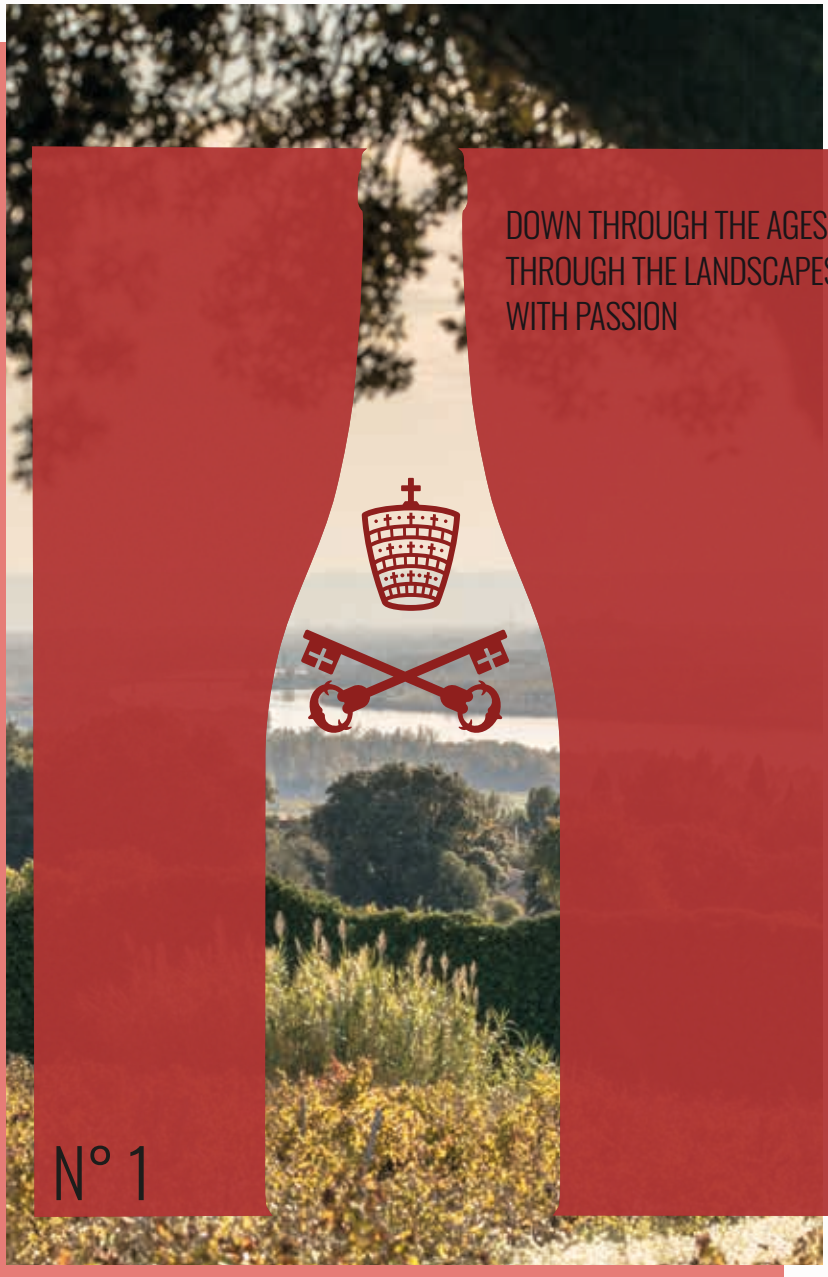


EPIC JOURNEYS

CHÂTEAUNEUF DU PAPE

APPELLATION D'ORIGINE CONTRÔLÉE

01

DOWN THROUGH THE AGES

The history of Châteauneuf-du-Pape is an odyssey through time or rather timelines, embracing both natural history and the story of people. In relation to humankind, it is a holistic story where the social, cultural and even religious aspects are interwoven. Hence, Châteauneuf-du-Pape holds a particular place in the sequence of events as a wine region that is both at the epicentre and in the vanguard.

GEOLOGICAL TIMES

HISTORY OVER THE (VERY) LONG TERM

In the Cretaceous, over 100 million years ago, the sea covered the Châteauneuf-du-Pape wine region, leaving sediment several kilometres thick behind, including large amounts of limestone which now forms part of the appellation's mosaic of soil types. The upthrust of the Alps would gradually alter the landscape. The sea subsequently became a sound dividing two mountain ranges – the ancient Massif Central and the younger Alps.

In the Tertiary Period, the Châteauneuf-du-Pape wine region was a maritime delta. Rivers ran off the developing Alpine peaks and deposited large volumes of detrital materials including gravel, sand and clay – as they consolidated, they gradually caused the sea to recede. Around 20 million years ago, the Châteauneuf-du-Pape area was engulfed in a maritime incursion by the Mediterranean. The sea covered the dips hollowed out by erosion then the entire area from 16 million to 7.25 million years ago, at which time the sea again receded, making way for lacustrine and fluvial deposits which would disappear through erosion.
The junction of the African and Iberian plates 5.96 million years ago caused the Strait of Gibraltar to close. The level of the Mediterranean suddenly plummeted and the Rhone and its tributaries carved out a new valley in record time.
Seismic turbulence freed the Strait 5.333 million years ago – inflows from the Atlantic suddenly filled the Mediterranean which then swept through the valleys as far as southern Lyon, covering the Châteauneuf-du-Pape area and depositing significant amounts of detrital rocks such as clay, sand and stones.

In the Quaternary, nearly 2 million years ago, the formation of the Alps was complete and the sea receded south. Washing down considerable masses of stony alluvium torn from the mountains, the Rhone and its tributaries would build up high terraces here and there, leaving outcrops of pebbles on the soils and adding the finishing touches to the ultimate appearance of the landscape.

-100 m years
The sea covered the Châteauneuf-du-Pape area, depositing large amounts of limestone materials

-23 m years
Pushed back by the upthrust of the Alps, the sea began to recede. Sediment transported by the Alpine rivers built up.

-5.3 m years
A sudden influx of ocean water masses brought with it new marine sediment deposits

-2 m years
Sediment washed down by the Rhone and its tributaries created pebble-strewn terraces

ANCIENT TIMES

THE MIDDLE AGES

In 1309, Pope Clement V moved to Avignon for political reasons. Rome was in the throes of factional infighting and the city was the target of riots. But Avignon was not chosen by default. The town was a dependency of the earldom of Provence, and the earl was a vassal of the Pope. Also, the major issue of the time involved the Templars, the 'military monks' whose fate was to be debated not far away, in Vienne, during a council due to take place in 1311 at the behest of the powerful King of France, Philip the Fair.

The history of the Châteauneuf-Calcernier wine region – as the village located on the Left Bank of the Rhone was known at the time due to its production of high quality lime – gathered pace. Vine growing here, introduced in the sixth century BC by the Greeks, was already ancient. But the 14th century would be decisive. The Popes, who built their summer residence in Châteauneuf-Calcernier, engaged brilliant minds who would structure the vineyards. In 1325, there were approximately 8 hectares of vines in the village, which for the time was a considerable area.

The second Pope to serve in Avignon, John XXII – who was 72 years old at the time of his election in 1316 – reshaped the landscape of Châteauneuf-Calcernier by beginning construction of a castle overlooking the village in 1317. He died in 1334, aged 90.

The red and white wines of Châteauneuf-Calcernier excelled.
Through the papacy, Avignon became one of Europe's most important towns, housing a lavish court along with many embassies. The reputation of the wines served there transcended borders and very soon, Châteauneuf-Calcernier wines – further bolstered by their status as the wines of Popes – were shipped in barrels throughout the Papal States and even to England, France and the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation.

1157
The first written evidence of Châteauneuf-Calcernier wines

1309
The Popes settled in Avignon

1317
Construction work on a Papal residence began in Châteauneuf-Calcernier

1376
The Popes left Avignon

MODERN TIMES

18TH CENTURY > 20TH CENTURY

The spirit of enlightenment swept across the wine region, whose growth had been hampered by wars in the previous centuries. Noble families invested in vineyards whilst trade was supported by the emergence of merchants among the middle classes. Properties were expanded and some of them exported their wines to Europe and even to the United States.

The industry gradually became structured. In 1817, a municipal by-law banned mixtures with crops from other wine regions, and the wines' reputation constantly grew. The 'Félibrige' movement, founded in 1854 by Frédéric Mistral and Provencal poets like the winegrower Anselme Mathieu, introduced them to Parisian literary circles – Alphonse de Lamartine, Alexandre Dumas and Alphonse Daudet became their advocates.

After first emerging in Gard in 1863, within a few years phylloxera had wrought havoc across the vineyards of France, decimating the Châteauneuf-du-Pape wine region. The economic crisis undermined the industry structure and fraud became rife, particularly as the strong symbolic value of Châteauneuf-du-Pape offered an incentive to cheat. This galvanised winegrowers into action in a bid to rebuild vineyards and protect their reputation stemming from the wines' provenance. A bill dated from August 1st 1905 cracked down on fraud and falsification in trade of agricultural produce and foodstuffs. Another bill on May 6th 1919 introduced the concept of appellation of origin.

Led by Baron Le Roy, Châteauneuf-du-Pape winegrowers invented the very principle of the controlled appellation of origin at the turn of the 20th century.

Winegrowers also began to self-organise. An initial collective structure was started in 1894, followed by a producers' organisation in 1923, chaired by one of their members, legal expert and former wartime pilot Baron Pierre Le Roy de Boiseaumarié. Their aim was to retain control over the Châteauneuf-du-Pape name but also to guarantee the quality of the wines associated with that name. Winegrowers rallied round to obtain legal statutes for the producers' organisation, increasing standards by establishing a list of authorised grape varieties for example.

So it was that Châteauneuf-du-Pape laid the foundations for the concept of controlled appellation of origin (AOC), whose status was established in the July 30th 1935 statutory law. On May 15th 1936, Châteauneuf-du-Pape became one of the first six French wine regions to be recognised as an AOC. In 1947, Pierre Le Roy de Boiseaumarié was elected as chairman of a new administration – INAO, the national institute for appellations of origin.

THE EMBOSSED CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE BOTTLE WAS CREATED IN 1937. IT HAS NOW BECOME AN ICON AND HAS BRAND PROTECTION IN NEARLY TWENTY COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE.

1776 The first shipments of bottled wines

1786 The first shipments of wine to the United States by Château La Nerthe (Boston, Philadelphia)

1817 A municipal by-law banned winemaking using grapes from other wine regions

1878 Reconstruction of vineyards destroyed by the phylloxera crisis began

1893 The village of Châteauneuf-Calcernier was renamed Châteauneuf-du-Pape

1894 The first producers' organisation aimed at authenticating the origin of the wines was established

1923 The Châteauneuf-du-Pape organisation of owners and winegrowers was created, and continues to this day

1936 The first wine region recognised as an AOC

1937 Creation of the bottle embossed with a coat of arms

1954 A municipal by-law forbidding UFOs from flying over Châteauneuf-du-Pape

1967 The Echansonnerie des Papes wine fraternity was established

THE PRESENT DAY AND THE FUTURE

21ST CENTURY

Today, some 300 registered producers farm nearly 3,150 hectares of vines spread over vineyard blocks covering five towns and villages in Vaucluse: Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Bédarrides, Courthézon, Orange and Sorgues. They form a structured group of nearly 220 independent wineries and one co-operative winery founded in 1925 which has around one hundred member growers.

They share the same production specifications, passed down through the generations. Rules on quality are very stringent and include a maximum yield of just 35 hl/ha, hand-picking only and mandatory fruit sorting for quality purposes, both in the vineyards and the winery. Winemaking techniques are also strict – for instance, use of oak chips is outlawed. However, production specifications ensure that winegrowers have total freedom of expression in terms of choice of grape varieties and winemaking methods.

They have also made a pledge to protect the environment. Measures include the introduction of an agricultural observatory of biodiversity, planting of 42 km of hedges using native species, development of eco-grazing in winter, widespread use of biological control methods and preparation of changes to specifications aimed at banning use of chemical weedkillers. In addition to individual initiatives, there is a collective drive to reduce the industry's environmental footprint and preserve the ecosystem conditions that make the wine region unique. The switch to organic farming has been collectively supported since 1991. Currently, over 35% of the appellation's acreage is certified organic or biodynamic.

IN 2024, THE APPELLATION INTRODUCED A PLAN TO INCREASE THE SHARE OF WHITE GRAPE VARIETALS. THE AIM IS FOR 20% OF VINEYARDS TO BE PLANTED TO WHITE VARIETIES BY 2036.

2000 – The appellation joined the Slow Food movement

2006 – The appellation was endorsed as a Remarkable Site of Taste

2009 – Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines were listed in the national register for intangible cultural heritage

2011 – The current production specifications for Châteauneuf-du-Pape were approved

2018 – The producers' organisations reunited

2019 – The Châteauneuf-du-Pape Young Sommelier Trophy was introduced

02

THROUGH THE LANDSCAPES

Strolling along the roads and paths that cut through the vineyards is a must because the landscape is the best vehicle for recounting the wines that are born there. The geography in Châteauneuf-du-Pape is granular and defies simplification. Obviously there are salient, distinctive features but nature here is subtle and complex with unique soil types and grape varieties that fuel inspiration.

A WINE REGION WITH THE WIND IN ITS SAILS

The Châteauneuf-du-Pape wine region is situated between Avignon and Orange, in the heart of the driest part of the Rhone Valley, between the left bank of the river and the first range of hills. The terrain is fairly even and home to plateaux and gentle hills. There is a variety of aspects but no prevailing exposure.

The climate clearly has a Mediterranean influence. The winters are fairly mild and summers often stifling with temperatures regularly in excess of 35°C. Rainfall patterns are both chaotic and limited, staying within an average of 650 millimetres a year. Sunshine is exceptional, with 2,800 hours of sun a year, promoting ripening during the summer.

THE CLOUDS THAT MAINLY APPEAR DURING THE EQUINOXES ARE QUICKLY DISSIPATED, DRIVEN AWAY BY THE MISTRAL WIND THAT OFTEN REACHES GUSTS OF OVER 100 KM/HOUR

The Mistral wind blows nearly every other day, especially in winter, in spring and towards the end of summer. It is a wind hailing from the north that picks up speed as it moves south. And whatever the season it is beneficial. In March and April, it circulates air, preventing cold air from creating frost by lingering on the ground. In August and September, it halts the spread of fungal diseases by drying the grapes after thunder storms, concentrating sugars in the berries.

A MOSAIC OF SOILS

The setting seems barren with its weather-worn, eroded mantle that is often stony. Vines are therefore forced to put down very deep roots, through a bedrock of red, iron-rich clay, in search of water and nutrients. Some root systems even go down as far as three metres below ground.

Due to the intricately woven fabric of soils, Châteauneuf-du-Pape is a model of diversity. It seems as though the various geological movements have colluded to juxtapose very different structures. The Châteauneuf-du-Pape wine region thus combines landscapes where terraces are strewn with sizeable pebbles (500 ha), vibrant areas of rough limestone (250 ha) and younger alluvium terraces combining silt, quartzite and sand (625 ha). Expanses of sand, fawn sands and sandstone (1,825 ha) can be found beneath the surface or in teh subsoil.

READ: GEORGES TRUC, 'CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE, GEOLOGICAL HISTORY AND THE BIRTH OF TERROIRS', 2022

This diversity is a source of inspiration for winegrowers who have always crafted wines that express gratitude to the unique features of a particular soil structure – like the wines grown on fawn sands for example – or, conversely, are a blend of juices so that their complementarity can transcend the different types of terrain.

WATCH

GEORGES TRUC, WHO AS A WINE GEOLOGIST SPECIALISES IN RHONE VALLEY VINEYARDS, PRESENTS THE DIFFERENT SOIL TYPES IN CHATEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE.

PEBBLES

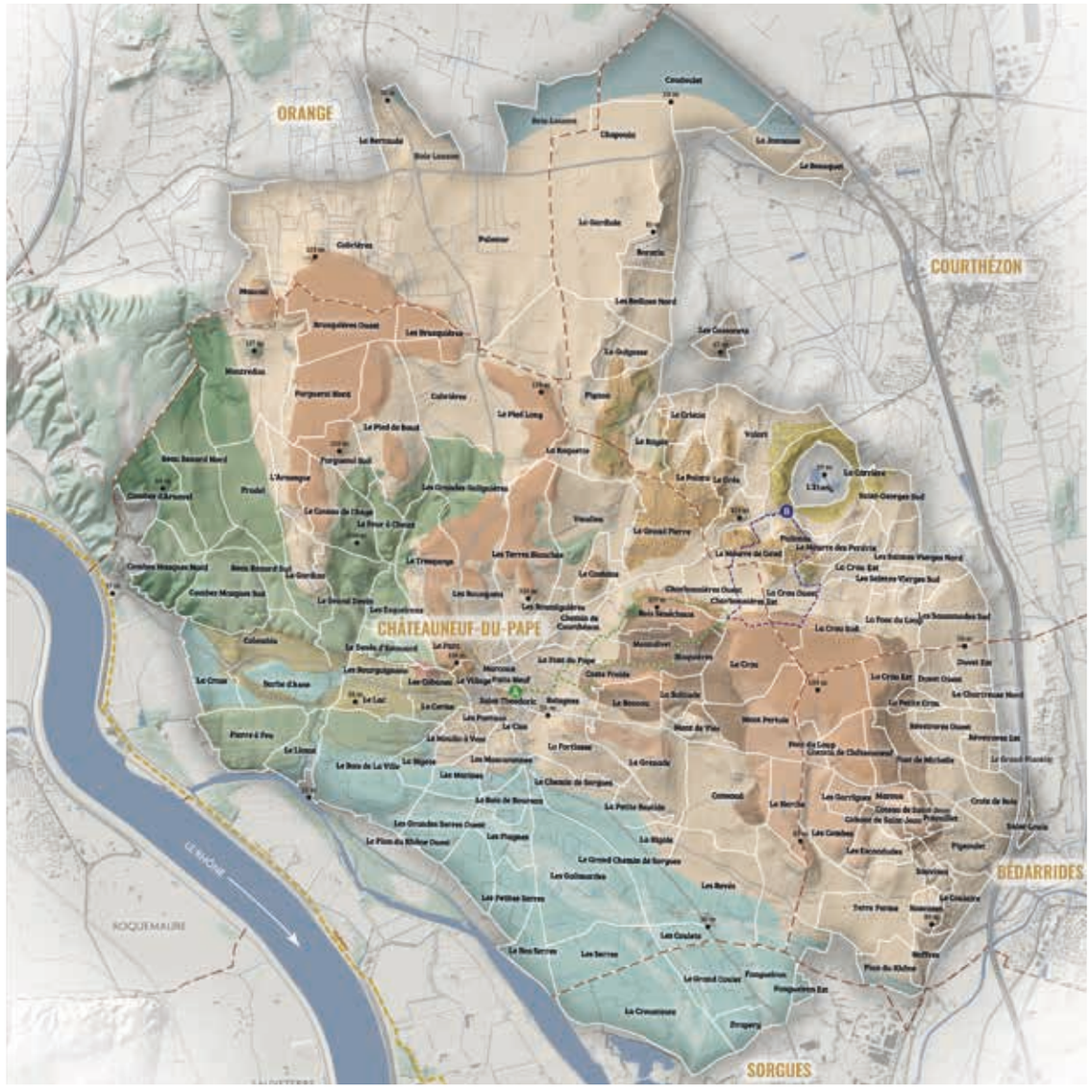
The youngest soils in the appellation area, stretching from one side to the other, are composed of pure silica. They stem from Alpine blocks wrenched away then displaced by the Rhone when it was still a mountain stream. Radiating back the heat stored during the day, they promote unrivalled ripeness, producing intense wines.

LIMESTONE SHARDS

Deposited by the sea during the Mesozoic era, they line the western border of the appellation area, forming a surface of crystalline rocks revealing a mixture of clay and sand below. These soils produce razor-sharp wines with characteristic salinity.

SAND (FAWN SAND)

Conveyed by marine currents then washed up and subsequently weathered through erosion, this flowing sediment covers the north and east of the appellation area. By allowing vines to put down deep roots, they promote wines showing sleek elegance.



RED SANDSTONE

Stemming from coarse sediment of shells cemented by limestone, they form small islands where they are entwined with clayey materials tinged by iron oxide. The resultant wines are distinctively tense and fresh.

SOIL MAP

Based on research by wine geologist Georges Truc

QUATERNARY SOILS

- Recent terrace (gravel and silt)
- Würm terrace (South, with quartzite pebbles)
- Ancient Würm terrace
- Villafranchian terrace with quartzite pebbles
- High Villafranchian terrace

TERTIARY SOILS

- Pliocene (sand, fine-grain sandstone and marl)
- Miocene (upper coarse sandstone – red sandstone)
- Miocene (lower coarse sandstone)
- Miocene (fawn sand and sand - marl)
- Eocene (silica and ferruginous sandstone)

CRETACEOUS SOILS

- Cenomanian (glauconitic marl and limestone)
- Barremian (flint limestone and Urgonian limestone)
- Barrémien (calcaires et calcaires argileux)

A NATURAL GRAPE VARIETY CONSERVATION CENTRE

Châteauneuf-du-Pape's vine heritage was painstakingly rebuilt after the phylloxera crisis which devastated French vineyards at the end of the 19th century. It was cast in stone in the charter of the Châteauneuf-du-Pape vineyard owners' organisation, drafted in 1923, then in the May 15th 1936 decree that made Châteauneuf-du-Pape France's first appellation of origin.

WINEGROWERS ARE FREE TO USE THE APPELLATION'S 13 GRAPE VARIETIES WITH NO RESTRICTIONS ON THEIR PROPORTIONS

The appellation's repertoire comprises an incredible array of thirteen grape varieties, or eighteen even if you include all three colours. Winegrowers are free to blend them or not by focusing on their essences, their provenances and their complementarities. They therefore offer endless scope for expression and inevitably, the resultant wines are individually styled boutique offerings because they require interpretation.

This heritage, which is common property, is both precious yet fragile. Agro-biodiversity, or the diversity of varieties grown, has a widespread tendency to decrease due to pressure on ecosystems and the bane of standardisation.

In 2019, the appellation thus began an inventory of its oldest vines. Samples were taken from the most remarkable vines and will allow the genetic diversity of the wine region to be protected, not only to perpetuate Châteauneuf-du-Pape's heritage but also to strengthen its ability to cope with climate change.

BOURBOULENC

WHITE

A variety originating in the South of France

Floral notes

Often blended with Grenache blanc and the Clairettes

CINSAULT

RED

A variety originating in the South of France

Drought resistant

Fruity notes

Often blended with Grenache noir to which it imparts suppleness

CLAIRETTE

WHITE | PINK

A variety originating in the South of France

Slightly bitter notes

The predominant or even sole grape variety in some of the appellation's white wines

COUNOISE

RED

A variety originating in Spain

Fruity and spicy notes

Grown on a boutique scale

GRENACHE

WHITE | BLUSH | RED

A group of grape varieties originating in Spain, adapted to local conditions since the Middle Ages. Drought-resistant

Fruity and spicy notes, with the ability to develop

An iconic, intense and lush grape variety that often dominates blends

MOURVEDRE

RED

A variety originating in Spain, adapted to local conditions since the Middle Ages

Fruity and spicy notes, with the ability to develop

Often used in blends, mainly for its ageing capacity

MUSCARDIN

RED

Native grape variety

Floral notes

Used as a blending variety, primarily for its potential for freshness

PICARDAN

WHITE

Native grape variety

Musk notes

Grown on a boutique scale but plantings are being stepped up due to concerns about varietal preservation

PICPOUL

WHITE | BLUSH | RED

A group of grape varieties originating in the South of France

Versatile fruity or floral notes

Used as a blending variety, primarily for its potential for freshness

ROUSSANNE

WHITE

A variety originating in the northern Rhone Valley

Versatile fruity or floral notes

The predominant or even sole grape variety in some of the appellation's white wines

SYRAH

RED

A variety originating in the northern Rhone Valley

Fruity and spicy notes, with the ability to develop

Often used in blends

TERRET NOIR

RED

A variety originating in the South of France

Fruity notes

Grown on a boutique scale

VACCARÈSE

RED

A variety originating in the southerly part of Provence, also known as Brun argenté

Floral notes

Used as a blending variety, primarily for its potential for freshness

03

WITH PASSION

Admittedly, passion is a strong word yet it is so appropriate. Its origin stems from religion, but it has entered secular language, describing the almost-mystical yet very physical bond between winegrowers and their land. It acts as a focal point – akin to a new-style pilgrimage – for wine buffs around the world who love to stroll through this minute rectangle just eight kilometres long by six wide that is the Châteauneuf-du-Pape wine region.

THE TASTE OF WINE

RED WINES

With their intense crimson hues leaning towards ruby, these legendary icons now express the full potential of Châteauneuf-du-Pape's terroir through their diversity.

There are the profound, sensual wines with outstanding ageability that can be cellared for several decades. Born of the innate chemistry between grape varieties, they assert themselves over many years, gradually revealing their graceful tannins and their intensity of flavour through a blend of ripe fruits, spices and forest floor aromatics.

LIKE ANY RELIGION, CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE ALSO HAS ITS SHARE OF LEGENDS THAT ARE ITS VINTAGES. TO CONTINUE THE METAPHOR, YOU COULD SAY THEY ARE NATURALLY BLESSED: 1947, 1957, 1961, 1966, 1978, 1990, 1998, 2007, 2010 AND 2016. THAT'S WHILST THE JURY'S STILL OUT ON THE ULTRA PROMISING VINTAGES OF THIS DECADE.

READ
TASTING NOTES FOR VINTAGES FROM 1985 TO THE PRESENT DAY

Châteauneuf-du-Pape's signature style though also embraces different wines that lust after fresh fruit perfumes or take the limits of their single vineyard boundaries to the extreme by creating single varietals that continue to encapsulate the essence of their terroir.

The rules in Châteauneuf-du-Pape may well be strict, but they also offer space for freedom. Provided grape varieties are chosen from the authorised list, any blend is permitted with no restrictions on varietal proportions. Single varietal wines are similarly allowed.

This versatility carries through to the duration and method of maturation, with winegrowers using traditional casks – large and small – along with demi-muids, but also cocrete eggs, amphorae and other clay vessels that soften the tannins and promote aromatic expression.

PAIRINGS

Lamb, duck
Wild game
Kobe beef
Vegetarian spring rolls
Sukiyaki
Provence-style stew
Stuffed Provencal vegetables
Vegetable tian
Moussaka

WHITE WINES

They may only account for around 8% of the appellation's wines, but they are treasured by its winegrowers, and not just for their vibrant golden colour.

WHITES ARE RARE AND ACCOUNT FOR JUST 8% OF CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE WINES

There is a long-standing legacy of white grape varieties in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Historically, the appellation's vineyards were home to mixed plantings – within the same block, different grape varieties were planted and there were always whites. The purpose of this was to promote blends where the acidity of the white grapes toned-down the powerfulness of the reds.

White grape varieties are still used to adjust balance in red wines. More often than not, however, they are fermented separately to produce gastronomic white wines which by delivering a fresh, smooth palate, will reveal the persistent white fruit, honeysuckle, narcissus or even honey or lightly toasted brioche notes. White Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines have a predisposition for ageing, just like the reds.

Over time, they have the ability to develop and improve, revealing even more subtle aromas and balances with pinpoint precision.

In 2023, the appellation launched a collective plan to increase the share of white-skinned grape varieties in the vineyards whose purpose is to raise production of white wines but also enable co-fermenting of white and red-skinned grape varieties – this is already permitted as per production specifications. The future objective is 20% of white varieties by 2036, a symbolic date marking the centenary of Châteauneuf-du-Pape's recognition as an appellation.

PAIRINGS

- Foie gras
- Scallops
- Ceviche
- Creamy vegetable risotto
- Monkfish curry
- Grilled lobster
- Bresse fattened chicken with truffles
- Tandoori chicken
- Veal cutlets with girolle mushrooms
- Goat's cheeses
- Saint-Marcellin or Saint-Félicien cheese
- Comté cheese

A TASTE FOR TRAVEL

DISCOVER

Its strategic location in the southern Rhone Valley makes Châteauneuf-du-Pape a very accessible destination, both by road and by train. Paris is less than three hours from Avignon's train station and Lyon an hour away. Marseille is barely 30 minutes away, as is its airport or the airport in Nîmes (an hour drive).

Endorsed as a 'Remarkable Site of Taste', the wine region is welcoming with some choice accommodation and of course places to eat. In terms of gastronomy, there are no fewer than six Michelin-starred establishments within a 20-kilometre radius, including La Mère Germaine, the legendary inn founded in 1922 in the village of Châteauneuf-du-Pape itself.

CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE IS LOCATED AT THE HEART OF A SERIES OF IMPRESSIVE LANDMARKS, FROM THE PALAIS DES PAPES IN AVIGNON TO THE ANCIENT ROMAN THEATRE IN ORANGE...

Set back from the Rhône, Châteauneuf-du-Pape is a fortified village with a population of 2,100, built into the rock and dominated by the ruins of the Papal castle that has been listed as a historic monument since 1892. Ringed by vineyards, it is at the heart of the appellation. Two walks – one of which starts in the village – allow visitors to gain a better understanding of the appellation: the Discovery and Biodiversity trails.

SHARE

Housed in a former barn backing onto the old ramparts of the village of Châteauneuf-du-Pape since 2000, the Vinadea wine hub is home to the appellation's official shop on the first floor and a cultural outreach venue, the Vinothèque, on the ground floor. The Vinothèque is a space designed to offer experiences, primarily hosting workshops for introducing people to tasting Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines or allowing them to perfect their skills.

From vineyard and winery tours, horizontal and vertical tastings to guesthouse dining and snacks for sharing, visitors are also free to meet the winegrowers for in situ experiences that take them right to the birthplace of the wines and their makers in properties whose history often spans several centuries.

The Vinothèque also houses a unique collection – the largest collection of 'taste-vins' in the world. It comprises 1,511 individual items and was donated by Jean-François Huette, grand master of the Taste-vin du Vaucluse wine fraternity. As a reminder, a 'taste-vin' is the shallow silver cup that was once used for assessing and tasting wine.

THE 'PRINTEMPS DE CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE' IS AN EVENT FOUNDED IN 2011 THAT IS ATTENDED BY OVER ONE HUNDRED APPELLATION WINEGROWERS EVERY YEAR. IT IS A MAJOR WINE EXHIBITION COMBINED WITH A GOURMET FOOD MARKET AND TASTING WORKSHOPS.

CHÂTEAUNEUF DU PAPE

APPELLATION D'ORIGINE CONTRÔLÉE

Join the Gang !

@chateauneufdupapewines

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