



Double good news for Bourgogne wines

9 November 2017

It is with a great deal of pleasure and not without pride that the Burgundian winemakers welcomed today the official creation of 2 new AOCs: Bourgogne Côte d'Or and Vézelay. The signature of the relevant government ministers brings an end to the administrative procedures, allowing these wines to be brought to market with the 2017 vintage.

As a reminder, in June of this year, the Institut National des Appellations d'Origine (INAO) said 'yes' to the 'cahier des charges' of those 2 AOCs.

Consumers may find the first bottles of those wines as soon as September 2018.

Vézelay becomes a *Village* appellation

This is a wonderful promotion for Vézelay, one of the smallest Bourgogne appellations (66 hectares), which this year has been granted a *Village* appellation.

Vines were first grown in Vézelay during the Roman era, but unfortunately, they were almost completely destroyed by phylloxera in 1884. In 1875, they began a gradual comeback, and were granted the Bourgogne appellation in 1985. Then in 1998, the quality and uniqueness of this *terroir* were recognized and given a welcome boost when they were awarded the Bourgogne Vézelay *Régionale* appellation.



There are around 20 winegrowers currently producing the Vézelay appellation, including many newcomers to the industry, following in the footsteps of those who came before and working to translate the unique characteristics of the Vézelay *terroir* into wine. The INAO crowned this combined effort in June 2017, putting its signature on the specifications for this new *Village* appellation, the 44th in the Bourgogne winegrowing region.

These new specifications are rigorous, as they should be for a new *Village* appellation, with yields restricted to a maximum of 55hl/ha. And Vézelay is determined to continue expanding. Although far from the 1,000 hectares under vine in the Napoleonic era, this little winegrowing area, which previously covered 66 hectares, now has an additional 150 hectares of AOC *Village* available for planting, which will certainly delight fans of this 100% Chardonnay white wine with its pale yellow gold color. A smooth ride for this appellation whose name promises some exceptional heritage.

Bourgogne Côte d'Or: A highly-anticipated new member of the Bourgogne family

Industry professionals from the Côte de Beaune and Côte de Nuits are hailing the recognition of this *Régionale* appellation identified some 20 years ago. They were keen to highlight these plots of Bourgogne wine with their unique characteristics, and the INAO has made a favorable judgement in this respect.

To ensure this appellation enjoys the reach it deserves, it was necessary to give it a meaningful name that



adds value. The name of Bourgogne Côte d'Or does not refer to the eponymous department, rather the area where the grapes are grown (*see sidebar*). Indeed, the production area extends across all the villages of the Côte de Beaune and Côte de Nuits, from south of Dijon to Maranges. This offers a potential of 1,000 hectares of Pinot Noir for reds and Chardonnay for whites. However, in one of those twists so common in this region, Bourgogne Côte d'Or is not, properly speaking, a new AOC.

Integrated into the specifications of the *Bourgogne Régionale AOC*, it enjoys a *Désignation Géographique Complémentaire (DGC)*, similar to Bourgogne Côte Chalonnaise or Bourgogne Côte d'Auxerre for example. There are currently 14 DGCs for the Bourgogne appellation, chiefly allowing for the differentiation of the various wine producing areas within the Bourgogne region, each with their own unique characteristics. This is just one more way to rediscover Bourgogne wines and their many, varied styles.

The creation of the Bourgogne Côte d'Or DGC comes with rigorous production conditions, guaranteeing a certain level of quality:

- ▶ As with *Village* appellations, plantation density is set at a minimum of 9,000 plants per hectare compared to a minimum of 5,000 plants per hectare for the Bourgogne appellation
- ▶ Target yields are 66 hl/ha for whites and 58 hl/ha for reds
- ▶ The minimum alcohol is also the same as for *Village AOCs*, at 11° for whites and 10.5° for reds
- ▶ The vines involved are all grown on the Côte, mainly on foothills, on the edge of *Village* appellations

We must be patient for a while longer before we can discover the 2017 vintage of this new classification, which should come to market in the fall of 2018.

Did you know? One name, two uses, and two origins!

Winegrowers called this new classification Bourgogne Côte d'Or in reference to the sloping hillside where the wines grow. The "Or" does not mean "gold", rather it's a shortening of "Orient", indicating that it is east-facing. The same on the Côte de Beaune and the Côte de Nuits, this favorable inclination partly explains the excellence of the wines produced here from vines that enjoy the rising sun.

The administrative department of Côte-d'Or (with a hyphen) was named by the French Parliament in the 19th century for a more bucolic reason. Here, it refers to the fabulous golden color the vines take on just after the harvest.

A note on the appellations of the Bourgogne winegrowing region

The diversity of Bourgogne wines is no myth – it's a well-catalogued heritage. Cultivated for two millennia, the vines have revealed their individual characteristics over the centuries. First monks and then winemakers identified the features of the different *terroirs* which resulted in the granting of the first *Appellations d'Origine Contrôlées* or *AOCs* in 1936. The result is a fascinating patchwork of *Climats*, or individually defined plots, that were included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2015 to the delight of wine lovers. And for those who also love numbers, here are a few that sum up the diversity of the wines of the Bourgogne region:



- ▶ **84 sets of specifications**, for the **seven Régional AOCs**, **44 Village AOCs** (including Vézelay) and **33 Grand Cru AOCs**.
- ▶ The specifications for Bourgogne and Mâcon AOCs identify certain sectors that enjoy a *Dénomination Géographique Complémentaire (DGC)*, and produce wines with different organoleptic characteristics. As such, there are **14 DGCs within the Bourgogne AOC**, including the new Bourgogne Côte d'Or, along with others including Bourgogne Côte Chalonnaise, Bourgogne Hautes Côtes de Beaune or Nuits, and Bourgogne Chitry, and **27 within the Mâcon AOC**, including Mâcon Igé, Mâcon Lugny, and Mâcon Uchizy.
- ▶ Similarly, the *Premier Cru* of the Bourgogne region are also DGCs within the *Village AOC* specifications. **Officially, there are 640 Climats within the Village AOC specifications**. But this does not do justice to the huge network of plots that is the Bourgogne winegrowing region because behind the names of these so-called "flagship" *Climats*, there are thousands of others found on wine labels. A "flagship" *Climat* is one with a greater reputation than that of neighboring *Climats*. It is the *Climat* that is mentioned in the specifications. As a result, the owner of a lesser-known *Climat* may choose to either call his or her wine by the name of the better-known flagship *Climat*, or by its actual name. This is nonetheless within a regulatory framework. For example, the three Chassagne-Montrachet *Climats* of Les Combards, Chassagne and Vigne Derrière may appear on the labels of bottles of Chassagne-Montrachet Premier Cru, or the owner may call their wines by the name of the flagship *Climat*, in this instance, Cailleret.
- ▶ Another common question for those who like counting: Is there one or are there seven *Grand Crus* in Chablis? In fact, **there is one Chablis Grand Cru that covers seven DGCs**, each one individually identified and applied to their wines by their producers: Blanchot, Bougros, Grenouilles, Les Clos, Preuses, Valmur, and Vaudésir.

There's always more to learn with Bourgogne wines!

Contact:

Cécile Mathiaud, Head of Press

Tel. +33 (0)3 80 25 95 76 - +33 (0)6 08 56 85 56

cecile.mathiaud@bivb.com

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