AMAZING ALSACE
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Certified Specialist of Spirits
Sommelier
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AMAZING ALSACE

- History (selected)
- The Region/Wine Route
- Terroir
- AOC
- Grapes
- Wines
PRETTY AS A POSTCARD
HISTORY
925-1618: The Historical Golden Age

- **900**: 160 growing areas
- **1400**: 430 producing villages
- **1600**: Alsatian wines world-renowned
Franco-Prussian War/War of 1870

- Napoleon III vs. the Kingdom of Prussia
- The Treaty of Frankfurt gave Germany most of Alsace
Tumultuous History - WW I
TUMULTUOUS HISTORY - WW II
Tumultuous History - WW II

- Attacked by Germany on May 10, 1940
- Surrendered on June 22, 1940
- Hitler used same railway car used when Germany surrendered to France in 1918
1945 - Liberation!
1960s-Present: Revival

- 1962: Alsace joins the AOC system
- 1972: Wines must be bottled in the region
- 1975: 1st of 51 Grand Crus
- 1976: Crémant d’Alsace
- 2011: Lieux-Dits & Communaules
REGION
WINE ROUTE
**GEOGRAPHY**

- The region is divided into The Bas-Rhin to the North & the Haut-Rhin in the South
- Best vineyards associated with the Haut-Rhin
The Alsace Region

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LA ROUTE DES VINS D’ALSACE

- France’s oldest wine route
- 106 miles through the vineyards
- Amazing - 26 Michelin-starred restaurants!
THE VINEYARDS:

- 1.25 - 9 miles wide
- 75 miles long
- Altitudes between 558-1,800 feet
- Planted in 119 communes
TERROIR
THE TERROIR

Geology, Climate & Topography
A Bit More History (Geologic!)

The Formation of Alsace's Soils and Sub-soils

Primary Era
Around 300 million years ago

Secondary Era
Around 150 million years ago

Tertiary Era (1st Phase)
Around 50 million years ago

Tertiary Era (2nd Phase)
Around 50 million years ago
Amazing Variety of Soils

- Most wine-producing communes (municipalities) located on 4 or 5 different formations, sometimes found together over a rather narrow area.
THE RHINE RIFT VALLEY

Lorraine Plateau
Vosges Mtns.
Plain of Alsace
Black Forest
sub-Vosgian hills
Rhine River
Faults
13 Geologic Formations

Mountain Edge:
- Granite & Gneiss
- Schist

Vosges Foothills:
- Limestone
- Calcareous Sandstone
- Marly Sandstone
- Marly Limestone
- Marly Clay
- Marly Calcareous Sandstone

In the Plain:
- Alluvial
- Loess & Lehm

Volcano-Sedimentary
- Sandstone

Vosges Foothills

Plain

Mountain Edge
A FAVORABLE CLIMATE

Low annual rainfall
20-28 inches

1,800 hours of sun per year in Colmar

The grape ripening period sees warm days and cool nights

Vent d’ouest

550 m

Vosges

Vignoble

Plaine d’Alsace

Rhin

THE WINE COUNSELOR
I have good wine so you don’t have to!
Most vines are planted at an altitude of between 650-1,300 feet
GRAPES
7 MAIN VARIETALS

- Sylvaner
- Pinot Blanc
- Pinot Gris
- Riesling
- Muscat d’Alsace
- Pinot Noir
- Gewurztraminer
PRODUCTION

- AOC ALSACE
  - 71% of production

- AOC CRÉMANT D’ALSACE
  - 25% of production

- AOC ALSACE GRANDS CRUS
  - 4% of production
PRODUCTION

15 500 ha = 4.5% of the utilized agricultural area of Alsace

Be bottled
100% in Alsace required by obligation since 1972

Protected bottle
The flute of Alsace exclusive bottle protected by law

The Wine Counselor
I taste bad wine so you don't have to
Alsace Wine Statistics

WINE PRODUCTION

- GRAND CRU ALSACE AOC
- CRÈMANT D'ALSACE AOC
- ALSACE AOC

39,500 ACRES (2012)

OTHER VARIETIES
- Auxerrois
- Chasselas
- Chardonnay

90% WHITE WINE

MAJOR GRAPES
- PINOT BLANC 21.2%
- RIESLING 21.9%
- GEWÜRZTRAMINER 19.4%
- PINOT GRIS 15.4%
- PINOT NOIR 9.9%
- SYLVANER 7.5%
- MUSCAT 2.3%
- OTHER 2.4%
BIODYNAMIC FARMING

- Approximately 15% of growers farm without chemicals
- Strongest organic wine region in France, just about as many domaines are also biodynamic
- Since 2002 Olivier Humbrecht has been president of the SIVCBD (Biodyvin)
- “Green-cutting”: cutting off some of the growing bunches of grapes so that the vigor of the vine is concentrated on remaining grapes
- "Sure it works in the short term, but the vine has a memory, and the fruit you cut this year has an impact on the growth next year. You are locked into a cycle where the vine remembers the fruit it lost, so re-doubles its efforts to grow more for the next season."
AOC
AKA RULES & REGULATIONS
A BROAD RANGE OF WINES
THE HIERARCHY OF APPELLATIONS

AOC ALSACE

« COMMUNALE »

« LIEU-DIT »

GRANDS CRUS

AOC ALSACE

SGN

VT

AOC CRÉMANT D’ALSACE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AOC</th>
<th>Yields</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ALSACE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>80 hl/ha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pinot Noir (rosé)</td>
<td>75 hl/ha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pinot Noir (red)</td>
<td>60 hl/ha</td>
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<td><strong>ALSACE COMMUNALES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>72 hl/ha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>60 hl/ha</td>
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<td><strong>ALSACE LIEUX-DITS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>68 hl/ha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>60 hl/ha</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ALSACE GRAND CRUS</strong></td>
<td>55 hl/ha</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CREMANT D’ALSACE</strong></td>
<td>80 hl/ha</td>
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AOC CRÉMANT D’ALSACE

- Created in 1976
- Sparkling wine
- 25% of total production
- Traditional method (methode champenoise)
- Authorized grapes:
  - Pinot Blanc, Gris & Noir Auxerrois
  - Riesling
  - Chardonnay
BLENDED WINES: GENTIL & EDELZWICKER

**GENTIL** - a fresh, fruity, easy-drinking wine
- Minimum 50% of noble grapes: Riesling/Muscat/Pinot Gris and/or Gewurztraminer
- + 50% of another grape: Sylvaner/Chasselas and/or Pinot Blanc
- Each varietal must be vinified separately
- Compulsory tasting after bottling
- Vintage must be indicated on the label

**EDELZWICKER** - a blend of white grapes of AOC Alsace, no indication of percentage:
- The varietals can be vinified together or separately
- Vintage not required
AOC ALSACE

- Created in 1962
- Wines from grapes grown on parcels with precise boundaries, based on historical areas
- Bottled in the region of production in tall flute bottles
## AOC ‘COMMUNALE’

- **13 Geographic/communal names**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town 1</th>
<th>Town 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BERGHEIM</td>
<td>RODERN</td>
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<td>BLIENSCHWILLER</td>
<td>SAINT-HIPPOLYTE</td>
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<td>CÔTE DE ROUFFACH</td>
<td>SCHERWILLER</td>
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<td>CÔTEAUX DU HAUT-KOENIGSBOURG</td>
<td>VALLÉE NOBLE</td>
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<td>CÔTES DE BARR</td>
<td>VAL SAINTE-GRÉGOIRE</td>
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<td>KLEVENER DE HEILIGENSTEIN</td>
<td>WOLXHEIM</td>
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<td>OTTROTT</td>
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</table>
AOC LIEU-DIT

- Lieu-Dit: small area w/traditional name- CLOS WINDSBUHL/CLOS JEBSAL
- Bound by specific production rules: grape varieties/ density/pruning/ Trellising/ maturity yields
- Mandatory for Grand Cru
- More stringent than communale
THE DIFFERENT SOIL TYPES & THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE WINE

- **Granite & gneiss**
  - AROMATIC, FINE ACIDITY, OPENS UP QUICKLY

- **Sandstone**
  - LIVELY, EXPRESSES THE VARIETAL

- **Limestone**
  - LEMONY, WITH LONG ACIDITY
  - LEMONY, WITH LONG ACIDITY

- **Marly limestone**
  - FULL-BODIED, WELL-STRUCTURED

- **Marly clay**
  - COARSE, ALMOST TANNIC

- **Schist**
  - SVELTE, AUSTERE

- **Volcano-sedimentary**
  - BODY, SMOKY, BRINY
GRAND CRU

- Created in 1975
- 51 classified areas
- In 2011 each recognized as its own Appellation
- 4% of total production
- 4 noble grapes (3 extremely limited exceptions):
  - RIESLING
  - MUSCAT
  - PINOT GRIS
  - GEWURZTRAMINER
**Vendage Tardives (Late Harvest)**

- Dry or sweet
- Grapes have enough sugar at harvest to produce minimum 14% ABV (Riesling & Muscat) or minimum 15.3% ABV (Gewürztraminer & Pinot Gris)
SÉLECTION DE GRAINS NOBLES (SGN)

- SGN means “Sélection de Grains Nobles” (selection of grapes with noble rot)

- Only the berries that are evenly affected by Botrytis Cinerea are hand-picked in several passes.
LABELING “News”

- Dry white wines obliged to carry the word "dry" on labels from the 2016 vintage
- Alsace's interpretation of European Union law mandating 4 levels of sweetness on labels:
  - Sec/demi-sec/moelleux/doux
ZIND-HUMBRECHT

- >100 acres scattered widely from Hunawihr in the north (Clos Windsbuhl) to Rangen above Thann in the south

- Created in 1959 by the fusion of two winegrowing families, the Humbrechts & the Zinds

- Vignerons since the Thirty Year War in 1620
2014 Riesling Roche Calcaire

- 7 small vineyards planted in the 1960s-1970s on marl-limestone based soils.
- Average vine age: 40 years
- Issues with fruit fly (drosophila Suzukii)
2012 RIESLING CLOS WINDSBUHNL

- South-East facing steep slope (15–40%), the small Windsbuhl hill is at a high altitude for Alsace, around 865 feet above sea level.
2012 Pinot Gris Rangen de Thann Clos St. Urbain Grand Cru

- Most southern Grand Cru
- Volcanic rocks & sedimentary sandstones
- Steep volcanic hill
- Late ripening vineyard
- Flinty/smoky?
- Very small harvest
2012 RIESLING RANGEN DE THANN
CLOS ST. URBAIN GRAND CRU

- The Rangen appears in history in the 12th & 13th centuries
- Rapidly acquires a great reputation due to the exceptional quality of its vines
- 1272: A document from the Abbey of Murbach, states the entire hillside of Rangen is planted to vines
2012 Gewurztraminer Calcaire

- Blend of “young” vines from the Hengst (planted in 1985 & 1978) with a small vineyard located near the Goldert, all from marl/limestone soils (Calcaire)
2012 Gewurztraminer Hengst Grand Cru

- 80 growers on Hengst
- Limestone soil
- Many experts believe it’s the 1st viticultural area in Alsace
- It’s one of the driest vineyards
2011 Gewurztraminer Hengst Grand Cru Vendange Tardive

- Hengst means “stallion”
- Site is 1,180 feet high on clay & marl over limestone
- Very rarely a Vendange Tardive because of the increased resistance of the old vines to rot
2008 Pinot Gris Clos Jebsal Vendange Tardive

- Planted in 1983 on gray marl limestone just below Brand Grand Cru
- Tiny 3 acres planted on 50% grade south-facing slope
- Every vintage from 1989 onwards a VT or SGN
ALSACE, AMAZING...
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

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