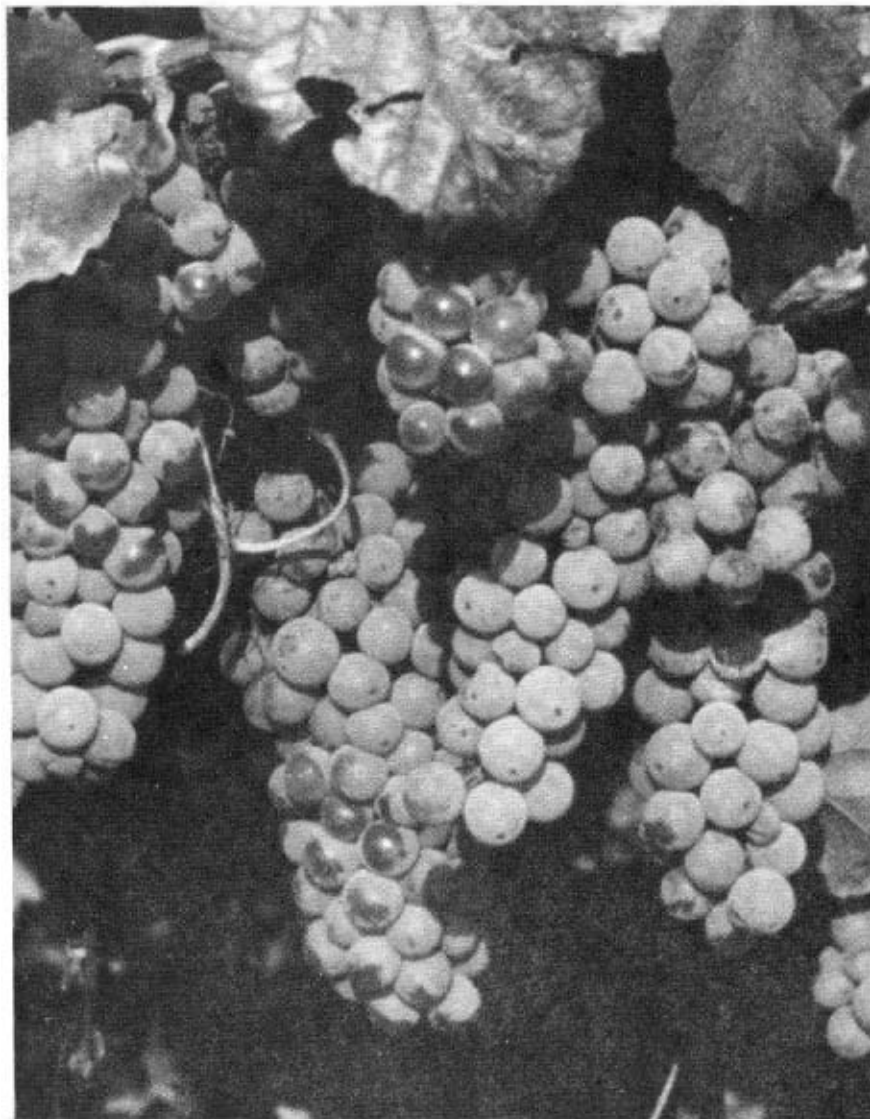
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Cayuga White, the first of a Finger Lakes series of wine grapes for New York

John Einset and W. B. Robinson



A changing and expanding grape industry has recently brought about considerable interest in variety evaluation and improvement. This is especially true in the Northeast and Great Lakes area where relatively few pure *vinifera* or European varieties of grapes are grown. Increasing attention is being given to varieties that will produce premium quality dry table wines of distinctive character. This implies pleasant and characteristic aroma and flavor in wines that are an appropriate accompaniment to a meal.

Cayuga White (New York 33403 or G.W. 3) deserves extensive testing as such a grape. The new variety is a result of a cross between Seyve-Villard 5-276 (also known as Seyval) and Schuyler. The former is a French hybrid that produces a dry white wine of very good quality under our conditions. It is an introduction of the hybridizer-nursery firm of Seyve-Villard. It has in its genetic background considerable *vinifera* parentage and also several non-La-brusca American species.

The second parent, Schuyler, is a 1947 Geneva introduction, a cross of Zinfandel x Ontario. Zinfandel is a major red wine grape in California, pure *V. vinifera* in origin. Ontario, an early white American-type grape is a cross of Winchell x Moore's Diamond. The wine character of Cayuga White has a complex origin and appears to be a blend of some of the most desirable characters of its progenitors.

The cross that produced Cayuga White was made in 1945; the fruit was first described in 1952. A year or two later it was selected for further trial as a very productive vine. The original propagation or second test consisted of four vines planted in the fall of 1955. Based on their performance, the selection was included in the "25-variety trial" established in 1964 as a formal trial of the most commercially promising American and French hybrid varieties and six new Geneva selections. This experiment was located at three sites, one at Geneva, the second in a vineyard of the Taylor Wine Co., Inc. at Hammondsport, N. Y., and the third at the Vineyard Research Laboratory at Fredonia, N. Y. A preliminary report, including yield

data for 1969, published in the 1970 Proceedings of the New York State Horticultural Society, ranks G.W. 3, or Cayuga White, as the highest yielding grape in these trials. Data for later years have confirmed these findings.

The vine is vigorous and has been rated as medium hardy. Moderate injury, or killing of about 30 per cent of the primary buds, occurred after a temperature of -20° F in the winter of 1967-1968 at Geneva. The vines recovered with little cane or trunk injury. The flowers are perfect with upright stamens, and bloom is relatively late. Fruit clusters are medium to large, medium compact; long and slightly tapering. Berries are slightly larger than medium, roundish to ellipsoidal, white. The skin is resistant to cracking, and the flesh is meaty, somewhat astringent.

A wine sample was first made in 1955 by one of the Finger Lakes Wineries and was rated very good. Since that time, samples have been made at Geneva in 10 different years. With no exception, the wines have been rated very good (2+) to excellent (1). The samples have been described as pleasant, nicely balanced, with delicate aroma, neutral, fruity, European type, resembling most nearly White Riesling.

The harvest dates have usually fallen between September 24 and 29. This would be considered mid-season or close to the Concord season. At harvest, soluble solids have ranged from 17.0 to 19.0. The fruit hangs very well; fruit condition has been excellent for 2 or more weeks after normal harvest. If higher solids are desired, a later harvest should be possible.

REFERENCES

1. Kimbail, Keith, Nelson Shaulis, and John Einset. 1970. Wine Grape Variety Trials in New York. Proc. N. Y. State Hort. Soc. 115: 280-282.
2. Einset, J., K. H. Kimbail, W. B. Robinson, and J. J. Bertino. 1971. Vineyard and Cellar Notes 1969-70. N. Y. State Agr. Exp. Sta., Geneva, Spec. Rep. No. 4. 27 pp.