



COGNAC, ARMAGNAC and CALVADOS: The Three Great Brandies of France Tasting Sheet:

1. Remy Martin VS Petite Champagne Cognac
2. Camus VSOP Borderies Single Vineyard Cognac
3. Pierre Ferrand Esprit des Dieux, 1er Cru, Grande Champagne
4. Cles de Ducs Armagnac VSOP
5. Cles de Ducs Vieil Armagnac XO
6. Chateau de Tariquet Armagnac Folle Blanche 8 ans (2002/2013)
7. Chateau de Tariquet Armagnac 1993 (1993/2010)
8. Les Domaines Grassa Armagnac Reserve
9. Chateau de Laubade Armagnac VSOP
10. Chateau de Laubade Armagnac XO
11. Lemorton Vieux Calvados Domfrontais NV AOC
12. Dupont Vielle Reserve Calvados Pays d'Auge AOC

COGNAC

The 6 Crus +1

Grande Champagne

Central cru; mineral, limestone and chalk soils produce wines of structure, high acidity and long aging

Petite Champagne

Somewhat lesser focused chalk/limestone soil than Grande Champagne with clay/sand mixed.

Fine Champagne

A blend of Grande and Petite, with minimum 50% Grande, is allowed to be labeled Fine Champagne.

Borderies

Smallest cru with clay soil dominating; provides highly sought after soft and mellow eau-de-vie

Fins Bois

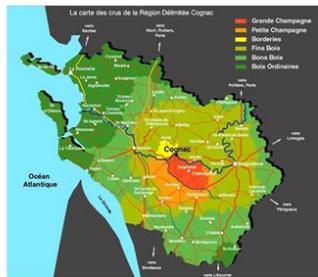
Large area with mix of soils; contributes major percentage to Cognac AOC.

Bons Bois/Bois Ordinaires

Outlying areas of primarily sandy soils, some clay and flint.

Cognac is an AOC/GI grape brandy from western France made to careful specification in a delimited area encompassing the Charente and Charente-Maritime centered on the Charente River. Dutch merchants convinced French growers to cultivate white varieties to distill into brandy to reduce shipping costs. Eventually the Cognacais took over the distillation and shipping for themselves, created a thriving tradition of quality and established Cognac as the most famous and iconic brandy in the world. The “Cognac Process” requires double-distillation in small batch copper alembic stills and various maturation levels in French white oak barrels.

Today Cognac encompasses 75,000 hectares of vineyard and maintains almost 5,000 grower-distillers and several large negociant houses, with the majority of its production exported around the world.



Grape Varieties Several varieties permitted; although five major varieties dominate:

- ♦ **Ugni Blanc** (aka Trebbiano)-structure; high acidity & high yield; 98% of Cognac
- ♦ **Columbard**-spice; herbal
- ♦ **Folle Blanche**-floral, but finicky almost wiped out by phylloxera
- ♦ **Montils**– provides fruit and floral notes
- ♦ **Folignan**-cross between Folle Blanche x Ugni Blanc

Distillation

Cognac requires strictly regulated double discontinuous distillation in specifically designed copper pot stills called alembic Charentaise. Direct flame must be used and only small batch (30hl) is allowed.

First distillation is Premier Chauffe (*brouillis*, boil or brew) to raise alcohol level; second distillation, Bon Chauffe or “repassé,” is to concentrate alcohol and make cuts (heads, hearts, seconds, tails), selecting only the purest heart of the run for eau-de-vie.

All fermentation is required to be completed no later than March 31 of the year following harvest.

Cognac rules allow water and small additions of three approved additives, up to 4° maximum:

1. Caramel Coloring
2. Sugar syrup
3. Boisé (oak/tannin tea)

Maturation

French white oak is required in Cognac, but tradition favors Limousin, with some Tronçais.

Staves are rick-dried for up to three years before coopering. Barrels range between 350—400 hl.

Barrels are toasted to order, with most using medium to light toast. Most producers use this new oak for only a few months, then rack to older (usually) Limousin barrels for longer maturation.

Traditional preference is for less wood and vanillin influence and greater impact of slow oxidation and reduction of fatty acids.

Cognac Comptes

VS/*:** minimum 2 years in oak

VSOP: minimum 4 years

XO/Napoléon/Réserve: minimum 6 years (2018-10 yrs)

Age-Dated: all cognacs must be minimum of age stated

Vintage-Dated: all cognacs must be from vintage year

Cognac may be:

- from entire AOC
- Fine Champagne, if blended of Grande & Petite Champagnes, with at least 50% Grande.
- Individual Crus



The Cognacs: Terroir, Maturation and Essence

Remy Martin V.S. Petite Champagne

One of the “four great houses” of Cognac, Remy Martin is an icon in world trade, with the world’s most popular and well known V.S.O.P, bearing its distinctive centaur logo on its red and black label.

Remy Martin’s characteristic style of light, airy, floral but rich cognacs, however, may be best introduced by its V.S., a blend of 100% Petite Champagne from its grower-producers.

The V.S. Petite Champagne is selectively distributed, and formerly bore a “Grand Cru” designation. It is matured for a minimum of twice the time necessary by law, so is at least four years old at release.

Since Petite Champagne is prized for its floral assertiveness but slightly faster maturation capability, it is quite possibly better suited to a V.S. maturation grade than a Grande Champagne.

The initial aromas are of sweet redskin apples, but immediately evolve to elegant and light but quite complex floral notes. Delicious by itself, it can be easily served as a mixed drink with ginger, ginger beer, orange liqueur, or orange bitters.

Remy-Cointreau USA is the importer for Remy Martin Cognac.

Camus V.S.O.P. Borderies Single Estate

The House of Camus spans several generations and remains a family-owned company; with its aggressive expansion it is now called the “Fifth House of Cognac” and vies with Hennessy, Remy Martin, Courvoisier and Martell in many markets.

Camus is the only major house situated in the Borderies, and possesses the most vineyards in the area now highly sought after for its particular Cru qualities of soft roundness, rich character and early maturation, all derived from the unique dominance of heavy clay soils in the Cru.

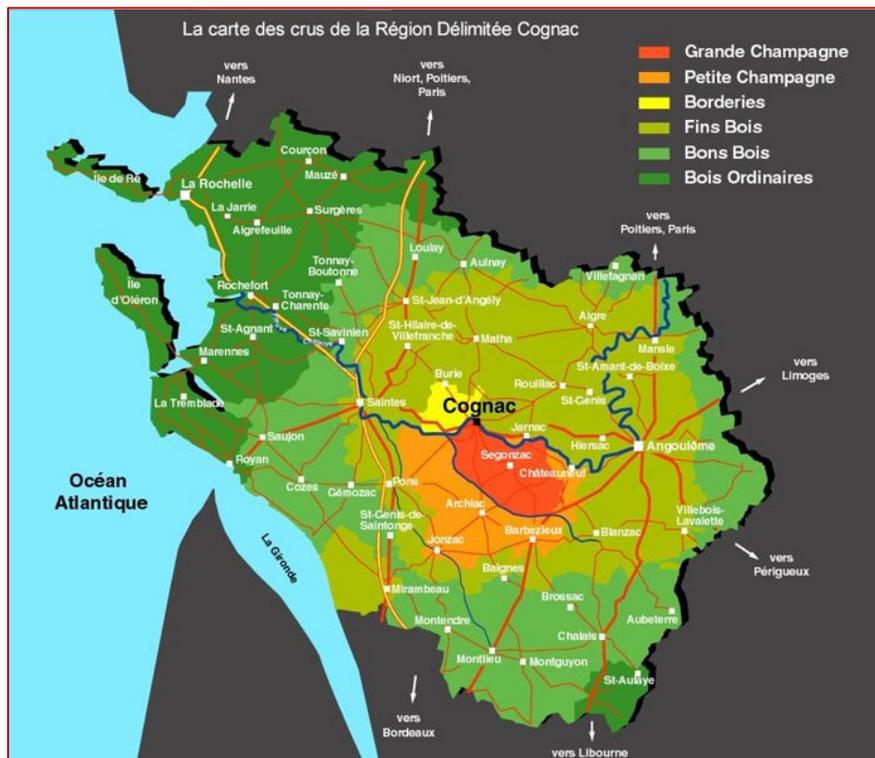
The Camus Borderies is a perfect exemplar for both Borderies and V.S.O.P., for it precisely represents the nature of the terroir---soft, rounded, mellow and balanced---and shows the aging regimen for a V.S.O.P. as well---the lifted airiness of the aromatics leading to the enhanced richness and depth of the components added by barrel wood and further deepened

by oxidative aging. This is impressive V.S.O.P., in that it manages to appeal to lovers of the young and fruity/floral/vanilla face of cognac as well as those who prefer the rounder, deeper, elements that come from maturity.

Pierre Ferrand **Esprit des Dieux, 1er Cru, Grande Champagne**

Pierre Ferrand is located in the heart of Grande Champagne and is owned and operated by Alexandre Gabriel. Ferrand has established a reputation for both championing and producing some of the most impressive traditional cognacs from the Grande Champagne while at the same time creating innovative approaches with new styles, such as the “Original 1840”, styled on cognacs of the 1800s but created to appeal to bartenders and the cocktail set.

Pierre Ferrand Esprit des Dieux is a remarkably robust and hearty cognac at about 25 years of age. Gabriel describes it as “Brilliant brown with mahogany highlights. Nose dominated by cedarwood, accompanied by notes of spice (cinnamon, pepper, nutmeg) and black tea. Pierre Ferrand Esprit des Dieux is distinguished by powerful masculine notes of leather, licorice and tobacco. A powerful and assertive cognac



ARMAGNAC

Armagnac is a grape brandy distilled in Gascony, centered in the départements of Gers and Landes. It is considered the oldest brandy in France, predating Cognac by about 150 years. However, it is distinctly different from Cognac in many ways, resulting in an entirely different stylistic expression.

The AOC is divided into three sub-AOCs: Bas-Armagnac, Ténarèze, and Haut-Armagnac. With its landlocked nature and tradition of small individual farmers, Armagnac never received the commercial/export attention Cognac did; much of the Armagnac produced today is thus from small to moderate-sized producers. Armagnac maintains a fine reputation among connoisseurs of brandy.

Three Sub-AOCs

Bas-Armagnac

Westernmost, higher in altitude; sandy soils with iron-rich deposits and pieces of clay; greatest number of quality producers located here.

Ténarèze

Central AOC, with harder soils of clay and limestone that yield structured, long-aging eaux-de-vie. Many negociants are located here. Much vineyard land is now going over to table wine production.

Haut-Armagnac

Easternmost and southernmost of the AOC, with hard limestone soils; few producers remain, and little vineyard land exists; eaux-de-vie tend to be harsh and flat in nature.



Grape Varieties

Nine varieties permitted; although four major varieties dominate:

- ♦ **Ugni Blanc** (aka Trebbiano)-structure; high acidity & high yield
- ♦ **Baco Blanc** (Baco 22A)-earthy; fast maturing, rounded and weighty hybrid
- ♦ **Columbard**-spice; herbal
- ♦ **Folle Blanche**-floral, but finicky almost wiped out by phylloxera

Distillation

Armagnac allows both single-continuous or double alembic distillation; however, 95+% is in *alembic Armagnacais*, an early type of a hybrid pot-with-single-column continuous still. The combination type of still allows sufficient alcohol strength to develop with only one distillation and keeps the alcohol levels lower than other brandies.

The grape varieties are kept separate through vinification, distillation and subsequent aging.

The finished distillation may be bottled and sold as a clear eau-de-vie called Blanche d'Armagnac; however, most is then aged for several years and blended.

A portion of distillate is kept separate and added to unfermented grape must. The resulting traditional aperitif is known as *Floc de Gascogne*.

Maturation

French oak is required in Armagnac, but tradition favors a local, high-tannin oak called Monlezun Black Oak.

Most producers use this oak for only a few months, then rack to older (usually) Limousin barrels for longer maturation.

Traditional preference is for less wood and vanillin influence and greater impact of slow oxidation and reduction of fatty acids.

Varieties are kept intact in barrel and all blending is done post-maturation.

Armagnac rules allow small additions of four approved additives:

1. Water
2. Caramel Coloring
3. Boisé (oak tea)
3. Sugar syrup

Armagnac Comptes

Blanche d'Armagnac: clear eau-de-vie, usually unaged

Armagnac: minimum 1 year in oak

***** (Three Stars):** minimum 2 years in oak

VSOP/Réserve: minimum 4 years in cask

Napoléon/Vielle Réserve: minimum 6 years in cask

XO: minimum 10 years **XO Premium:** minimum 20 years.

Hors d'Âge/Single Vintage: minimum 10 years in cask

Armagnac may be:

- blends of vineyards/producers/sub-regions/ages
- Single Vintage
- Single Vineyard
- Single Estate
- Single Variety
- Cask Strength (Degrés Naturel)



The Armagnac Producers

Clés des Ducs

Clés des Ducs Armagnac is located in the village of Panjas, and possesses vineyards originally developed by Paul Baylac in 1774. The owner, the Armanoir Group, engages 200 growers, owns 2,500 hectares of vineyards, maintains 2 vinification sites, 1 distillery with 4 operating continuous stills, and 4 separate aging facilities throughout Armagnac.

Cellar Master Phillipe Lezama has presided over the Armagnac and dictated the style for over 35 years. Clés des Ducs is 100% Ugni Blanc, and all iterations are the same master formula with age differentiation only. Barrels are lightly toasted and new eau-de-vie is in new barrel for only three to four months maximum, to avoid too much impression of wood, before being racked to older barrels for long term aging. The brand prefers Armagnac with fruity notes and the characters of age. Most expressions are well above the minimum requirements. No sugars, colors or other additives are allowed.

International Beverage Company (Interbevusa.com) is the U.S. importer for Clés des Ducs.

Chateau de Tariquet/Les Domaines Grassa

Chateau de Tariquet has an colorful history. M. Artaud, an itinerant bear trainer who eventually settled in America, became homesick for Gascony and returned to purchase Chateau de Tariquet in Éauze, Gers, in 1912. He found himself with a lovely property devastated by phylloxera and barely sustaining viticulture. In 1939 Pierre Grassa, born in France of Spanish parents, met Helene Artaud in Éauze, fell in love and married, dedicating themselves to restoring Tariquet to its former glory. In 1982 the Domaines Grassa began an enormously successful wine operation that is still thriving and expanding around the world today with the Cotes des Gascogne wines of Domaines du Tariquet, under the direction of Yves, their son, and now his sons, Armin and Rémy, as well.

Throughout this saga, the family continued to develop their Bas-Armagnacs to great acclaim and today produce an extensive line consisting of their Classic Series, the "Color Series", a Carafe/Decanter Series, and the special Les Degrés Naturels.

Chateau de Tariquet Bas-Armagnac customarily features blends of Ugni Blanc and Baco, special blends of Ugni Blanc-Baco-Folle Blanche and several Folle Blanche iterations.

Les Domaines Grassa Reserve and Chateau de Tariquet 8 Year Folle Blanche were provided by U.S. Importer CVI Brands (www.cvibrands.com), located in San Carlos, California.

Chateau de Tariquet was provided by Robert Kacher of U.S. importer www.RobertKacherSelections.com.

Chateau de Laubade

For 144 years, Chateau de Laubade has been a shining light of the Bas Armagnac. Located in an idyllic setting in Sorbets d'Armagnac, the stunning chateau and grounds, constructed by M. Noutens in 1870, have been managed by three generations of the Lesgourgues family since 1924. Vignoble Lesgourgues also owns four other wineries: Chateau Haut Selve and Chateau Le Bonnat in Graves, Chateau Loumelat in the Cotes de Blaye, and Chateau Peyros in Madiran.

Chateau de Laubade creates exclusive estate Bas Armagnac from four varieties: Ugni Blanc, Baco 22a, Columbard, and Folle Blanche. Although most releases are blends of the four varieties, Folle Blanche is also bottled as a single-variety. Chateau de Laubade is devoted to developing the Baco variety, and uses it heavily in their blends to attain a rich earthiness that is characteristic of their world-renowned style.

Chateau de Laubade VSOP and XO were provided by Jonathan Cambournac through importer-distributor Vinum Wine and Spirits Importing and Distributors (www.vinumimporting.com).



CALVADOS

The Three AOCs

Calvados

Calvados AOC may be sourced from the entire AOC of several sub-regions with varying soils. Most is apple-based and made with column stills.

Calvados Pays d'Auge

Pays d'Auge is a delimited area within Calvados that has a high reputation for quality. It may contain no more than 30% perry pears. It must be twice distilled in pot stills and barrel aged for three years.

Calvados Domfrontais

Domfrontais is a smaller sub-zone AOC that includes 30% or more pears with apples, is primarily made with column stills, and has its own rules for maturation.

Calvados is a distilled spirit based on apple and pear cider from the orchards of Normandy.

The Calvados tradition began in the 1500s and cider/pommeau/apple brandy became the common alcoholic beverages of Normandy, but the trade languished and the modern AOC was not established until 1984, with Domfrontais being declared as late as 1997.

Calvados is enjoying a resurgence of popularity, and is considered an extremely high-quality spirit, both as beverage and for use in cooking.

Fermentation/Distillation

Calvados, located in Normandy on the chilly and stormy Channel Coast of France, is not conducive to fine wine grapes. It is orchard country, primarily apples and pears; hence, the spirit of Calvados is based on distilled cider.

Cider apples and pears are harvested, pulped and made into cider. After aging, the cider may be distilled, either once in column stills or twice in alembic pot stills, and then matured in French oak barrels. As evaporation occurs, water may be added to bring the Calvados to the desired abv for bottling.

Pommeau AOC, a *mistelle* from Calvados, Bretagne or Maine, is fruity cider blended with eau-de-vie (*mutage*) at 3:1, then aged for at least one year. It is generally bottled at 15-20% abv.

Le Trou Normand—"The Norman Hole" is the popular Norman tradition of taking small shots of Calvados in between the sumptuous courses of Norman meals...to aid the digestion.

Apples and Pears

The apples and pears of Normandy are not all considered edible, as they are developed for acidity and sourness. They are graded and blended between acidic/sour, bitter, bittersweet, and sweet (for fermentation sugars) specifically for cider distillation. Each producer has his own preferred blend.

Curiously, the origination of Calvados began when entrepreneurs bought Basque/Spanish cider apples to the region in the 1500s.

Maturation

French white oak is required in Calvados. Barrels range from 250 hl to 600 hl.

Some producers use a regimen of new oak in smaller barrels for a brief time before racking the eau-de-vie into larger, older barrels. More traditional producers use only the larger, older barrels to impart less wood influence to the Calvados.

Calvados AOC and Calvados Pays d'Auge AOC require a minimum of 2 years maturation. Calvados Domfrontais AOC requires a minimum of 3 years.

Calvados Comptes

VS//Fine/*:** minimum 2 years; Domfrontais 3 years.

Vieux/Réserve: minimum 3 years.

VO/VSOP/Vielle Réserve: minimum 4 years

Napoléon: minimum 6 years.

XO/Hors d'Âge/ Très Vielle Réserve: minimum 10 years

DUPONT CALVADOS VIEILLE RESERVE

A.O.C. CALVADOS DU PAYS D'AUGE

Calvados Vieille Reserve is aged 5 years in oak barrels; 25% of new oak.

Terroir:	Clay/Oxfordian marl
Varieties:	80% bittersweet; 20% acid
Harvesting:	September to November
Alcohol content:	42 % vol.

TECHNIQUES USED:

The apples are mixed, crushed and pressed. The juice is fermented right out to give cider to be distilled. **Double distillation** is carried out 6 months after the fermentation has taken place. The first distillation gives the "petite eau" at 30% by volume and it is the second distillation, that of the "petite eau" which gives the Calvados.

Ageing: Five years minimum in toasted 400 L oak barrels, 25% of which are new. Bottled when ordered.

TASTING NOTES:

Eyes: Gold color. Bright and clear.

Nose: Intense and soft. Notes of fresh oak, vanilla sugar and candied fruits.

Mouth: First sensation is sweet and soft with notes of fresh liquorice. Citrus notes at the end. Empty glass offers notes of vanilla, citrus, and hay.

SUGGESTIONS

- Storage: very long, bottles upright
- As an Aperitif: on its own, over ice, or with a drop or two of water to let it release its aromas.
- For cooking: to flambé, and for sorbets and granités.
- As a digestive: drinking temperature 20-22°C (68 to 72°F)

LEMORTON CALVADOS RESERVE

A.O.C. CALVADOS DOMFRONTAIS

Calvados Reserve

is aged 6 years in oak barrels.

Terroir:	Clay/Limestone
Varieties:	70% pears; 30% apples
Harvesting:	October to December
Alcohol content:	42 % vol.

TECHNIQUES USED:

The apples are mixed, crushed and pressed. The juice is fermented out to give cider to be distilled. **Alembic single distillation** is carried out 11 months after the fermentation

Ageing: Six years in toasted 400 L oak barrels.

TASTING NOTES:

Eyes: Gold straw. Bright and clear.

Nose: Light pear, apple, vanilla spice.

Mouth: Bright acidity, pear, apple, flowers, almond, vanilla, baking spices, toffee.

SUGGESTIONS

- Storage: very long, bottles upright
- As an Aperitif: on its own, over ice, or with a drop or two of water to let it release its aromas.
- For cooking: to flambé, and for sorbets and granités.
- During meals, between courses to stimulate appetite: le trou Normand (the Norman hole).
- As a digestive: drinking temperature 20-22°C (68 to 72°F)

Calvados Suggested Reading

An brief explanation of Calvados by Charles Neal:

<http://charlesnealselections.com/calvados/>

Arguably the best and most authoritative book on Calvados is by...surprise, Charles Neal.

It is available by mail order, here:

<http://flamegrapepress.com/calvados/>

“Calvados: The World’s Premier Apple Brandy” by Henrik Mattson, is available on Amazon:

<http://www.amazon.com/Calvados-Worlds-Premier-Apple-Brandy/dp/916315546X>

An excellent article on Calvados from Eric Asimov in the New York Times, The Pour:

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/02/dining/calvados-a-taste-of-apples-and-fall-the-pour.html?_r=0

A brief interesting article on ‘Learning to Love Calvados’ by bartender Dushan Zaric, including cocktail recipes, in Liquor.com:

<http://liquor.com/articles/learning-to-love-calvados/>

“Loving Calvados to the Core by Jason Wilson, The Washington Post:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/22/AR2009092200771.html>

On NPR, “Calvados: A (Potent) Norman Tradition by Eleanor Beardsley; an interview with Vincent Boulard of Calvados Boulard:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4964484>

Calvados on Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvados>