

Burgundy



Classifications & Terms

Introduction

Whilst it would be nice and easy if all French wine regions had exactly the same classifications and terms, they don't. What applies in Burgundy doesn't necessarily apply to Bordeaux! Like anything in life, once you understand it, it's much easier. We hope this helps you understand Burgundy and that you too can enjoy even more of the fabulous wines from this brilliant region!

Classifications

Labels give you a heads up on what to expect in the content of a bottle, not just quality but other things too i.e. it could be the colour, sweetness, if it is still or sparkling etc. Wines are categorised by means of the classifications shown.

In Europe, PDO and PGI are marks of quality. They both represent excellence in production and are both the result of a unique combination of human and environmental factors characteristic of a certain geographical area. Precise regulations apply to safeguard them.

PDO



PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) mark is the stricter of the two classifications and has tighter regulations in the vineyard and winery. Along with other key wine producing nations, France registered their traditional term at this level e.g. Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) and prefers to use this on their wine labels. France's AOC was established in 1935 to combat against fraudsters and help guarantee authenticity. Administered by the INAO, it was devised and developed to protect wines (and spirits) regarding their definition, protection and control. The Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) stands for "a product for which the principal steps for production are done following a well-established technique within the same geographical area and gives the product its characteristics". Each appellation has specific regulations to abide by in the vineyard and winery in terms of permitted grapes, maximum yields, colour of wine, alcohol strength post fermentation, vinification methods and so on.

"appellation translates to designation and they don't necessarily conform to geographical borders"

The Burgundy wine region has 84 appellations that can be broken down into sub regions, appellations and sub-appellations. So, in ascending order of importance and quality, plus increasingly tighter vineyard and vinification regulations, these are:

AOC Structure	
Bourgogne Grand Ordinaire AC (Red, rosé and white wines produced from across Burgundy. Generic appellation with the least regulations)	Around 52% of region's production
Bourgogne Passetoutgrains AC (Red wines. Unusually for Burgundy, these are blends that must have at least 33% Pinot Noir)	
Bourgogne Aligoté AC (White wines made with the Aligoté white grape)	
Bourgogne Rouge or Blanc AC (Wines made with the key grape variety for the area they've grown in e.g. Pinot Noir for red and Chardonnay for white)	
Bourgogne Communes/Villages AC (e.g. Beaune AC, Mâcon-Village AC, Gevrey-Chambertin AC)	Around 35.6% of production
Premier Cru AC (e.g. Volnay 1er Cru AC)	Around 11% of production
Grand Cru AC (In the Côte d'Or, the vineyard name appears on the label and no commune e.g. Chevalier-Montrachet Grand Cru)	Around 1.4% of production

PGI



PGI (Protected Geographical Indication or Indication Géographique Protégée (IGP) in French) mark has less regulations in the vineyard and winery than PDO e.g. wider range of grapes etc. France registered their traditional term Vins de Pays (VdP) and winemakers can use either on their wine labels. The grape variety frequently appears on the labels.

Wines without a geographical indication have the least regulations and controls. Grapes can be sourced from around the country e.g. outside of Burgundy. There are less of these today and domestically drunk. Labels will have Vins de France/Vins on them.

Terms

Like any industry, the wine world uses loads of jargon. A word or phrase used here or there in magazines, websites, tastings and so can leave you trying to fathom out or guess what it actually means. Here's a helpful guide for some Burgundy terms to help you understand and clarify what they actually mean.

Carbonic Maceration

Aimed at extracting fruit flavours rather than tannin.

Cooperative

Enterprise facility jointly owned by a number of growers with wine making, and often bottling and marketing capabilities too. Particularly important in Chablis, Mâconnais and Beaujolais.

Domaine

As estate or winery and indicates the grapes have been grown on land the producers own.

Domaine Bottled

Wine produced and bottled on the producers own land. See Domaine.

En Primeur

En primeur applies to all fine wines, not just those from Bordeaux, and is a bit like financial hedging. An investor is given an opportunity to purchase wine early whilst it is still in barrel. The aim is that once the wine is bottled and marketed, around 18 months later, the release price will hopefully be significantly higher than the en primeur price giving the investor a good return on his/her investment.

Like any hedging, there is no guarantee of profit though. En primeur gives the Château/producer some initial cash injection to offset against their costs.

INAO

Institut National des Appellations d'Origine is a public body responsible for management and control of the regulations for the production of AOC and AOVDQS wines.

Monopole

Vineyard owned by one owner only. This is quite exceptional as most have multiple owners.

Terroir

Terroir just means the natural environment and conditions (i.e. includes things like soil, topography, and climate) where the grapes are grown as well as the taste and flavour characteristics that are imparted into a wine by the environment where it has been produced.



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