



# Melon

## Synonyms

In France, the variety is known as Melon de Bourgogne and Muscadet and in Germany as Weisser Burgunder or Später Weisser Burgunder. Melon de Bourgogne is an approved synonym in the United States. In California it was misidentified as Pinot blanc.

## Source

Melon is an old Burgundian variety where it was once widely grown. In France, Melon is mainly used for the production of Muscadet wines in the Loire Valley. In California, it is a minor variety with small plantings in the cooler production areas of the North and Central Coast regions. Prior to the introduction of true-to-type selections in the 1980s, most Pinot blanc vineyards in California were plantings of Melon.

## Description

**Clusters:** small to medium; compact, conical to cylindrical; short peduncles.

**Berries:** small to medium; round; yellow with white bloom; prominent lenticels; skins with high tannin.

**Leaves:** medium; mostly entire with relatively closed U-shaped petiolar sinus; upper surface bullate; short, rounded teeth; lower surface mostly glabrous with very sparse, tufted hair.

Its leaves are similar to those of Chardonnay and distinguished by not having “naked” veins along petiolar sinus.

**Shoot tips:** felty cream-yellow; young leaves yellow-green. Pinot blanc shoot tips and young leaves are felty white, a characteristic that can distinguish it from Melon in the spring.

## Growth and Soil Adaptability

Vine vegetative growth can vary significantly from weak to moderately vigorous depending on the climatic region, soil characteristics, moisture availability, and rootstock selection. Adaptable to a wide range of soils, Melon's highest vigor will be on deep loam or clay loam soils with high moisture availability. Shoot growth on non-positioned canopies is semi-erect. Melon has early budbreak, which makes it sensitive to frost.

## Rootstocks

Rootstock experience is limited due to the low acreage replanted in the 1980s and 1990s. Melon has no known incompatibilities when certified budwood is used to propagate the planting stock. Rootstock selection should be based on soil characteristics, the pests present, the potential vigor of the site, vine spacing, and desired vine size. Rootstocks may have more influence on sites where anticipated vigor is low, and the choice may have a greater effect on vine growth and development.

## clusters

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## berries

*Small to medium; round; yellow with white bloom; prominent lenticels; skins with high tannin.*

## Clones

There are five registered selections of Melon. FPS 01 was selected from Beaulieu Vineyards. Melon FPS 05 came from Inglenook's Napa Valley Vineyards; selection 07 is a heat-treated subclone of 05. In France, there are 10 certified ENTAV clones. One of them, Melon ENTAV-INRA® 229, is now available in California and is a registered selection at FPS.

## Production

Vine yield can vary considerably by climatic region, site influences, bunch rot level, and cultural practices. Melon is a moderately productive variety; crop size can range from 3 to 6 tons per acre.

## Harvest

**Period:** A midseason variety, harvested from mid-September to early October in the coastal regions.

**Method:** Hand harvest with knives or shears is easy due to the lack of excessive canopy growth. Horizontal rod or bow machine harvest is medium in difficulty with fruit coming off mostly as single berries with moderate juicing. Bow-rod picking heads used on well-trained vines on vertical-shoot-positioned trellises have lower shoot and spur breakage than straight rods. Trunk shaker machine harvest is medium in difficulty with fruit coming off as single berries with medium juicing, although brittle wood can be a problem.

## Training and Pruning

Melon is commonly trained to bilateral cordons and spur pruned. In very cool regions where bud fruitfulness is low, head training and cane pruning may result in higher productivity. For low-vigor sites, higher plant densities and the use of unilateral cordon training may produce vines that better balance fruit and vegetative growth.



## leaves

*Medium; mostly entire with relatively closed U-shaped petiolar sinus; upper surface bullate; short, rounded teeth; lower surface mostly glabrous with very sparse, tufted hair.*

## shoot tips

*Felty cream-yellow; young leaves yellow-green. Pinot blanc shoot tips and young leaves are felty white, a characteristic that can distinguish it from Melon in the spring.*



### Trellising and Canopy Management

For low- to moderate-vigor sites, vertical-shoot-positioned systems are appropriate. The use of split canopy systems should be considered only on sites with especially high potential vigor. Leaf removal in the fruit zone can be used to reduce the risk of Botrytis bunch rot.

### Insect and Disease Problems

The compact clusters are susceptible to bunch rot, mainly by *Botrytis cinerea*. Orange tortrix, *Argyrotaenia citrana*, prefers compact-clustered varieties, and high populations have been observed in some Melon vineyards.

### Other Cultural Characteristics

Vine growth can be slow and irregular, and the leaves can show a temporary chlorosis when early spring temperatures are cold. Crop recovery after spring frost is good.

### Winery Use

Melon can produce table wines of good flavor and balance when grown in the cooler coastal regions. The grapes have also been used to make base wine for sparkling wine production. Due to the higher tannin content in the skins, the wines are more prone to browning if not handled correctly.

—Larry J. Bettiga and Edward Weber