Le Cognac.

Le Cognac. Quand l'esprit s'ouvre.
HISTORY

... of a legendary spirit

◆ 3RD CENTURY
Expansion of the Saintonge vineyards. The Roman emperor Probus extends to all Gauls the privilege of owning vineyards and making wine.

◆ 12TH CENTURY
Guillaume X, Duke of Guyenne and Count of Poitiers creates a large vineyard known as the “Vignoble de Poitou”.

◆ 13TH CENTURY
Dutch ships bringing salt from the area to Northern European countries also carry wines from the “Vignoble de Poitou”. This early wine trade helps develop a business mentality in the Charente region. The success of the local wines leads to the expansion of the vineyard of Poitou into the Saintonge and Angoumois. The city of Cognac becomes renowned for its wine trade adding to a reputation for storing salt since 11th Century.
16th Century

Dutch ships come to Cognac and Charentais ports in search of the famous wines of the “Champagne” and the “Borderies” areas. The wines from the vineyards in Aunis suffer from excessive production and dropping quality. Because of their weakness, they can’t survive long sea voyages. The Dutch start using them in their newly established distilleries where they are transformed into “brandwijn” – burnt wine – hence the name “Brandy”. It is drunk with water in an attempt to recreate the original wine.

17th Century

At the beginning of the century, double distillation makes its appearance in the region. It will allow the transformation of local wines into eau-de-vie and their transportation by sea without damage. Given its concentration, eau-de-vie is also much cheaper to ship than wine.

The first distillation stills in the Charente were built by the Dutch. They are progressively modified until French distillers refine the method of double distillation also known as Charentaise distillation.

Delays in the handling of ship cargo leads to the realization that eau-de-vie improves when it spends extended time in oak casks (made with wood from the Limousin) and that it can even be consumed straight from the cask.

18th Century

From the end of the 17th century, and most especially from the beginning of the 18th century, the market becomes organized. In order to meet demand, “Local Offices” – most of them of an Anglo-Saxon origin – are created in the main towns of the region. Some of them still exist nowadays. They collect eaux-de-vie and establish long-term commercial relationships with buyers in Holland, England, Northern Europe, and later in America and the Far East.

19th Century

Starting in the middle of the 19th century, many trading houses begin to ship eau-de-vie in bottles instead of casks. In turn, this new form of commerce gives birth to related industries such as glassmaking – since 1885 Claude Boucher works with full dedication in the St. Martin de Cognac glass factory, with the aim of automating bottle-making procedures –, case-making, corks, and printing. The Vignoble now occupies nearly 280,000 hectares. Around 1873, phylloxera arrives in the Charente and destroys most of the vineyards, leaving only 40,000 hectares by 1893. This tragedy will lead to the creation of a Viticulture Committee which is established in 1888. It will become today’s Station Viticole – Cognac’s technical center – in 1892.

The economic recovery of the region will take many years of patient effort.

20th Century

The vineyards are slowly replanted using American rootstock immune to phylloxera. Somewhat fragile due to grafting, traditional grape varieties (Colombard, Folle Blanche…) are little by little replaced by the Ugni Blanc, which is more resistant and is now used for more than 90 per cent of the production of Cognac. On May 1st, 1909, the geographical area for production is delimited by the government. From 1936, Cognac is recognized as a Controlled Appellation of Origin. During the Second World War, a wine and eaux-de-vie distribution bureau is created to protect the stocks of Cognac. When the war ends, it is replaced by the Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac and in 1948 the Station Viticole is placed under its authority. Henceforth, all the stages involved in Cognac elaboration are subject to regulations destined to protect the product, and thus its reputation is increasingly known and respected.

21st Century

Cognac is exported to over 150 countries. Regardless of the way it is consumed, it is, from the Far East to the American continent and in Europe, a synonym of great quality, a symbol of France, and her lifestyle. Like all luxury products, the success of Cognac is dependent on the international environment. That is why all the producers make every effort to protect Cognac’s unrivalled quality, its uniqueness and its authenticity in the face of global competition.
Harvest and winemaking

Back to the origins of Cognac...
THE VINEYARDS OF A NOBLE SPIRIT

The vineyards of the Cognac Delimited Region include approximately 5,900 grape growers who produce white wine for Cognac making. The variety most widely planted is Ugni Blanc, although Folle Blanche and Colombard are also found. This late maturing variety has a good resistance to grey rot and produces a wine with two essential features: a high acidity level and, generally speaking, a low alcohol content. Since the phylloxera plague suffered at the end of the 19th century, all the varieties used have been grafted onto various rootstocks according to the type of soil.

THE HARVEST

On average, vines are planted 3 meters apart. All types of pruning are permitted. The most commonly used is the “Double Guyot” method. Some growers continue to harvest by hand, but the great majority now use harvesting machines. These machines have existed for about 30 years and are perfectly suited to the needs of the region’s growers. Harvesting may begin as soon as the grapes are ripe generally at the beginning of October and conclude at the end of the month.

PRESSING AND FERMENTATION: THE NATURAL METHOD

The grapes are pressed immediately after harvesting in traditional horizontal basket presses or pneumatic bladder presses. The use of continuous screw presses is forbidden. Fermentation of the juice follows immediately. Chaptalisation (the addition of sugar) is forbidden by law. Pressing and fermentation are closely supervised, as they have a determining influence on the final quality of the eau-de-vie.

FROM WINE TO EAU-DE-VIE

About 5 to 7 days after the beginning of fermentation, the wines for Cognac contain about 9% alcohol. With their high acidity and low alcohol content, they are perfect for distillation, which must be completed by the next March 31st at the very latest.
Only 6 Crus are allowed to make Cognac...

GRANDE CHAMPAGNE
- CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EAUX-DE-VIE
  - Bread, elegance, subtlety, power, long finish, suppleness
  - AROMAS
    - Mostly floral: grape-vine flower, lime blossom, dry wood
  - AGEING
    - Slow
  - Area under vines* 13,159 ha

PETITE CHAMPAGNE
- CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EAUX-DE-VIE
  - Bread, elegance, suppleness, delicacy
  - AROMAS
    - Floral (grape-vine flower) and fruity
  - AGEING
    - Slow
  - Area under vines* 15,246 ha

BORDERIES
- CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EAUX-DE-VIE
  - Subtlety, delicacy, long finish
  - AROMAS
    - Mostly floral: violet, iris
  - AGEING
    - Faster than GC and PC
  - Area under vines* 3,987 ha

FINS BOIS
- CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EAUX-DE-VIE
  - Intensity, roundness, smoothness
  - AROMAS
    - Mostly fruity (crushed grapes), lightly floral (grape-vine flower)
  - AGEING
    - Faster than GC and PC
  - Area under vines* 31,001 ha

BONS BOIS
- CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EAUX-DE-VIE
  - Dominated by terroir character
  - AROMAS
    - Fruity, crushed grapes
  - AGEING
    - Fast
  - Area under vines* 9,308 ha

BOIS ORDINAIRES
- CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EAUX-DE-VIE
  - Dominated by terroir character (strong maritime influences)
  - AROMAS
    - Fruity
  - AGEING
    - Fast
  - Area under vines* 1,101 ha

* in 2005, for Cognac production only
* 1 ha = 2.47 acres
THE DELIMITED REGION

The Cognac Delimited Region is located at the north of the Aquitaine basin, bordering the Atlantic Ocean. To the West, it borders the Gironde estuary and the islands of Ré and Oléron and to the East it neighbours the region of Angoulême and the Massif Central foothills. The landscape is formed by plains and small hills with smooth reliefs. The Charente river crosses the region, nourished by other streams: the Né, the Antenne, the Seugne rivers...

The production area covers the Charente-Maritime and most of the Charente departments, and several districts of the Dordogne and Deux-Sèvres. It has a homogenous and mild seaside climate. Annual average temperature in the area is of about 15°C (59 ºF), and winters are normally mild. The Delimited Region has a total area of over one million hectares (1 095 119 ha), but the actual vineyards only occupy 79 636 ha. Approximately 95% of them are used for Cognac production.

GROWING AREAS (THE CRUS)

The Delimited Region is made up of six growing areas known as crus that reference the various appellations.

> Champagne

Champagne is planted with about 13 250 ha of vines used in the production of Cognac white wines. These wines produce fine, light Cognacs with a predominantly floral bouquet, requiring long ageing in casks to achieve full maturity.

The Grande Champagne Appellation

Grande Champagne is planted with about 13 250 ha of vines used in the production of Cognac white wines. These wines produce fine, light Cognacs with a predominantly floral bouquet, requiring long ageing in casks to achieve full maturity.

The Petite Champagne Appellation

Petite Champagne has 15 246 devoted to Cognac production. The resulting eaux-de-vie are very similar to those of Grande Champagne, but without their finesse.

> The Borderies

The Borderies is the smallest of the six Crus. Its soil contains clay and flint stones resulting from the decomposition of limestone. Lying North-East of Cognac, its 3 987 ha of vines produce fine, round Cognacs, smooth and scented with an aroma of violets. They reach optimum quality after a shorter ageing period than Cognacs from the Grande and Petite Champagne.

> The Bois

The Fins Bois Appellation

Most of this area is covered by clayey, chalky soils known as «groies» very similar to those of the Champagne Crus, except for their red colour and hard stones from the Jurassic. Lying in a lower area known as the “Pays Bas” (Low Countries) north of Cognac, heavy clayey soils can also be found (60% clay). The Fins Bois surround the first three crus. Their 31 001 ha produce round, smooth Cognacs that age fairly quickly, with a bouquet that recalls the scent of freshly pressed grapes.

The Bons Bois Appellation

In the Bons bois crus, we find sandy soils on coastal locations, in certain valleys, and most especially in all the southern part of the vineyard. These are sands that have eroded from the Massif Central. Vines are quite dispersed, mixed with other crops, surrounded by forests of pine trees and chestnuts. The Bons Bois form a vast belt, of which 9 308 ha are destined to Cognac production.

The Bois à Terroir or Bois Ordinaires

This growing area has less of 1 101 ha of vines destined to Cognac white wine production. The soil, almost exclusively sandy, lies along the coast or on the islands of Ré or Oléron, producing fast-aging eaux-de-vie with a characteristic maritime flavour.

> The Fine Champagne Appellation

Fine Champagne is not a cru, but rather a Controlled Appellation of Origin composed of a blend of Grande and Petite Champagne eaux-de-vie, with at least 50% of Grande Champagne.
The Charentaise method
...the slow rhythm of double distillation in copper stills
WHY IS DISTILLATION NECESSARY?
Alcohol is a product of the fermentation of sugar, found in its natural form in fruit as fructose and glucose. Alcohol is also associated to many other components and must therefore be isolated from them. This operation is performed by distillation. The principle of distillation is based on the volatility differences of these components. In a distilled eau-de-vie we only find those volatile substances that make up the main features of the bouquet.

WHICH WINES ARE DISTILLED?
Cognac is obtained by the distillation of white wines harvested in the Controlled Appellation area. These wines have a high acidity and a low alcohol content.

A PERFECT STILL
Distillation is carried out in two "chauffes", that is, in two separate heatings, using a special Charentais copper still. It is made of a uniquely shaped boiler heated on a naked flame topped by a still-head in the shape of a turban, an olive, or an onion, and prolonged by a swan-neck tube that turns into a coil and passes through a cooling tank referred to as "the pipe".

THE DISTILLATION METHOD
Unfiltered wine is poured into the boiler and brought to the boil. Alcohol vapours are freed and collected in the still-head. They then enter the swan-neck and continue into the coil. Upon contact with the coolant, they condense, forming a liquid known as "brouillis". This slightly cloudy liquid with an alcohol content of 28 to 32 % alcohol is returned to the boiler for a second distillation, known as the "bonne chauffe". This second heating, the boiler capacity must not exceed 30 hectoliters, and the load volume is limited to 25 hectoliters. The master distiller must then carry out the delicate operation known as "cutting" or "la coupe": the first vapours that arrive, called "the heads", have the highest alcohol content, and are separated from the rest. Then comes "the heart", a clear spirit that will produce Cognac.

The distillation season for white wines destined for the production of Cognac closes on March 31st following the harvest.

THE AMBIANCE OF THE ChARENTES
Distilleries work day and night during the winter months. It is a time when the Charentais adapt their lives to the rhythm of the stills, in an atmosphere where the glow of the flames, the quiet bubbling of the alcohol, the water, the copper and the bricks form a marvelous combination.

CHARENTAIS POT STILL AND DISTILLATION
Once alcoholic fermentation is completed, the white wine has to be distilled to make the eau-de-vie. The distillation method has not changed since the birth of Cognac. The special Charentais copper stills “à repasse” that were used then are still in use today. Cognac distillation is performed in a two-stage process. Stage one: a first distillate is obtained, referred to as “brouillis”, with an alcohol content of 28 to 32%.

Stage two: the “brouillis” is returned to the boiler for a second heating, known as “la bonne chauffe”.

The traditional Charentais still is often equipped with an energy-saving wine preheater. This optional device, in which the heat is provided by the alcohol vapours passing through it, preheats the wine that is to be distilled in the next cycle.
Barrel making

*Subtle exchanges between oak and the eaux-de-vie...*
An eau-de-vie only becomes Cognac following slow ageing in oak casks whose wood has been selected because of its natural properties and its ability to transfer them to the spirit. The contact with the wood will give each eau-de-vie its unique colour and bouquet, without which it could not receive the Cognac appellation.

**SELECTING THE WOOD**

Cognac ages exclusively in oak casks traditionally from the Tronçais and Limousin forests – Quercus pedunculata and Quercus sessiliflora, respectively – depending on the producer and style. These two varieties of oak were selected because of their hardness, porosity and extractive characteristics. The Tronçais forest, in Allier, provides softer, finely grained wood, which is particularly porous to alcohol. The Limousin forest produces medium grained wood, harder and even more porous. The tanins in Tronçais oak are famous for their softness, whereas those in Limousin oak are known for the power and balance they communicate to Cognac. An eau-de-vie will extract more tanins when it is aged in casks made with Limousin oak.

**HIGHLY TECHNICAL**

Making the cask where an eau-de-vie is to become Cognac requires performing a series of highly technical tasks that cooperers pass on from one generation to another. In their work, they combine their craft and skills with the use of ancestral tools still in use today.

**IN THE BEST CASKS**

Cask making suffers no improvisation. The “merrains” or boards used to make each cask are culled between the heartwood and sapwood of oak trees that are over 100 years old. Then they must be split in order to respect the wood’s grain, and stacked in the open air for about three years where they can lose their sap and the wood’s bitter flavours. Following this long curing period, the boards are shaped into curved staves. The cooperers can now start their work. They hoop the staves over and around a fire made with wood shavings and oak pieces. The wood is repeatedly moistened and heated to bend the staves into shape giving out an unforgettable smell of freshly baked bread. How much the wood is charred in this process called “bousinage” – barrel toasting – will strongly influence the characteristics of the eau-de-vie in the cask.

During the heating period, a wire rope placed around the base of the cask is progressively tightened in order to bring the staves closer together, and finally join them without any need for nails or glue. After the finishing touches, the cask must pass several solidity and boiling water tests to detect possible leaks. Some cooperers sign their “master pieces” to demonstrate their full commitment to their work.

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**Cognac**

Cognac is kept and aged for many years in oak casks. The making of a Cognac cask follows a traditional and ancestral method that is near perfection. Nothing is left to chance from the selection of the oak to the assembly of the casks, in order for Cognac to acquire the best of the oak over many years.
Ageing

The slow work of time...
◆ AN EXCHANGE OF FLAVOURS

The long work of maturing Cognac, which may at times last decades, is made possible thanks to the wood’s porosity. It allows indirect contact between the spirit in the casks and the air outside. This way, the substances extracted by the Cognac from the wood, known as “dry extracts”, alter the Cognac’s physical appearance, giving it a colour ranging from golden yellow to fiery brown.

With time, the transfer of the natural characteristics of the oak gradually produces “rancio” aromas and develops the bouquet of Cognac.

◆ THE WORK OF TIME

Ageing is essential for an eau-de-vie to be sold as Cognac. It takes place in casks that hold between 270 to 450 litres of spirit.

The natural humidity of the cellars in which the casks are stored, with its influence on evaporation, is one of the determining factors in the ageing process. When humidity, dryness and temperature are in balance, the spirit becomes mellow and ages harmoniously. This evolution in the ageing process is made up of three basic stages: extraction, hydrolysis, and oxidation.

❖ Extraction: The new eau-de-vie is stored in new casks where it dissolves the wood’s extractable substances and acquires a golden yellow colour. Part of the volatile components are eliminated…

❖ Eaux-de-vie undergo an evolution in terms of colour (they progressively pass from being colourless to a marked yellow colour), flavour and bouquet (aroma of oak with a hint of vanilla).

❖ Hydrolysis: This is a transitory stage that precedes an important evolution of the spirit’s organoleptic characteristics. The eau-de-vie is about to “digest the wood”. Its colour tends to darken.

❖ Oxidation: The taste softens, the notes of steamed oak disappear and give way to floral aromas with hints of vanilla, the colour deepens. With the years, the eau-de-vie becomes increasingly mellow, the bouquet grows richer, and the “rancio” flavour appears.

◆ A CORNER OF PARADISE

The oldest Cognacs are usually kept away from the other cellars, in a dark cellar known as “the Paradise”.

Once they have reached maturity, the master blender decides to end their ageing process and places them first into very old casks and then into large glass containers called “demijohns”, where they may rest for many decades with no air contact.

◆ THE ANGEL’S SHARE

While Cognac is ageing in casks, absorbing the best of the oak and developing its most exquisite flavours, it is in contact with the air and gradually loses some of its alcohol and some volume, but without excess.

This natural evaporation is poetically referred to as “The Angel’s Share”. It is the equivalent of more than twenty million bottles per year that disappear into the atmosphere: a high price that Cognac producers do not hesitate to pay in their quest for perfection.

These alcohol vapours feed a microscopic fungus known as “torula compniaenesis” that covers and blackens the stone walls of the cellars, giving them their characteristic colour.

**Cognac** is a living product. During its long ageing in oak casks, it is in permanent contact with air. This allows the extraction of substances from the wood that give Cognac both its colour and bouquet.
The quality of Cognac comes from a delicate combinations of flavours...
**CONSISTENCY OF QUALITY**

Cognac has a reputation for quality to defend across the world. The constant quest for consistency of quality is the work and the main concern of each Cognac House.

**ACCORDING TO THE BOOK**

For many years now, rules have codified the ways in which Cognac is made and presented. Nonetheless, all Cognacs are different. Every Master Blender creates unique Cognacs to seduce connoisseurs through subtle and endless variations of flavours.

**A MASTER AT WORK**

The Master Blender buys eaux-de-vie and follows their development from the moment they come out of the pot stills. He monitors their ageing, tastes them regularly, and decides whether it is time to change them from one oak cask or from a chai – ageing warehouse – to another so they become rounder or dryer. It is also he who progressively adds distilled or demineralized water to the eau-de-vie in order to slowly reach the desired alcohol content for its release into the market. Cognac’s minimum alcohol content must be 40%. This delicate operation is referred to as “reduction”.

The work of the master blender requires extensive experience. It allows each Cognac House to control the quality of its spirit. By blending eaux-de-vie of different ages and from different crus, the master blender creates genuine harmonies, like a painter or a musician. This patient craftsmanship will allow each consumer to recognize and appreciate the Cognac he/she loves.

Making Cognac is the work of the Master Blender. Like the “master nose” and his perfumes, the Cognac Master Blender (Maître de Chai) subtly blends together eaux-de-vie of different ages and from different crus. Rigorously, with experience and intuition, he strives to achieve consistency in his blends and loyalty among the followers of his House.
Appellation
A strict legal framework to guarantee excellence...

◆ THE DECREES OF THE COGNAC APPELLATION

The Cognac AOC - appellation d’origine contrôlée or controlled appellation of origin - is governed by three main legal texts:

- The May 1st, 1909 modified decree establishes the Delimited Area for the production of Cognac, what is known as the “Delimited Region”.
- The May 15th, 1936 modified decree defines the controlled appellations of Cognac, Eau-de-vie de Cognac and Eau-de-Vie des Charentes.
- The January 13th, 1938 modified decree defines the various controlled appellation areas within the Delimited Region.

◆ THE AREA OF PRODUCTION

The Delimited Region for the production of Cognac was established by the decree of May 1st, 1909. It includes the entire department of the Charente-Maritime, most of the department of Charente and small parts of the Deux-Sèvres and Dordogne departments.

Vineyard, Grape varieties

According to the 1936 decree, the following grape varieties only can be used for the production of wine for the Controlled Appellations Cognac, Eau-de-vie de Cognac and Eau-de-vie des Charentes:

Colombard, Folle Blanche, Jurançon blanc, Meslier Saint-François, Montils, Sémillon, and Ugni Blanc. Additionally, Folignan and Sélect (each representing a maximum of 10% of the plantings).

Terroirs, Growing areas (Crus)

The Delimited Area is made up of six districts of production as defined by the 1938 decree:

- Grande Champagne
- Petite Champagne
- Borderies
- Fins Bois
- Bons Bois
- Bois ordinaires or Bois à terroirs

Vinification

- Addition of sugar is prohibited (1936 Decree)
  
  Charente............................. Absolute prohibition,
  Charente Maritime................. idem, additionally, a certificate of non-sugaring must be provided.

Distillation

Cognac is distilled following a specific, traditional, two-stage method (1936 Decree):

- Charentaise method by production of “brouillis” (first distillation) and “repasse” (second distillation).
- Use of the traditional Charentais still with a total capacity not exceeding 30 hl and a maximum load of 25 hl for the second distillation known as “bonne chauffe”.
- Maximum alcohol content of distillation: 72 % alcohol by volume at 15°C (59 °F).
- Distillation cannot be done after March 31st following the harvest.
**Cognac Commercialization**

Cognac’s commercialization must respect a set of rules in order to carry the Cognac Controlled Appellation of Origin.

**Storage and Ageing**

- Ageing must take place in a storage facility registered by the BNIC. This registration is mandatory to obtain the necessary Cognac certificates guaranteeing age and origin that only the BNIC is authorized to issue. They are required by law to export Cognac.
- Ageing must take place in oak casks. Limousin or Tronçais-type oak, (“sessile” or “pedunculate” oak, according to use).
- Inventory and age control performed by the Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac (BNIC) (2003 executive order).
- Minimum ageing prior to shipping Cognac: ageing compte 2 (21 months following the end of the distillation period).

**Commercialization Rules**

- Minimum alcohol content to be sold to customers in France and abroad: 40 % alcohol by volume (1936 Decree).
- All additives are prohibited (1921 Decree) with the exception of: reduction with distilled or demineralized water; sugar, caramel, oak infusion for final adjustment.

**Mandatory mentions on the labels**

- Denomination (Cognac, Eau-de-vie de Cognac, or Eau-de-vie des Charentes).
- Bottle content (EU directive 75/106 on bottle sizes).
- Alcohol content (percentage of alcohol by volume).
- Name or trademark and address of the producer, bottler, or vendor established within the European Community (community directive EU2000/13).
- AOC or Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée. Because of the established reputation of Cognac, this mention is not required. It remains mandatory for all other appellations of the Delimited Production Area (such as Grande Champagne, Petite Champagne, etc.).

**Rules Regarding Ageing Designations**

A decision of the Government Commissioner to BNIC (1983 decision) has codified the usage of the designations based on the time of ageing for the Cognacs in the blends.

**Fine**

- The word “Fine” can only be used for Controlled Appellation eaux-de-vie of wine or cider such as “Fine Cognac”, “Grande Fine Champagne”, etc (1928 law).
- Note: “Fine Champagne” is a controlled appellation obtained by blending Grande and Petite Champagne eaux-de-vie, with a minimum of 50% from Grande Champagne (1938 Decree).
- “Grande Fine Champagne” is a synonym of “Grande Champagne” (1938 Decree).
- “Petite Fine Champagne” is a synonym of “Petite Champagne” (1938 Decree).
How to read a label
And better identify Cognac...

Each Cognac is identified by its label, based on a number of mentions and designations.

◆ MENTIONS
> Mandatory mentions :
- Denomination (Cognac. Eau-de-vie de Cognac, Eau-de-vie des Charentes)
- Content of bottle
- Alcohol content (minimum 40% vol).

> Optional mentions, such as :
- Regional appellations : Grande Champagne, Petite Champagne, Fins Bois, Bons Bois.
- Ageing designations : They indicate the age of the youngest eau-de-vie in the blend.

◆ AGEING DESIGNATIONS
A Cognac may not be sold to the public unless it has been aged in oak casks for at least two years counting from the end of the distillation period, that is from April 1st of the year following the harvest (compte 2). Once bottled, a Cognac retains the same age indefinitely.
The executive decision of August 23, 1983 codified the usage of designations based on the length of ageing of the youngest eau-de-vie in the blend:
- V.S. (Very Special) ou *** (3 stars)… Compte 2 : Cognacs whose youngest eau-de-vie is at least two years old.
- VS.O.P. (Very Superior Old Pale), Reserve… Compte 4 : Cognacs whose youngest eau-de-vie is at least four years old.
- Napoleon, XO (Extra Old), Hors d’âge… Compte 6 : Cognacs whose youngest eau-de-vie is at least six years old. In 2016, the youngest eau-de-vie in the XO category will have to be 10 years old (Ageing compte 10). Generally speaking, Cognac Master Blenders use eaux-de-vie that are much older than the minimum requirement for their blends. In fact, the most prestigious designations may have aged for dozens of years in oak casks before being presented to the public. The BNIC is in charge of controlling the stocks and the age of maturing Cognac.

The BNIC is in charge of controlling the stocks and the age of maturing Cognac.
◆ EXAMPLE OF AN EAU-DE-VIE DISTILLED IN NOVEMBER 2005

This table shows the minimum mandatory oak cask ageing for the youngest eau-de-vie in a Cognac blend. It does not refer to the age of the finished blend contained in a Cognac bottle.

> Ageing control system (ageing comptes)

- Compte "00" designates the distillation period following the harvest up to March 31st.
- The ageing compte changes April 1st every year.

> Vintage Cognacs

Cognacs made with eaux-de-vie from a single harvest. The year of the harvest is specified on the label. Producing vintage Cognac is not a common practice.

> Lexicology of the Cognac Controlled Appellation of Origin

- (Fine) Cognac, Eau-de-vie de Cognac, or eau-de-vie des Charentes
- Cognac Grande (Fine) Champagne, Cognac Petite (Fine) Champagne, Cognac (Fine) Borderies, Cognac (Fine) Fins Bois, Cognac (Fine) Bons Bois: 100% of the eaux-de-vie come from the mentioned Appellation area. These mentions must be accompanied by the terms “Controlled Appellation” or “AOC”
- Fine Champagne : Controlled Appellation of Origin that designates a Cognac only composed of Grande and Petite Champagne eaux-de-vie, with a minimum content of 50% Grande Champagne
- Fine : The term “Fine” was authorized by a Law of 1928 in order to designate an eau-de-vie made from wine (or cider) in a Controlled Appellation of Origin.
The Art of Tasting Cognac

Please follow your senses...

◆ GENERAL TASTING PRINCIPLES
To best awaken your senses and taste like a pro, let these few pieces of advice be your guide:
> Pour Cognac in a tulip glass whose shape was especially designed and is recommended by professional tasters. Such a glass retains aromas and reveals them with great delicacy during the tasting.
> Fill the glass with about 1 oz of Cognac. Hold it by its foot and rotate the Cognac easily, slowly and gently to reveal all its aromas. Hold the glass in the same manner during all the steps of the tasting experience.
> For a successful tasting, make sure the temperature of the Cognac is the same as the ambient temperature.

◆ VISUAL EXAMINATION
This is the first contact with the Cognac and it is paramount:
> Raise the glass to your eye. Look carefully at the colour and its nuances preferably against a white background.
> Tilt the glass carefully to appreciate the intensity and brightness at the surface of the Cognac. Doing this makes the Cognac “cry”: its tears slowly run along the inside of the glass.
> You can now describe the Cognac according to its colour, its clarity and its viscosity...
  - Cognac can display a multitude of different hues.
  - Its clarity can be crystaline, brilliant, dull, cloudy.
  - Its viscosity can be described as watery, syrupy or oily.

◆ ON THE NOSE
There are two ways of perceiving aromas: directly through the nose, or indirectly through the mouth (retro-olfaction).
The nose examination is the most important phase of the tasting. It is a two-step process:
> 1st nose: bring the glass to your nose without stirring it. This is the “rising”, by which you slow down the release of the most volatile and delicate elements.
> 2nd nose: rotate the glass in order to aerate the Cognac and speed up the release of the aromatic compounds in it. The specific shape of the tulip glass helps the process.
ON THE PALATE

With its sensory receptors or taste-buds, the tongue is apt to detect sweetness (on the front), saltiness (on the back side), acidity (on the side) and bitterness (in the back). (This can vary from person to person.)

In order to assess the taste and aromas of the Cognac, take a mouthful and suck in a small amount of air over it. The Cognac will reach most of the taste receptors in the mouth. It will also release aromatic vapours in the olfactive bulb via the retronasal passage.

Here is a list of the sensations that appear in the mouth:
- Aromatic (retro-olfaction).
- Tactile (fluidity, onctuosity, stinginess,...).
- Taste.
- Chemical (astringency,...).
- Warmth (alcohol,...).

Each flavour compound traces its characteristics to the various steps of Cognac's elaboration. The following can be identified:
- Primary aromas: aromatic compounds which originate in the "base" used to make the eau-de-vie (the grapes).
- Secondary aromas: characterized by the flavours produced by the alcoholic fermentation of sugar - alcohols, aldehydes, esters, etc.
- Tertiary aromas: during the ageing in oak barrels, new flavours are extracted that will play an important part in the final aromas. They constitute tertiary aromas.

THE MAIN AROMATIC CHARACTERS OF COGNAC

### Main Fruity Aromas and Flavours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLD</th>
<th>YOUNG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40-YEAR OLD</td>
<td>20-YEAR OLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscat grapes</td>
<td>Almond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litchi</td>
<td>Hazelnut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marmalade, jam</td>
<td>Walnut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange (peel)</td>
<td>Black cherry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Main Floral Aromas and Flavours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLD</th>
<th>YOUNG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40-YEAR OLD</td>
<td>20-YEAR OLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange water</td>
<td>Iris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>Lilac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-YEAR OLD</td>
<td>COMPTÉ 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried flowers (pet. powd.)</td>
<td>Violet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPTÉ 0</td>
<td>COMPTÉ 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Main Woody Aromas and Flavours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLD</th>
<th>YOUNG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50-YEAR OLD</td>
<td>30-YEAR OLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandalwood</td>
<td>Oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedarwood</td>
<td>Eucalyptus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocolate</td>
<td>Incens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>Licorice, honey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-YEAR OLD</td>
<td>15-YEAR OLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saffron</td>
<td>Curry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPTÉ 10</td>
<td>COMPTÉ 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Main Spicy Aromas and Flavours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLD</th>
<th>YOUNG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30-YEAR OLD</td>
<td>15-YEAR OLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginger (candied)</td>
<td>Green pepper (vegetal and spicy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinnamon</td>
<td>Black pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-YEAR OLD</td>
<td>15-YEAR OLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curry</td>
<td>Clove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPTÉ 10</td>
<td>COMPTÉ 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to enjoy Cognac

1001 ways to savour it...
◆ IN THE PURE TRADITION
At the end of a meal, when you feel like making a special moment last longer. Enjoy the aromas of a Cognac served straight in a tulip glass or a balloon glass. Take your time to appreciate all its subtle flavours.

◆ COGNAC, DAY AND NIGHT:
Allow Cognac to surprise you. Happily married to sparkling or tonic water, Cognac will refresh you when it is time to have a drink with friends. It is enjoyed around the world in many different ways, especially in the USA and in Asia. It may be served as a long drink at the end of the afternoon and as the main accompaniment to a refined meal, all in one day.
Cognac can also dress up in original and fun ways for the greater pleasure of your palate. Mix the aromas of Cognac into classic or innovative fruit cocktails.

◆ V.S. OR V.S.O.P.
Aperitif, cocktails, long drinks.

COGNAC - PINK LOVE
Pour 1 oz. Cognac into a cocktail glass, add a dash of raspberry liqueur, top with chilled Champagne and 2-3 fresh raspberries.

LONG DRINK - COGNAC & TONIC
1 oz. Cognac, ice cubes, 3-4 oz. of tonic according to taste.

◆ V.S.O.P.
Aperitif. Enjoy on the rocks or with sparkling or flat water.

COGNAC ON THE ROCKS
1 oz. Cognac with ice cubes in a tumbler.

◆ X.O. AND RARER COGNACS
At the end of a meal and other moments of pure pleasure. Enjoy straight.

COGNAC TRADITION
1-2 oz. old Cognac in a tulip glass or a snifter, sip slowly.

GAstronomy
Please see the chapter on Gastronomy and Cognac
Gastronomy & Cognac

An exceptional marriage of flavours...

When the flavours and aromas of Cognac meet the culinary arts, new gastronomical sensations result. No matter what the dish, the fragrance of Cognac always adds something that transforms the simply excellent into the clearly sublime.

TARTAR OF SCALLOPS, FLEUR DE SEL, AND BASIL DRESSING WITH FROZEN VSOP COGNAC:

FOR 4 PEOPLE

- 12 large fresh scallops
- 1 bunch of basil
- 2 oz. caviar
- 1 lb. fennel
- 2 organic lemons
- ½ lb. mache (lamb’s lettuce)
- 1 tsp fleur de sel (preferably from Ile de Ré)
- Fresh ground pepper
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp fine salt
- 8 oz frozen Cognac (put in freezer a day in advance)
- 8 oz extra virgin olive oil
- chervil

- Cut the scallops into 1/8-in slices. Remove the peel of the lemons and cook it in boiling water for 5 minutes.
- Let it cool and cook again 3 times to remove the bitter taste. Then cook over low heat for 1 hour with the sugar, the salt and 1 glass of water. Drain and let it cool.
- Braise the fennel with a tbsp of olive oil in a tightly covered pan until it falls apart. (About 10 minutes.) Let it cool. For the basil dressing: in a blender, mix together the basil, the juice of both lemons, the olive oil, salt and pepper. 5 minutes.
- Preparation of the plates:
  - Spread the fennel at the bottom of the plates on a bed of mache. Pile the scallops on top, pour the basil dressing and cover with pieces of candied lemon peel. Finish with a dollop of caviar.
- Add fleur-de-sel, ground pepper and bits of chervil.
- Serve frozen Cognac in narrow glasses as an accompaniment.
Capon with Royal Stuffing & Fried Wild Mushrooms

SERVES 8

- Debone the capon. Open the two breasts. Remove the bones from the legs.
- Spread out the pork caul on a clean cloth to form a rectangle 2 x 1 ft. Cover with the thin slices of smoked pork. Arrange capon’s legs and breasts on top of the pork and evenly cover with sausage meat.
- Remove tendons and membranes from duck liver and place it on top. Season generously with salt and pepper.
- With the help of the cloth, roll the ingredients into a cylinder, tie with a string and place into a baking pan. Cook for 2 hours at 350 F.
- While stuffed capon is roasting, wash the mushrooms and cut them into equal size pieces. Sauté them in a non-stick pan with the goose fat. Drain excess fat when cooked. Season, add shallot and chopped parsley. Finish with a knob of butter and pour into a serving dish. Take capon out of the oven, remove string and place capon on serving dish.

Chocolate and Cognac Tart with Caramel Sauce

INGREDIENTS FOR 4 PERSONS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SWEET COCOA-FLAVOURED PIE CRUST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 oz. sifted flour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 oz. sweet butter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 oz. confectioner’s sugar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 oz. almond powder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¾ oz. unsweetened cocoa powder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 egg</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHOCOLATE AND COGNAC FILLING</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 oz. heavy cream</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 oz. butter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 oz. dark melting chocolate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 eggs plus 3 egg yolks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¾ oz. sugar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 oz. Cognac</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CARAMEL SAUCE</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 oz. heavy cream</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1½ oz. sugar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¾ oz. lightly salted butter</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Roll out the pastry and press it into a 10-in pie plate.
- For the filling, boil cream and butter, add chocolate and Cognac. Beat eggs and sugar until white and add to the mixture. Pour into the pie.
- Bake at 350 F for 15 minutes.
- For the caramel sauce, pour the sugar into a saucepan and cook until light brown. Add cream, butter and whip for 2 minutes. Refrigerate for 1 hour.
- Serve the chocolate tart slightly warm with a pitcher of sauce.
The Cognac region

A varied and rich land...
The Cognac region combines diverse landscapes with an exceptional microclimate caused by the influences of the nearby ocean on the continent. Each of the six Crus of the AOC has its own distinct personality. It expresses itself in the intricate blends of aromas and tastes characteristic of each Cognac.
THE CITY OF COGNAC

World famous for its eau-de-vie, Cognac, the birthplace of King François I is also well known for its old town, with narrow winding streets. The stonework of its old houses is often coated with black velvet, the work of a microscopic fungus known as Torula Companiacensis that feeds on alcohol vapours.

In Cognac one can explore the castle where François I was born, the church of St. Léger, the towers of the gate St Jacques and many large 18th century houses, all witnesses to the town’s historic past.
Cosmopolitan, Cognac is also a festive town, with a reputation that grows every year: Cognac Thriller Film Festival, Coup de Chauffe (Street Arts Festival), Cognac Blues Passions (Blues Festival), Salon de la littérature européenne (European Literature Exhibition), the Fête du Cognac, the Grape Harvest Festival, the Florilées, and the Portes Ouvertes des Bouilleurs de Côte are only some of the events that are held every year, providing the city with a quality of life that is second to none. Reaching Cognac and exploring the area is very simple: Paris is only 3 hours away on the TGV train. Cognac is located 30 km. away from the Paris-Bordeaux highway, and not far from the Bordeaux-Mérignac airport, with domestic and international flights.

◆ COGNAC, THE SPIRIT

Coming to the Cognac region means discovering the secret of its elaboration. While in the region, visit large Cognac Houses and smaller producers. They will give you a warm welcome and will be glad to share their passion with you.

◆ A BLESSED REGION

In the heart of the Cognac area there are many wonderful restaurants that use the natural riches of the region to their best advantage: farm produce, game, fish, shellfish, and of course, Cognac, Pineau des Charentes, and the Vins de Pays Charentais. These specialties are used in the highly original and tasty local cuisine, such as in the recipe for ‘petits griis à la charentaise’ (snails Charentais style), oysters with a shallot and vinegar sauce, éclade de moules (mussel bake), goat milk cheeses, without forgetting Bavarian cream flavoured with Cognac and Pineau.

◆ FROM TOWN TO TOWN

The Cognac region is an area full of places to visit, all of them as if they had been taken from an architecture or a French history book: St. Peter’s Cathedral in Angoulême, the Spa in St. Saloin (Charente-Maritime), the Arch celebrating the birth of Germanicus in Saintes, the old port at La Rochelle, the legendary Rochefort Arsenal evocative of Colbert and Lafayette (in Charente-Maritime), and many more sites of France’s heritage.

◆ A CRUISE ON THE CHERANTE RIVER

370 kilometers long, the Charente River has its source in Chéronnac (Haute Vienne) and flows into the Atlantic Ocean near the city of Rochefort. The slow-moving, winding river has served as a natural link between France and the Nordic countries since the 15th century. From March to November, it is possible to take a discovery cruise on this delightful river. These magnificent trips will give you glimpses of the region’s many Romanesque churches, and show you a variety of landscapes.

◆ ROMANESQUE ART, THE REGION’S TREASURE

From the year 1000 onwards, many shrines were built in Angoumois, Aunis, Poitou and Saintonge for the pilgrims who crossed the region on their way to Santiago de Compostela. This was the beginning of Romanesque art: a combination of fine elegance and bold innovation, and spectacular technical experiments such as stone roof vaults. Inside, the churches have an elegant simplicity, with striking sculptures, carved capitals, and wonderful frescoes, chiseled decoration, all made from local limestone. Particularly worth seeing are the churches at Aulnay de Saintonge, Talmont, Saint-Preuil, Bourg-Charente, Bouteville, and the Bassac Abbey.

◆ SPORT AND RELAXATION

There is enough choice and diversity in the Cognac region to please whomever is looking for leisure activities such as horse-back riding, four-wheeling, rowing, hiking, and of course every possible water sport thanks to the closeness of the ocean with its natural beaches, its seashore resorts and spas from Royan to the islands of Ré, Oleron and Aix.

Useful Addresses and Places to Visit:

> The Routes of Cognac
  Maison des Viticulteurs - 25 rue Cagouillet - 16100 Cognac - Tél : +33(0)5 45 36 47 35 - www.cognacetapes.com

> Cognac Tourism Office
  14, rue du 14 juillet - 16100 Cognac - Tél : +33(0)5 45 82 10 71 - www.tourism-cognac.com

> Le Musée des Arts du Cognac
  Place de la Salle Verte - 16100 Cognac - Tél : +33(0)5 45 32 07 25 - www.alienor.org/maco/index.htm

> Departmental Committee of Tourism (Charente)
  Place Bouillaud - 16000 Angoulême - Tél : +33(0)5 45 69 79 09 - www.tourisme-charente.com

> Departemental Committee of Tourism (Charente-Maritime)
  Maison de la Charente-Maritime - 85, Boulevard de la République - 17076 La Rochelle cedex 9
  Tél : +33(0)5 46 31 71 71 - www.charente-maritime.org

> Regional Committee of Tourism
  BP 56 - 86002 Poitiers cedex - Tél : +33(0)5 49 50 10 50 - www.poitou-charentes-vacances.com
An interprofessional organization entrusted with public service missions, the Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac (BNIC) acts on behalf of all the Cognac growers and firms of the region of production.

◆ A BIT OF HISTORY...
Around 1875 the phylloxera plague hit Charente and destroyed most of the vineyards. Only about 40,000 ha were left in 1890. This drama gave birth in 1888 to the Viticulture Committee, followed by the Cognac Station Viticole in 1892. Many years of patient efforts were necessary before the economy of the region could recover.
On May 1st, 1909, the Cognac area of production was delimited. In 1936, Cognac became a Controlled Appellation of Origin (AOC).
During the Second World War, the wine and eaux-de-vie distribution bureau was created to preserve the stock of Cognac. When the war ended, in 1946, it was replaced by the Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac and the Station Viticole was placed under its authority in 1948.
Since then all the stages of Cognac’s production have been strictly regulated to guarantee its quality and authenticity. Its reputation has continued to grow ever since.

◆ WHAT IS THE BNIC?
The BNIC is an interprofessional organization as defined by Article L631 of the French Rural Code. It is a private institution financed by the Cognac professionals (Cognac companies and growers). However, it is entrusted with public service missions.
Its members are appointed in equal numbers by the trade organizations that are most representative of the growers and merchants. A president is elected for a five-year term.
The State is represented by an Economic and Financial General Controller, appointed by the Ministry of Finance, and by the heads of various relevant administrations associated to Cognac.
The Plenary Assembly is in charge of taking all the decisions pertaining to every facet of Cognac following their proposal by the Standing Committee and consultation with specialised commissions.
The BNIC’s various departments are in charge of assuring the execution of these decisions.

◆ BNIC’S MISSION
Together, the Cognac growers and merchants have defined the BNIC’s mission as follows:
«To develop and promote Cognac, representing the best interests of all Cognac professionals including growers, merchants and members of other activities related to the Cognac trade».

◆ ACTIONS
- Structure the region of production
- Increase knowledge of the appellation, and protect it
- Facilitate market access
- Promote Cognac
- Establish the conditions necessary to accomplish all its missions
- Fulfill all the missions delegated by the Government

BNIC has ratified the « Code of Good Conduct on Commercial Communication for Alcoholic Beverages »
BNIC is currently pursuing Quality Certification under ISO 9001/2000
The BNIC functions within a legal framework approved by a ministerial decision of July 24, 1989.

**The Plenary Assembly**

The Plenary Assembly is the BNIC’s decision-making body. It is made up of 34 members, of which:
- 17 represent the wine growers,
- 17 represent the Cognac firms.

These 34 members hold a vote each. The president of the Plenary Assembly is elected for five years.

The following are also represented at the Assembly, but in an advisory capacity only:
- relevant administration of the ministries of Agriculture and Finances
- related professions such as nurserymen, cooperers, brokers, etc.

**How BNIC is funded**

Since January 1st, 2004, BNIC is exclusively funded by its members. The dues are voted by the Plenary Assembly of the organization and rendered mandatory by ministerial decree.

**The dues**

The level of the dues paid by the Cognac professionals – CVO, or "cotisations volontaires obligatoires" / compulsory voluntary dues – are based on the volume of sales made by each grower or shipper. The basis and the level of the dues are established annually by the Plenary Assembly which also determines the appropriation of the funds according to the actions it wishes to undertake.

**The organization of the BNIC**

BNIC includes several highly specialised departments. Each one is equipped to efficiently handle the needs of the professionals and fulfill its missions.

**The Director**

Mission:
- Optimise BNIC’s structure to best serve the objectives of the organization
- Manage the organization and its 100-staff
- Communicate with the Cognac professionals
- Represent BNIC.

**The Departments**

**Legal, Economic, and Tax Affairs**

Mission:
- Examine all legal aspects (production, defense of AOC, environment, safety)
- Access to markets
- Tax issues
- Advisory

**Station Viticole**

Mission:
- Carry out research into all aspects of Cognac production
- Analyse
- Provide technical services
- Increase knowledge of and defend AOC
- Distribute scientific and technical information

**Control of Ages**

Mission:
- Implement public service missions delegated by the State
  Control transactions of Cognac
  Implement compte âge system: control of the ages and inventories of Cognac eaux-de-vie
  Deliver Cognac certificates

**Marketing & Communication**

Mission:
- Develop the knowledge of Cognac
  - Promote the Cognac Appellation of Origin

**IT and Statistics**

Mission:
- Manage the BNIC’s information systems
  - Study, analyse and publish statistics

**Human and Financial Resources**

Mission:
- Manage finances, budget and personnel
  - Publications
1001 ways to talk about Cognac...

> History
Coming from the best vineyards and transported on ships to Northern European countries, the wines of the Poitou, La Rochelle and Angoumois have been greatly appreciated by the English, the Dutch, and the Scandinavians since the 13th Century.

> Charentaise Distillation
The distillation method has not changed since the birth of Cognac. The special Charentais copper stills “à repasse” that were used then are still in use today.

> Blending
Making Cognac is the work of the master blender. Like the “master nose” and his perfumes, the Cognac Master Blender (Maître de Chai) subtly blends together eaux-de-vie of different ages and from different cru.

> AOC
Nearly a century and the assistance of the French government were needed for Cognac professionals to define a framework that preserves the authenticity and uniqueness of Cognac, from its production to its marketing.

> Harvest
It all starts with the selection of grape varieties, mostly Ugni Blanc, perfectly suited to make Cognac. This is followed by the traditional harvest, the pressing of the grapes and winemaking according to natural methods.

> Quality
Quality is a Cognac state of mind. We sometimes say that a chain is as solid as its most feeble link. For that very reason, to guarantee an impeccable quality, all the stages in the elaboration of Cognac are extremely strict.

> Market
In 2005, Cognac had a historical year and had the third best performance of its history in terms of sales. This performance was reflected in 95% of the exports, although the French market is still a priority for the BNIC.

> The Art of Wood
Cognac is kept and aged for many years in oak casks. The making of a Cognac cask follows a traditional and ancestral method that is near perfection.

> The power of taste and smell
In order to discover all the subtleties of a Cognac, a taster will take much pleasure in collecting many bits of information with his eye.

> Consumption
Straight, as a long drink, or a cocktail, discover the different ways in which you may enjoy Cognac.

> Gift
What is more natural than offering Cognac as a gift? In many countries, this is a synonym of recognition and deep respect.

> Cognac Perfect Pairs
Cognac may be enjoyed together with a meal. Why not? Let yourself be surprised. Cognac goes wonderfully with a great variety of dishes. It will be a true delight for your taste buds.

> Cooking with Cognac
When the flavours and aromas of Cognac are used in cooking, gastronomy takes on a whole new meaning.

> Cellar Paradise
Cognac is a living product. During its long aging in oak casks, it is in permanent contact with air. This allows the extraction of substances from the wood that give Cognac both its colour and bouquet.

> The Art of Hosting
Charente and Charente-Maritime have always been a privileged tourist destination. Here, the art of hosting is extremely developed. The large number of bed and breakfasts gives many tourists the possibility of enjoying a nice stay.

> The Region
The Cognac region combines diverse landscapes with an exceptional microclimate caused by the influence of the nearby ocean on the continent. Each of the six Crus of the AOC has its own distinct personality. It expresses itself in the intricate blends of aromas and tastes characteristic of each Cognac.

> Cognac Thriller Film Festival
Since 1992, famous actors and prestigious directors gather in Cognac for a few days.

> Cognac Blues Passion
Since 1993, the Blues invade the streets of Cognac during July. A carnival ambiance reminiscent of New Orleans.

> Fête du Cognac
Launched by several young Cognac producers to promote their spirits, the Fête du Cognac has become a not to be missed festival that celebrates the town and its eau-de-vie.

> The Art of Glassmaking
The Art of Glassmaking has been part of Cognac’s success since the 19th century. Bottles look like genuine decanters or curules worth admiring and sometimes treasuring.

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