



Cabernet Franc

Synonyms

In France, the variety is called Breton, Véron, Noir dur, Bouchy, Bouchet, Gros Bouchet, Carmenet, Grosse Vidure, Messanges rouge, and Trousset noir. In Italy, it is known as Bordo and Cabernet frank.

Source

The variety may have been established in Bordeaux in the seventeenth century.

Description

Clusters: small to medium; cylindrical to slightly conical with shoulders; mostly well filled.

Berries: small; round, blue-black berries.

Leaves: medium; mostly 5-lobed; closed, narrow U-shaped petiolar sinus; lateral sinuses (particularly superior) often have small teeth at their base; relatively narrow, sharp teeth; rough, bumpy surface; light, tufted hair on lower surface.

Shoot tips: felty with red margin; first unfolded leaf has red-bronze highlights.

Cabernet franc is similar to Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot but differs by smaller, compact, and mostly cylindrical clusters; in petiolar sinus; and teeth in lateral sinuses. Clusters are tighter than Cabernet Sauvignon due to greater berry set.

Growth and Soil Adaptability

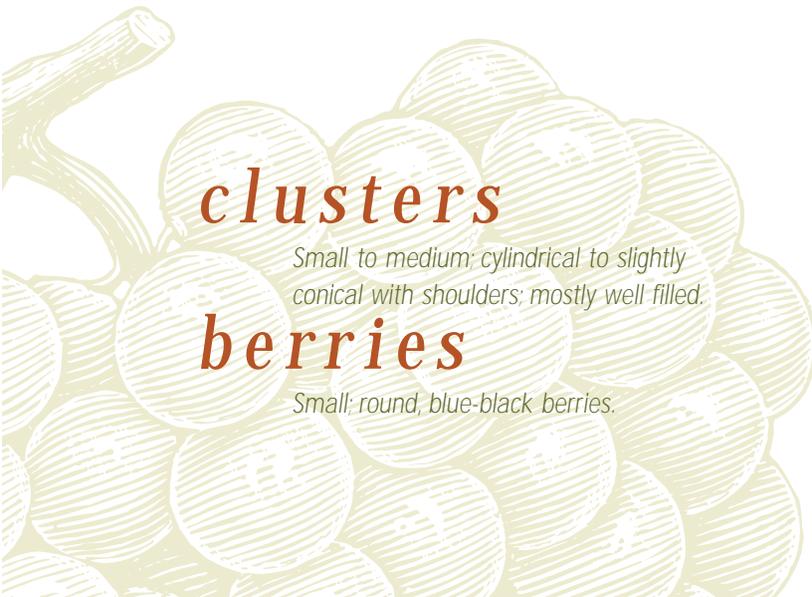
Vines grow vigorously in many soil types in both cool and warm regions, thus it is generally advisable to avoid highly fertile, deep soils. Well-drained soils also help keep vigor in check. Vine spacing should be a minimum of 6 feet. Shoots grow upright, which facilitates vertical-shoot positioning. Budbreak and ripening precede that of Cabernet Sauvignon.

Rootstocks

Moderate- to low-vigor rootstocks are recommended to discourage additional vegetative growth, although several different rootstocks are in use.

Clones

Cabernet franc FPS 01 was the only registered selection available in California in the mid-1990s. This selection is reported to be high-yielding compared to clones developed in Europe. Registered and provisional selections have become available at FPS, but these have not been evaluated under California conditions. Cabernet franc FPS 03 came from Conegliano, Italy, known there as Cabernet franc ISV1. A Rauscedo selection has been registered as Cabernet franc FPS 09 (VCR10). The generic French clones available at FPS are Cabernet franc FPS 04 (French 332), 05 (French 331), 11 (French 214), 12 (French 327), and 13 (French 312). In California, ENTAV-INRA[®] 210, 212, 214, 327, and 623 are all available.



clusters

Small to medium; cylindrical to slightly conical with shoulders; mostly well filled.

berries

Small; round, blue-black berries.

Production

This is a moderate-yielding variety averaging 5 to 7 tons per acre. High set may require thinning at 90 percent veraison on valley floors to maximize uniformity. The variety is appropriate for hillside developments since it produces well.

Harvest

Period: A mid- to late-season variety, harvested September to November, depending on the region and crop load.

Method: Cabernet franc's moderately long bunch stem makes it easy to pick by hand. With machine harvesting, single berries,

cluster parts, or entire clusters may be removed if fruit maturity is variable. Harvestability is easy to medium with canopy shaking, and juicing is light to medium. Moderately tough skins result in low juicing.

Training and Pruning

Commonly cordon trained and spur pruned, Cabernet franc may also be head trained and cane pruned. It is easily hedged and a good candidate for mechanical pruning if not cane pruned.

Trellising and Canopy Management

The fruiting wire height for a vertical-shoot-positioned system can be 30 to 42 inches high, and a 4-to 5-foot canopy above the fruiting wire is common. Two pairs of moveable wires are sufficient. In extremely vigorous sites, a horizontally divided canopy such as a lyre or "U" is used. Sunburn can occur on highly exposed fruit so a GDC is not recommended, and leaf removal is light to moderate.



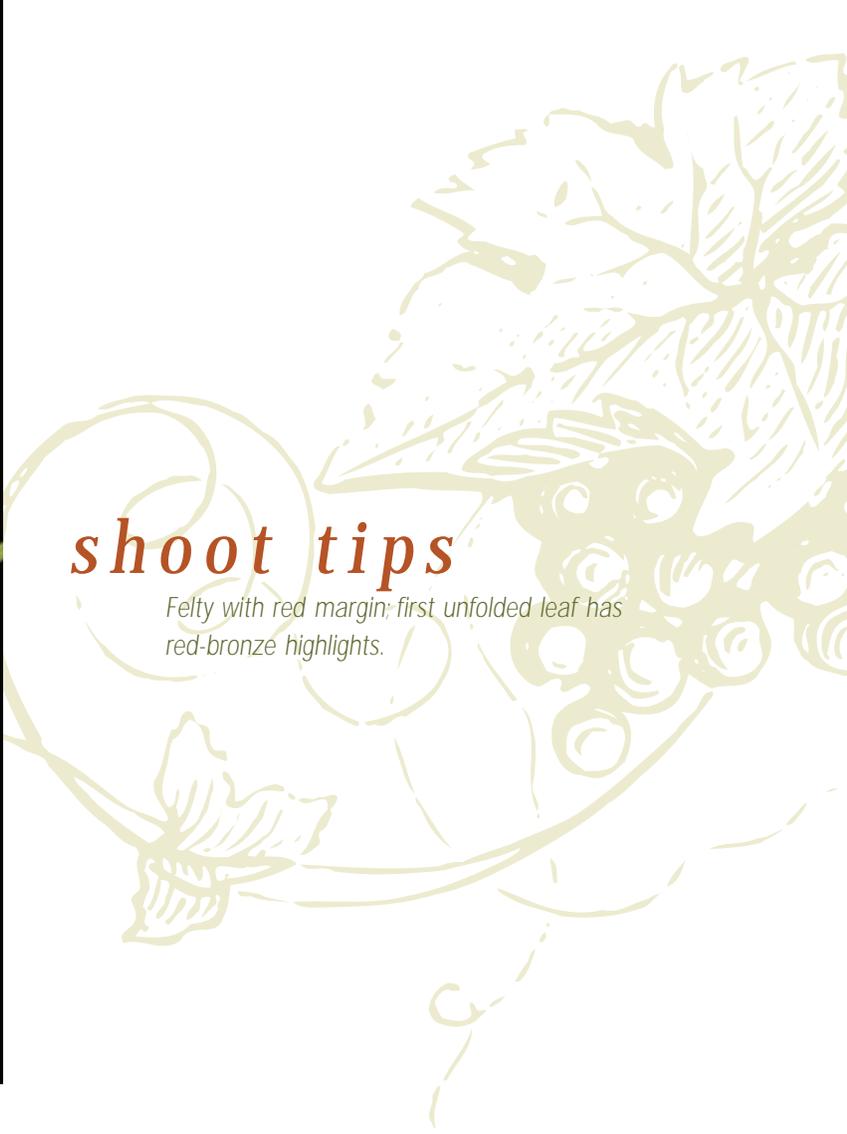
leaves

Medium; mostly 5-lobed; closed, narrow U-shaped petiolar sinus; lateral sinuses (particularly superior) often have small teeth at their base; relatively narrow, sharp teeth; rough, bumpy surface; light, tufted hair on lower surface.



shoot tips

Felty with red margin; first unfolded leaf has red-bronze highlights.



Insect and Disease Problems

Cabernet franc is a good indicator for leafroll virus, which is common in older plantings. On average, it is more susceptible to Pierce's disease than Cabernet Sauvignon, yet less susceptible to Eutypa dieback. Bunch rot is not a significant disease problem.

Other Cultural Characteristics

This can be a higher-yielding variety than Cabernet Sauvignon due to greater set. Late and uneven veraison is common, thus cluster thinning at this time is usually warranted to enhance ripening uniformity. Occasionally set may be reduced by shelling; however, this occurs much less severely than in Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon.

Winery Use

As a varietal wine, it usually has a lighter body with less tannin and acid than Cabernet Sauvignon. As a result, it is often blended with this variety and occasionally with Merlot. Wines can have a pronounced vegetative aroma that is commonly associated with highly vigorous growing sites.

—Rhonda J. Smith