



## Merlot

**Synonym:** Bigney, Crabutet noir, Langon, Médoc Noir, Merlau, Merlot Noir, Picard, Sémillon Rouge, Vitraillie

**Commonly mistaken for:** Carmenère, Menoir

**Origin:** Mention of this member of the Bordeaux grape family was first made in the late eighteenth century in Libourne where it has long been cultivated and blended with *Cabernets* to make the world's finest red blends. Its name likely derives from blackbird: merle in French or merlau in Occitan because it seems to be particularly fond of the berries of this variety.

**Agronomic and environmental aspects:** This variety is planted widely across the world because it is adaptable and consistently produces moderate to high yields, even in damp, maritime climates. It grows better than the Cabernets in soils characterised by a good percentage of clay and clay-limestone, particularly on hillsides. It also ripens earlier in comparison to both Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. It is suitable for different training systems. In most Italian areas the VSP training system – *Guyot* (with 10-12 buds per cane) and *Cordone speronato* (cordon with spurs of 2-3 buds each) – are used.

**Diseases, pests and disorders:** It both buds and flowers early, so it can be susceptible to spring frosts, coulure and downy mildew but resists powdery mildew. Modest resistance to botrytis. Medium ripening.

### Description:

Growing Tip:

fully open, cottony, of white colour, with reddish edges.

Leaf:

medium, pentagonal, 3-lobed and 5-lobed. Has an open U-shaped petiolar sinus with lobes strongly overlapped, also lateral superior sinuses have U-shape and are very deep, while inferior are cudgel shape. The profile is undulated, blistered.

Bunch:

medium, of pyramidal form, winged (with one or two wings), loose density of berries, woody and rosy peduncle.

Berry:  
bloom.

medium dimensions, round; medium thick skin, of blue-black colour, plentiful

Vegetation Growth Habit:

semi-erect

Vigour:

medium-high

Average bunch weight:

medium-small (120-190 g.)

Average Bunches per shoot:

1 or 2

### Growth Stages:

Time of budburst:

early

Time of flowering:

early

Time of veraison:

medium

Time of harvest:

medium

### Wine characteristics:

A medium-bodied wine characterised by sweet plummy fruit and supple mouthfeel. Moderate level of colour and tannin. Well suited to oak ageing. Acidity levels can range from moderate in temperate climates to low in warm climates. Generally blended with Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc for structure and higher toned aromatics.

### Australian Experience:

Due to the timing of the arrival of these Merlot clones they haven't been widely taken up across Australia due to consumer preferences steering away from Merlot. However the observations and winemaking trials at Chalmers have seen massive potential in these two clones. Great colour and freshness in the fruit and the resulting wines showed character and distinction. Certainly of interest compared to the more common, older Merlot clones in Australia.

### Available Clones:



#### Merlot VCR 1

- Clone selected by Vivai Cooperativi Rauscedo;
- characterized by medium-small bunches, semi-compact, of pyramidal form, with only one wing.
- Excellent resistance to botrytis.



#### Merlot R12

- Clone selected by Rauscedo;
- characterized by medium-large bunches with medium density of berries;
- a rustic and vigorous vine

### Maturity Data Clonal Comparison: Chalmers Merbein Vineyard

|                     | 14/2/17 | 17/2/17 | 22/2/17 | 28/2/17 | 8/3/17 |  |
|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--|
| <b>Merlot VCR 1</b> |         |         |         |         |        |  |
| <b>Baume</b>        | 12.5    | 13.2    | 13.6    | 14.0    | 14.2   |  |
| <b>pH</b>           | 3.63    | 3.79    | 3.70    | 3.72    | 3.81   |  |
| <b>TA</b>           | 6.1     | 5.0     | 4.8     | 6.0     | 5.0    |  |
|                     |         |         |         |         |        |  |
| <b>Merlot R 12</b>  |         |         |         |         |        |  |
| <b>Baume</b>        | 13.2    | 13.2    | 13.4    | 14.0    | 14.4   |  |
| <b>pH</b>           | 3.49    | 3.74    | 3.71    | 3.8     | 3.79   |  |
| <b>TA</b>           | 5.8     | 5.1     | 5.5     | 5.8     | 5.6    |  |