

Sauvignon blanc Selections at FPMS

by Susan Nelson-Kluk, FPMS Grape Program Manager

INCREASINGLY POPULAR, SAUVIGNON BLANC has been among the registered varieties at FPMS since 1966. Over the last 26 years, Sauvignon blanc materials from France, Italy and California have been collected, tested for disease, and professionally identified to develop eight Registered and seven Provisional selections for the California Grapevine Registration and Certification (R&C) Program. This is an account of some of the contributions made by private industry, UC Davis and USDA to produce the Sauvignon blanc collection at FPMS today.

Sauvignon blanc FPMS 01, which has the longest history in the R&C program, was collected from Wente Vineyards by Dr. Harold Olmo in 1958. Wente acquired this selection when they bought the El Mocho Vineyard in Livermore, probably sometime before 1925, according to Philip Wente, executive vice president of Wente Vineyards.

The El Mocho vineyard was originally owned and planted in the 1880s by Louis Mel, an insurance agent turned grape grower. He got material of Sauvignon blanc, Semillon, and several other varieties from Charles Wetmore who was the head of the State Viticultural Commissioners at that time. Wetmore shared cuttings with Mel that he was able to collect from the Chateau Yquem vineyard in France with the help of a letter of introduction from Louis Mel's wife. (1,2) Semillon FPMS 02 may also be from this original French source.

Sauvignon blanc FPMS 01 was first registered in the R&C program in 1967 after 82 days of heat treatment was used to eliminate a leafroll infection found in the original material.

Several other early selections of Sauvignon blanc were collected by Dr. Austin Goheen, USDA, ARS plant pathologist, out of the Jackson Vineyard in Amador County. This vineyard was one of seven experimental vineyards established around California by UC Berkeley Professor Hilgard in the 1880s. Goheen rediscovered the Jackson vineyard in 1963 after it had been overgrown and abandoned by the University. He also found old maps and records for it in the UC Berkeley



library and managed to overcome resistance from the owner to get permission to visit the plot. The owner feared that the University was trying to take back land his parents had acquired by squatter's rights.

Although several Sauvignon blanc selections were collected from the Jackson vineyard, only one exists in the Foundation collection today and it was collected as another variety. Goheen wrote, "... I collected a vine which the records indicated should be Herbemont. Herbemont is an American bunch grape of Professor Munson, an early grape breeder from Texas. The grape I obtained turned out to be Sauvignon blanc. My collection was apparently three rows off from the original plan, an easy mistake when one considers the abandoned state of the planting at the time of my visit."

The selection first identified as Herbemont was tested for virus disease and later renamed Sauvignon blanc FPMS 03. By 1973, it was added to the list of registered selections in the R&C program. It remained in the program until 1983, when leafroll was detected in the selection when it was retested using the field indicator Cabernet Franc. Several plants have been made from the original FPMS 03 material using shoot tip culture to attempt to eliminate the leafroll disease. Testing of the tissue culture plants will be completed in the spring of 2003 when we hope to restore this selection to the collection.

Identity issues have plagued one of the older Sauvignon blanc selections in the FPMS collection. We now know that the selection labeled Savagnin musque, when it was imported from the viticulture station at Pont-de-la-Maye, (near Bordeaux) France in 1962, is in fact Sauvignon blanc. The name Savagnin musque FPMS 01 was used, however, when this selection was first registered in 1974. In 1978 the spelling of the name was changed to 'Sauvignon musque.' Sauvignon musque FPMS 01 remained registered until 1980 when it was removed because of a positive test for Rupestris stem pitting (RSP).

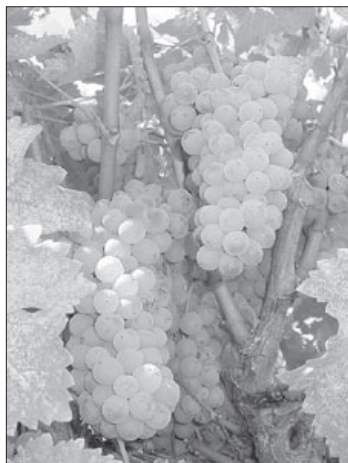
Old planting records from a T-bud and varietal trial planted in the 1970s by Curtis Alley, UC Davis viti-

culture extension specialist, and Terrel West, formerly with Arroyo Seco Vineyards in Monterey County, show that Savagnin/Sauvignon musque FPMS 01 was the Sauvignon blanc clone Doug Meador, president, Ventana Vineyards, discovered in that trial. Savagnin musque was among the many unusual varieties Alley took from the UC Davis Viticulture and FPMS collections to plant in the trial.

Meador had observed the Wente clone (Sauvignon blanc FPMS 01) growing in Monterey, but was not satisfied with its performance in his site. He recognized that the vines labeled Savagnin musque in the trial were really Sauvignon blanc and decided to make wine from it. His wine turned out “gorgeous” from the beginning and this selection has been the mainstay of his production. In general, he found that the musque clone did not have vegetative flavors when it was grown in the cool Monterey climate.

In order to confirm his opinion about the true identity of the musque clone, Meador took shoots and clusters to Pierre Galet, the French ampelographer, during Galet’s first trip to California in 1982. He didn’t tell Galet anything about the material. He just showed the samples. Galet immediately identified it as Sauvignon blanc. Later, when Galet wrote a report about his trip, he noted that there was true Sauvignon blanc in California, but for some strange reason it is called Savagnin musque. Galet’s comments were misunderstood by some to mean that the Savagnin musque material was the only true Sauvignon blanc in California, so during Galet’s second visit in 1985, Meador took shoots of the Wente and musque clones to him. Again Galet was given no information regarding the suspected variety or source. He identified both as Sauvignon blanc. Coincidentally, the same day, Monterey County Farm Advisor, Larry Bettiga, brought samples of the same two selections to show Galet. He identified them as Sauvignon blanc as well.

Carole Meredith, UC Davis viticulture professor, provided further evidence that the selection in the FPMS collection, originally called Savagnin musque, is really Sauvignon blanc using DNA analysis. In the 1999 *FPMS Grape Program Newsletter* she reported that Sauvignon musque has the same DNA profile as Sauvignon blanc.



A selection created from Savagnin/Sauvignon musque FPMS 01 using heat treatment and tissue culture remains in the FPMS collection today. The new selection which is designated Sauvignon blanc (musque) FPMS 27 was planted in the foundation block in 2001. Currently, the vines have Provisional California Foundation Stock status. After they are professionally identified, the registration status of all the propagation materials from these vines will be advanced to Foundation Stock status.

Sauvignon blanc FPMS 01 was the only registered selection available from FPMS from 1992 to 1997. Then, in the 1998-99 dormant season, two Italian selections (ISV-CPF-5 and ISV-CPF-2) imported from Conegliano, Italy in 1988 became registered selections 06 and 07 respectively.

Five more Sauvignon blanc selections were added to the registered list in the 2001-02 dormant season. This set included an Italian clone (ISV1) from Conegliano, Italy in 1988, now designated FPMS 17, and three generic clones reported to be from the French 316, 242 and 378. They are now designated FPMS 14, 20 and 21 respectively. The first official ENTAV-INRA trademark clone of Sauvignon blanc was also registered last winter. It is designated as clone 376 at both ENTAV and FPMS.

Six other Sauvignon blanc selections (FPMS 18, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26) with Provisional California Foundation Stock status have recently been planted in the FPMS foundation block and are awaiting professional identification. FPMS 18 and 25 are generic selections reported to be from the French clones 317 and 378 respectively. FPMS 24 is from the Italian clone ISV-CPF-3. The other three are California heritage selections.

Sauvignon blanc FPMS 22 came to Davis around 1990 from a very old head trained, gnarled and neglected vine in the southeast corner of the UC Davis Oakville field station. Phil Freese, former vice president of Wine Growing at Robert Mondavi Winery, encouraged FPMS to preserve this selection because he suspected that the vine might have been part of a very old vineyard that originated before the modern Sauvignon blanc introductions. Galet looked at this vine during one of his

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trips to California in the 1980s and told Freese that it was true Sauvignon blanc. Tests conducted at FPMS showed the original material was infected with leafroll and severe RSP. Shoot tip tissue culture was used to create selection FPMS 22, which qualifies for provisional Foundation Stock status.

Sauvignon blanc FPMS 23 was donated in 1999 by Daniel Roberts at Kendall-Jackson. It was from their Howell Mountain Vineyard. Roberts said that, "According to our winemakers, this Sauvignon was the best fruit in our program. But a large part of the quality was the soil (well drained fractured volcanic rock) and the climate (cool mountain vineyard). The earlier source is very vague... some people said Dry Creek others said Russian River." The cuttings that came from Kendall-Jackson were negative on all the tests for virus conducted at FPMS, so no treatment was necessary to qualify FPMS 23 for Provisional Foundation Stock status.

Sauvignon blanc FPMS 26 was selected in 1997 out of a well-respected Napa County vineyard that was probably planted around 1945. The wines made from it are reported to be distinctive, with intense varietal character. Due to the vineyard age, we suspect that the source of this selection may be other than Sauvignon blanc FPMS 01. The original material was infected with leafroll and corky bark. Shoot tip culture was used at FPMS to eliminate the virus.

Tests are in progress to qualify the Italian clone R3 from Rauscedo, Italy in 1994 for the R&C Program. Tissue culture was used to attempt to eliminate Ruprestis stem pitting from this selection which is currently designated FPMS S31. Test results are expected in the spring of 2003.

The newest candidate for the FPMS Savignon blanc collection is Sauvignon musque selected by Larry Hyde, a Carneros region grape grower well known for his collection of wine grape varieties and clones. He made the selection from Sauvignon musque materials that came from Arroyo Seco. Recent DNA analysis conducted by Gerald Dangl in Carole Meredith's lab showed that the Hyde Sauvignon musque selection is the same as Sauvignon blanc; it will be offered under that varietal designation. Disease tests were started at FPMS this spring 2002.

In less than a decade, the FPMS Sauvignon blanc col-

lection has grown from a single registered selection to a total of eighteen selections—fifteen of which are currently registered or provisional in the R&C Program. The generosity of viticulturists and winemakers in California and Europe have made this growth possible. California nursery assessment funds provided for the disease testing and disease elimination work have also been key in creating this expansion.

References:

1. Stoll, H. F. How the Choice Sauterne Grapes Were Introduced into California, *Wines and Vines*, October 1935.
2. A Winelover's Wine Called Sauvignon Blanc, *Robert Lawrence Balzer's Private Guide to Food and Wine*, May 1977. 🍇



This old vine growing in the southeast corner of the UC Davis Oakville field station was the source of Sauvignon blanc FPMS 22. (Photo courtesy of Phil Freese)

Sauvignon blanc Selections at FPMS

| Selection # | Period registered in CA R&C program | Source |
|--------------------|--|---|
| 01 | registered 1967–81 and 1992 to present | Wente 1958 and Chateau Yquem, France 1880s |
| 03 | registered 1973–83 (currently non-registered) | Jackson, Amador County, plants produced from 03 using tissue culture are being tested to try to re-qualify this source for registration |
| 06 | registered 1998 | ISV-CPF-5 from Conegliano, Italy in 1988 |
| 07 | registered 1998 | ISV-CPF-2 from Conegliano, Italy in 1988 |
| 14 | registered 2001 | reported to be from French 316 |
| 17 | registered 2001 | ISV1 from Conegliano, Italy in 1988 |
| 18 | provisional 2000 | reported to be from French 317 |
| 20 | registered 2001 | reported to be from French 242 |
| 21 | registered 2001 | reported to be from French 378 |
| 22 | provisional 2000 | UC Davis Oakville field station, 1990 |
| 23 | provisional 2001 | Kendall-Jackson Winery, CA, 1999 |
| 24 | provisional 2001 | ISV-CPF-3 from Conegliano, Italy in 1988 |
| 25 | provisional 2001 | reported to be from French 378 |
| 26 | provisional 2001 | Napa County, CA, 1997 |
| 27 | provisional 2001 | Savagnin/Sauvignon musque from Pont-de-la-Maye, France in 1962 |
| 376 | registered 2000 | Authorized proprietary clone ENTAV-INRA® 376 from ENTAV, France |
| group #7252 | non-registered until disease tests completed in 2004 | Larry Hyde, Hyde Vineyards, CA in 2002 |
| S31 | non-registered until disease tests completed in 2003 | R3 from Rauscedo, Italy in 1994 |