

FRENCH SPIRITS

Last Updated: 2018

HISTORY

- 1553 – 1st distillation of cider
- 1606 – Guild of apple-brandy distillers of Normandy created
- 1909 – Cognac is delimited
 - Armagnac is delimited
- 1936 – Cognac becomes an AOC
 - Eau-de-vie de Cognac becomes an AOC
 - Eau-de-vie des Charentes becomes an AOC
 - Armagnac becomes an AOC
- 1942 – Calvados Pays d’Auge becomes an AOC
- 1984 – Calvados becomes an AOC
- 1991 – Pommeau de Normandy becomes an AOC
- 1996 – Cidre Pays d’Auge becomes an AOC in Normandy
 - Cidre Cornouaille becomes an AOC in Brittany
- 1997 – Domfrontais Calvados becomes an AOC
 - Pommeau de Bretagne becomes an AOC
- 2001 – Poire Domfrontais becomes an AOC
- 2009 – Pommeau de Maine becomes an AOC
- 2018 – Cognac XO went from min. 6 years to a min. 10 years
 - Cognac XXO introduced - min 14 years

CALVADOS AOCs

- All production has to occur within the geographical areas
 - Apple/pear harvest, manufacturing, distillation, and aging
 - Min. 70% bitter or bitter-sweet varieties (single variety not allowed)
 - “bitter”
 - Domaine, Frequin Rouge
 - Rich in tannin – used for body and color
 - “bitter-sweet”
 - Bedan, Blsquet, Noel des Champs
 - Most balanced between sugar, acid, and bitterness
 - “sweet”
 - Germaine, Rouge Duret
 - Rounds out the palate and adds fragrance
 - “tart”
 - Rambault, Rene Martin
 - Used for freshness
- Planting = 250 trees per ha with a avg. yield of 25 tons
 - Tree produces after 10 years and full production at 15 years (70 year life span)
 - Cordon = 600 per ha with a avg. yield of 35 tons
 - Produces after 4 years and full production at 8 years (30 year life span)
- 18kg of apples = 13L of cider at 5% ABV = 1L of Calvados at 70% ABV

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- Distillation
 - Heads and tails are redistilled
 - Heart of 1st distillation = "brouillis" or "petite eau" = 28-30% ABV
 - Heart of 2nd distillation = "bonne chauffe" = max 72% ABV
 - Min 40% ABV
- Age Indications
 - ***/Trois Pommles/Very Special (VS) = 2 years
 - Vieux/Reserve = 3 years
 - Very Old (VO)/Vieille Reserve/Very Special Old Pale (VSOP) = 4 years
 - Hors d'Age/XO/Tre Vieille Reserve/Tres Vieux/Extra/Naoleon = 6 years

CALVADOS PAYS D'AUGE AOC (1942)

- Shallow clay-calcareous soils
- Max 30% Perry pears
- 21 day fermentation at 20°C to min. 4.5% ABV
- 2x distillation in alembic pot still (required)
 - July 1st to June 30th
- Aged 2 years in cask

CALVADOS AOC (1984)

- 21 day fermentation at 20°C to min. 4.5% ABV
- 1x distillation in column still is most common (no requirements)
 - July 1st to June 30th
- Aged 2 years in cask

CALVADOS DOMFRONTAIS AOC (1997)

- Granite soils
- Min. 30% Perry pears
- 30 day fermentation at 20°C to min. 4.5% ABV
- 1x distillation in column still (required)
 - July 1st to June 30th
- Aged 3 years in cask

POMMEAU AOCs

- Min. 70% bitter or bitter-sweet varieties

POMMEAU DE NORMANDIE (1991)

- Must = min. 108 g/L sugar
- 16-18% ABV
 - Fortified with Calvados (3/4 pomace to 1/4 brandy)
 - Aged 1 year and min 65% ABV
- Min. 69 g/L RS
- Aged 14 months in cask



SOURCE: <http://www.idac-aoc.fr/index.php/en/les-calvados/l-histoire.html>

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POMMEAU DE BRETAGNE (1997)

- Granite and shale soils
- Must = min 123 g/L sugar
- 16-18% ABV
 - Fortified with apple brandy from Brittany (3/4 pomace to 1/4 brandy)
 - Aged 1 year and min. 65% ABV
- Min. 90 g/L RS
- Aged 14 months in cask + 30 days in bottle

POMMEAU DU MAINE (2009)

- Must = min 123 g/L sugar
- 16-18% ABV
 - Fortified with "Eau-de-vie de cidre du Maine" (3/4 pomace to 1/4 brandy)
 - Aged 1 year and min. 65% ABV
- Min. 90 g/L RS
- Aged 21 months in cask + 30 days in bottle

COGNAC

- Control body = BNIC
- "Maitre de Chai" = master blender
- Cognac AOP = 100% from within the stated region
- Fine Champagne AOP = min. 50% Grand Champagne
- Grapes
 - Colombard, Folle Blanche, Ugni Blanc
 - Max. 10% each: Folignan, Jurancon Blanc, Meslier St Francois, Montils, Semillon, and Select
- Base wine = 9% ABV
- Min. 40% ABV
- **Distillation** = complete by March 31st
 - 1st distillation = brouillis = 28-32% ABV
 - 2nd distillation = repasse = min. 60% ABV
 - Heart = bonne chauffe = max 25 hL at max 72% ABV
 - Charentais still (max 30 hL size)
- **Aging:**
 - In a registered BNIC storage facility
 - Aged 2 years in new Limousin or Tronçais, Sessile, or Pedunculate oak (270-450L)
 - "Paradise" = dark cellar for old Cognac aging
- **Age Indications** (youngest eau-de-vie)
 - ***/VS = 2 years
 - Reserve/VSOP = 4 years
 - Hors d'Age/Napoleon = 6 years
 - XO = 10 years
 - XXO = 14 years
 - Vintage = year of harvest
- **Additives**
 - No chaptalization
 - Demineralized water to min. 40% ABV
 - Sugar
 - Caramel
 - Oak infusion

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• Growing Areas:

- Grande Champagne
 - Chalk (Cretaceous) and clay soils
 - 13,159ha under vine
- Petite Champagne
 - Clay and chalk soils (Cretaceous)
 - 15,246 ha under vine
- Borderies
 - Clay and flint soils
 - 3,987 ha under vine (smallest)
- Fin Bois
 - "Groies" = 60% clay and chalk soils (Jurassic)
 - 31,001 ha under vine
- Bon Bois
 - Sandy soils
 - 9,308ha under vine
- Bois Ordinaries/Bois a Terroir
 - Sandy soils
 - 1,101 ha under vine



SOURCE: http://www.cognac.fr/cognac/_en/2_cognac/index.aspx

PINEAU DES CHARENTES AOC (1945)

- VDL Blanc
 - Cab Franc, Cab Sauv, Colombard, Folle Blanche, Jurançon Blanc, Merlot Blanc, Merlot Noir, Meslier St. François, Montils, Sauvignon Blanc, Sémillon, Trousseau Gris (<10%), Ugni Blanc
 - April 1st release (2nd year)
 - Min. 12 months in oak
- VDL Rose
 - Cab Franc, Cab Sauv, Malbec, and Merlot
 - Just 1st release (1st year)
 - Min. 6 months in oak
- VDL Rouge
 - Cab Franc, Cab Sauv, Malbec, and Merlot
 - October 1st release (1st year)
 - Min. 8 months in oak
- 16-22% ABV
 - Fortified with Cognac (60% ABV)
- 170 g/L MW
- 85 hl/ha
- 2,200 vines per ha
- Aging Requirements:
 - "Old" = >7 years
 - "Very/Extra Old" = >12 years

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ARMAGNAC

- Controlling body = BNIA
- Armagnac AOC (1936)
- Armagnac Tenareze AOC (1936)
- Bas Armagnac AOC (1936)
- Blanche Armagnac AOC (2005)
 - Must be aged in inert vessels for min. 3 months
- **Grapes:**
 - Ugni Blanc = acid and low alcohol (high quality)
 - Folle Blanche = floral and elegant (rare)
 - Baco = hybrid of Folle Blanche and Noah created after phylloxera, grows best in sandy Bas Armagnac and suited for long aging
 - Colombard = rarely distilled, more used for Cotes de Gascogne IGT wines – sometimes blended for fruity and spicy aromas
 - Clairette de Gascogne, Jurancon Blanc, Plant de Graise, Meslier St Francois, Mauzac
- **Distillation** – by March 31st
 - 1x distilled in alembic continuous still or 2x in pot still
 - Eau-de-vie = 52%-72% ABV
 - Min. 40% ABV
- **Aging:**
 - Aged in new 400-420L oak barrels
 - Gascony or Limousin is typical
 - Alcohol decreased roughly 0.5% per year
 - “bonbonnes” = glass demi-johns
- **Additives**
 - Distilled/De-mineralized water
 - Sugar
 - Caramel
 - Oak chips
- **Regions:**
 - Bas-Armagnac
 - West, rolling countryside, sandy clay loam soils with some boulbenes (silt)
 - Light, fruity styles
 - Armagnac Tenareze
 - Boulbenes (silt) and terrefords (clay-limestone) soils
 - Full bodied styles
 - Haut-Armagnac
 - Limestone and clay soils with boulbenes
 - Sparse plantings

• **Age Indications:**

- ***/VS = 1-3 years
- Napoleon/VSOP = 4 years
- Hors d'Age/XO = 10 years
- Vintage = year of harvest

FLOC DE GASCOGNE AOP

- Fortified with 52% Armagnac (aged until April 1 after distillation)



SOURCE: <http://www.armagnac.fr/en>

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FINE DE BOURGOGNE AOC (1946)

- Blanc = Aligote, CH, Melon de Bourgogne, PG, PB, Sacy, SB
- Rouge = Cesar, Gamay, Gamay de Bouze, Gamay de Chaudenay, PN, Tressot
 - Base wine created from lees saturated wine after racking
 - Max 3% of total wine production
- Distillation
 - Pot or column stills = 72% ABV
 - Final = min 40% ABV
- Aging:
 - 3 years in max 60 hL oak
- Aging Indications – no varietal or geographical labeling
 - Vieille = 4 years
 - Tres Vieille = 6 years
 - Hors d'Age = 10 years

MARC DE BOURGOGNE AOC (1942)

- Blanc = Aligote, CH, Melon de Bourgogne, PG, PB, Sacy, SB
- Rouge = Cesar, Gamay, Gamay de Bouze, Gamay de Chaudenay, PN, Tressot
- Distillation
 - Pot or column stills = 72% ABV
 - Final = min 40% ABV
- Aged min. 2 years in max 60 hL oak
- Aging Indications – no varietal or geographical labeling
 - Vieille = 4 years
 - Tres Vieille = 6 years
 - Hors d'Age = 10 years

MARC D'ALSACE AOC (1966)

- 100% Gewurztraminer
 - 100% destemmed
- Distilled in copper Alembic/Pot still to min. 68.5% ABV
- Max RS: 10 g/L
- Aged min 3 months in inert vessel

MARC DU JURA AOC (2015)

- Blanc = CH, Savagnin, PG
- Rouge = PN, Poulsard, Trousseau
- Savagnin required plus 2 more varieties
- Distillation in pot or column still by April 30th
 - Max 70% ABV
- Aged 24 months in max 600L oak
- Age Indications:
 - Vieux: 5 years
 - Tres Vieux = 8 years
 - Hors d'Age = 10 years

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KIRSCH DE FOUGEROLLES AOC (2010)

- Red and black cherries
 - Fermented with pit for 5 weeks
- Distillation
 - 2x distilled in copper pot still by April 30th to max 65% ABV
 - Final = min 45% ABV
- Aging:
 - 6 months in neutral container
- Bottle
 - Mouth blown bottle (Bo) of ~70cL
- "Production Fermiere" = produced, matured, and bottled on same estate of harvest and fermentation

MARTINIQUE AOC (1996)

- Sugarcane
 - Saccharum officinarum or Saccharum spontaneum
 - Min 14* Brix
 - Min. 4.7 pH
 - Min 10 years field age
- **Fermentation**
 - Max 500 hL tanks
 - No enrichment
 - 3.5-7.5% ABV
- **Distillation**
 - Between Jan 2 and Sep 5
 - Continuous column still
 - Max 250 hL per 24 hours
 - 65-75% ABV
 - Final = min 40% ABV
- **Additives:**
 - Distilled and De-mineralized water
 - Sugar
 - Caramel
 - Oak Chips
- **Label Indications:**
 - "Blanc" = no color and aged min 8 weeks
 - "Eleves sous bois" = 12 months in oak
 - "Rhum Ambre/Paille" = 18 months in oak
 - VO/Hors d'Age/Vieux = 3 years
 - VSOP = 4 years
 - XO = 6 years
 - "Rhum Agricole" must be on the label
- **Smoking distilleries:**
 - The Favorite
 - Depaz
 - Saint James
 - La Mauny
 - JM
 - Simon and Neisson

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CIDRES AOCs

- Min. 70% bitter and bitter-sweet apples
 - Apples are stored in attic or wooden crates for several weeks until perfectly ripe
 - Juice is left out for a few hours for flavor and color development
 - “bitter”
 - Domaine, Frequin Rouge
 - Rich in tannin – used for body and color
 - “bitter-sweet”
 - Bedan, Blsquet, Noel des Champs
 - Most balanced between sugar, acid, and bitterness
 - “sweet”
 - Germaine, Rouge Duret
 - Rounds out the palate and adds fragrance
 - “tart”
 - Rambault, Rene Martin
 - Used for freshness

CIDRE PAYS D’AUGE AOC (NORMANDY – 1996)

- 6% ABV
- MW = 108 g/L
- RS = min. 20 g/L
- Slow fermentation at 10°C
- 6 week rest period prior to bottling to cool and develop the natural foam

CIDRE CORNOUAILLE AOC (BRITTANY – 1996)

- Same as Pays d’Auge

POIRE DOMFRONT AOC (2002)

- Perry pears trees are extremely long lived (300+ years)
- 5.5% ABV
- 6 week fermentation
- 6 week resting in bottle to produce natural foam
- Collectively released under “Le Roy des Vergers” brandname

CONTENTIN AOP (2016)

- ◦ Min. 60% bitter
- ◦ Min. 3.5% ABV (5% if “Extra Brut”)
- ◦ RS: 18-35 g/L (max 18 g/L if “Extra Brut”)
- ◦ Min 1 bar of pressure

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AGE INDICATION	CALVADOS	COGNAC	ARMAGNAC	FINE/MARC BOURGOGNE	MARC DU JURA	MARTINIQUE
*** / VS / Trois Pommes	2	2	1-3	--	--	--
Vieux / Vieille	3	--	--	4	5	3
Reserve	3	4	--	--	--	--
VO / Vieille Reserve	4	--	--	--	--	--
VSOP	4	4	4	--	--	4
Tres Vieux /Tre Vieille Reserve	6	--	--	6	8	--
Hors d'Age	6	6	10	10	10	3
Napoleon	6	6	4	--	--	--
XO	6	10	6	--	--	6
XO Premium	--	--	20	--	--	--
XXO	--	14	--	--	--	--

SOURCES

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 Cognac: The Story of the World's Greatest Brandy (Classic Wine Library)
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FRENCH LIQUEURS

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CHARTREUSE (1605)

- **History**
 - 1605 the monks received a gift from one of King Henry IV's men of an ancient manuscript nicknamed "Elixir of Long Life"
 - From a 16th century alchemist
 - 130 natural plants, herbs, and botanicals
 - Wine based alcohol
 - 1793 Chartreuse monks left France
 - Religious orders were ordered out of the country during the French Revolution
 - 1816 monks returned to their monastery
 - 1903 the distillery was nationalized by the French government
 - The Carthusian Monks were expelled from France
- **Production Locations**
- Outside of Grenoble France (1737-1860)
 - "La Grande Chartreuse"
 - Located in the Chartreuse mountain
 - 130 herbs/plants/flowers/etc are all still store here today
- Foirvoire, France (1860-1903/1930-1935)
 - Monastery was destroyed in a landslide in 1935
 - Some product was still intact and taken to Voiron where the monks owned a small warehouse and an aging cellar
- Tarragona, Spain (1903-1989)
 - "Une Tarragone"
 - "Chartreuse" was nationalized and was produced by a private company until 1929
- Marseilles, France (1921-1929)
 - "Tarragone"
- Voiron, France (1935-present)
 - Only Chartreuse production today
 - 130 herbs/plants/flowers/etc are stored at "La Grande Chartreuse"
 - 1966 the cellar was enlarged
 - 164m long = longest liqueur cellar in the world
- **Production:**
 - 130 herbs, plants, botanicals (wine based alcohol)
 - Crushing and mixing by two monks in the monastery
 - Then taken to the distillery in Voiron to macerate in alcohol before distillation
 - Distillation in stainless steel stills
 - In the 19 century they used copper stills
 - Aged several years in large oak barrels
 - Russian, Hungarian, and French oak
 - Chartreuse Diffusion
 - A company that handles bottling, packaging, advertising, and selling

FRENCH LIQUEURS

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- **Bottlings:**

- Elixir Vegetal de la Grand-Chartreuse (1737)
 - 69% ABV
- Green Chartreuse (1764)
 - "a milder style" of 130 ingredients
 - 55% ABV
- Yellow Chartreuse (1838)
 - "more mild and sweeter style"
 - 40% ABV
- Chartreuse Blanche (1840-1880, 1886-1900)
- Vieillessement Exceptionnellement Prolonge "VEP" (1963)
 - Aged an extended amount of time in oak
 - Each bottle is individually numbered, sealed with wad and packed in its own wooden box (1970)
 - Green = 54% ABV
 - Yellow = 42% ABV
- Liqueur du 9eme Centenaire (1984)
 - Commemorates the foundation (900th year) of the Chartreuse Order
 - 47% ABV
 - Natural color
 - "slightly sweeter than green"
- "1605" (2005)
 - Commemorates 400th anniversary of the gift of the recipe
 - 56% ABV
- Liqueur des Melleurs Ouvriers de France "MOF" (2007)
 - Created by the best craftsmen of France "sommeliers"
 - A yellow style with less alcohol and more sweetness
 - 45% ABV
- Genepi
 - Traditional term given by residents from the Alps to aromatic Alpine plants
 - Genepi des Peres Chartreux = 40% ABV
 - Genepi du Habert = 25% ABV
- Walnut Liqueur
 - Regional specialty made with green walnuts harvested on June 24th and macerated in wine alcohol
 - Noix des Peres Chartreux = 23% ABV
- The Gentiane des Peres Chartreux
 - Aperitif made with Alpine flowers
 - 22.7% ABV

- **CLASSIC COCKTAILS INCLUDING CHARTREUSE**

- Last Word (1920) = Gin, Green Chartreuse, Maraschino, Lime Juice
- Widow's Kiss = Calvados, Yellow Chartreuse, Benedictine, Angostura Bitters
- Tipperary = Irish Whiskey, Sweet Vermouth, Green Chartreuse
- Chartreuse Swizzle = Green Chartreuse, Pineapple, Lime Juice, Falernum

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LILLET (1872)

- Produced in Podensac (Graves – near Sauternes)
- In 1937 the first major advertising campaign = America
- Known as “Kina Lillet” until the 1970s
 - In America it was always known as Lillet
- Serve well chilled (6-8°C or 43-46°F)
- 85% aromatized AOC wine – 15% macerated liqueurs (citrus peel)
 - Contained quinine until 1985
 - 17% ABV
 - Blanc = SB & Semillon
 - Rose = Semillon (berry liqueur)
 - Rouge = Merlot
- Products:
 - Kina Lillet (1887-1986)
 - Lillet Blanc (1986)
 - Lillet Blanc Reserve (--)
 - 12 months in barrel
 - Lillet Dry (1945)
 - Created for the British market
 - Inspired by the Vesper
 - Lillet Rose (2011)
 - Lillet Rouge (1962)
 - Lillet Rouge Reserve (--)
 - 12 months in barrel
 - 1961 Lillet Vieux (1972)

QUINQUINAS

Wine-based apertifs flavored with quinine

BYRRH (1886)

- Rousillon
- Red wine (Carignan/GR), mistelle, quinine, spices, orange, and coffee)

DUBONNET (1846)

- Owned by Heaven Hill Distilleries (USA) and Pernod Ricard (FR)
 - Made in Bardstown, KY
- Fortified wine, herbs, spices, peels, quinine
- 19% ABV

ST. RAPHAEL (1830)

- Provence
- Wine, mistelle, with quinine, cocoa, bitter orange, vanilla, calumba, ++
- Products
 - The Gold-Amber
 - White mistelle + quinine, bitter orange, vanilla, cocoa
 - The Red
 - Red mistelle + quinine, bitter orange

RIN QUIN QUIN (--)

- Provence
- Neutral spirit infused (6-12 months) with sweet peaches blended with white wine, citrus and sugar
- 15% ABV

FRENCH VERMOUTH

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NOILLY PRAT (1850)

- Marseille
- Products
 - Extra Dry = 18% ABV
 - Dry white wine with botanicals (Roman chamomile, gentian, orange peel, nutmeg)
 - Dry
 - Original Dry = 18% ABV
 - Aged dry white wine with botanicals (Roman chamomile, gentian, orange, nutmeg)
 - Medium Dry
 - Ambre = 16% ABV
 - Dry white wine with botanicals (rose bud, cardamom, and cinnamon)
 - Sweet
 - Rouge = 16% ABV
 - Dry red wine with saffron, lavender, clove, and cocoa bean
 - Medium Sweet

DOLIN (1815)

- Chambéry AOP
- Products:
 - Blanc = 16% ABV – 130 g/L RS
 - Dry = 17.5% ABV – 30 g/L RS
 - Rouge = 16% ABV – 130 g/L RS
 - Chambéryzette = 16% ABV
 - Strawberry liqueur

ROUTIN (1883)

- Chambéry AOP

SOURCES

Cognac: The Seductive Saga of the World's Most Coveted Spirit
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