



# Pinot Meunier

The variety is known by different names in France, including simply Meunier. In Germany, it is called Schwarzwiesling, and in Australia it is known as Miller's Burgundy for the floury-white appearance of the shoots.

Pinot Meunier is the most distinct variant of Pinot noir in terms of physical appearance and growth habits. It is a red grape variety with pendant shoots that are covered with copious amounts of white hairs that increase in density toward the terminal ends so that shoot tips appear nearly white.

Pinot Meunier is a moderately high-vigor variety that can be planted in unrestricted soil. Its pendant canes preclude tight vine spacing and require multiple passes to position shoots. In vertical canopies, shoots are stuffed between three pairs of stationary wires. Several different rootstocks may be used; however, those that impart vigor may require training to a divided canopy. For either cordon- or head-trained, cane-pruned canopies, cluster exposure should be limited.

Clusters are small and extremely tight. In high-yielding years, there is an increase in the number of winged clusters. There are very few clones of Pinot Meunier, and there is little difference in fruitfulness among planted areas. Budbreak is about the same time or slightly later than Pinot noir, yet it is harvested at the same time or slightly earlier than Pinot noir for sparkling wine. The variety can be easily harvested by machine; however, depending on wine style, it may be hand harvested in small tubs since the juice oxidizes quickly. A second crop is consistently produced and occasionally harvested for still wine two to three weeks after the primary clusters are picked for sparkling wine.

Production goals are usually higher for this variety than for Pinot noir, and acceptable yields can be as high as 8 tons per acre. In California it is used as a component of

sparkling wine and, to a much lesser degree, it is made into a varietal red table wine.

In cool springs, portions of the cluster will become necrotic and desiccate, just as in Pinot noir. Pinot Meunier is not as susceptible to powdery mildew as Pinot noir, and it is far less susceptible to *Eutypa dieback* than Chardonnay. Although it has tight clusters, *Botrytis bunch rot* is not often an issue since Pinot Meunier is harvested before fall rains.

There are now six selections of Pinot Meunier in the collection at UC Davis: FPS 01 (French 817), 02 (French 864), 03 (French 791), 04 (French 819), 05 (French 864), and 06 (French 819). Of these, FPS 01, 05, and 06 are registered. There is no information available on the relative performance of these selections.

—Rhonda J. Smith

