



Understanding a Cognac label

1/ A Cognac can be identified by the information on its label

- The following information is mandatory (Directive CE n° 2000/13 du 20/03/2000):

- Denomination under which it is sold*
 - Name or company name and address of the producer or bottler, or of a vendor established within the European Community ;
 - Alcohol content in % of alcohol by volume* ;
in no case may it be below 40% vol. when sold to consumers (Art 5. - Decree of May 15, 1936). ;
Although the 40% vol. minimum is firm, at higher levels the actual alcohol content may vary by up to 0.3% from what is stated on the label (Commission Directive 87/250/EEC);
 - Net bottle content in litres, millilitres, or centilitres (min. 4 mm high) (Directive 2007/45/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of Sept. 5, 2007)*;
 - Identification of the bottler (executive order of Oct. 20, 1978 & addendum I-3.2 of EEC Directive No. 75/106 of Dec. 19, 1974), if different from the producer;
 - Lot number. Note that it may be placed anywhere on the container as long as it is visible, legible, and indelible (EEC Directive No. 89/396 of June 14, 1989);
 - "Green Dot" logo when registered with a competent body (Decree of Apr. 1, 1992).
Note: min. 6 mm diam., dark arrow on top pointing right;
 - Health message or pictogram recommending pregnant women abstain from alcohol (executive order of Oct. 2, 2006)(Always in the same visual block as the alcohol content)*.
- * Note that information marked with a (*) must be presented in the same visual block, on the front or back label.

- The following information is optional and controlled:

- Regional Appellation (cru) ;
 - Ageing designations.
- Certain optional pieces of information may appear on the label, but they must be justifiable, e.g.:
 - Brand name ;
 - Grower's name ;
 - Name of a person within the distribution network ;
 - Vendor.

2/ The appellation Cognac, Eau-de-vie de Cognac, or Eau-de-vie des Charentes must be stated on the label

This is the denomination under which it is sold.

3/ The word “Fine” can be used for Appellation Contrôlée eaux-de-vie made with grapes

This term provides no additional information (with the exception of Fine Champagne, which will be explained later), except that it can only be used for Appellation Contrôlée eaux-de-vie of wine or cider.

4/ Cognac is traditionally created by blending eaux-de-vie of different ages and crus

This is not, however, mandatory.

5/ 100% of the eaux-de-vie in a blend must come from the cru indicated on the label

When 100% of the eaux-de-vie in a blend comes from a single cru (regional appellation), the cru can be indicated according to the following rule:

"For the names of regional appellations (crus), place the word Cognac then the name of the cru between the words "Appellation" and "Contrôlée." Example: "Appellation Cognac Petite Champagne Contrôlée".

6/ “Fine Champagne” Appellation: Eaux-de-vie sourced exclusively from Grande Champagne (minimum 50%) and Petite Champagne

7/ Ageing designations are based on the age of the youngest eau-de-vie in the blend. Cognac may not be released to market without being aged in cask for at least 2 years, calculated from April 1 of the year following the harvest.

8/ Ageing designations

- mentions ou sigles such as V.S., V.S.O.P., X.O.....,
- vintages

Note:

The age of an eau-de-vie corresponds to the period during which it rested in oak casks. In contrast to wine, eau-de-vie virtually ceases to age as soon as it is transferred to a glass container. A Cognac will always be the same age it was when bottled.

Ageing designations are optional indications, regulated in application of European Community legislation:.

- *** (3-star) or VS (Very Special): The youngest eau-de-vie in the blend is at least 2 years old (*compte 2*)
- VSOP (Very Superior Old Pale): The youngest eau-de-vie in the blend is at least 4 years old (*compte 4*)
- Napoléon, XO (Extra Old)**, Extra**, Hors d'âge**: The youngest eau-de-vie in the blend is at least 6 years old (*compte 6*)

*** As of 2016 these designations are expected to require compte 10 for the younger eau-de-vie*

9/ In general, each Cognac house uses eaux-de-vie much older than the minimum requirement in their blends. Those bearing the most prestigious designations may have aged for decades.

A decision of the Government Commissioner to the BNIC (1983 decision) codifies the designations to be used based on the age of the Cognacs that make up a blend.

SEE ALSO

- **The 1983 decision in the media library (French version only)**

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L'ABUS D'ALCOOL EST DANGEREUX POUR LA SANTÉ, À CONSOMMER AVEC MODÉRATION