
Chapter 21

Southern France



Climate and Grape Growing

Climate: Warm Mediterranean (warm summers/mild winters = great condition for growing)

- Vineyards inland near foothills are cooler - less fertile, well-drained soils = better viticulture quality
- Northern winds cool eastern/western ends:
 - **Mistral** - down Rhone valley
 - **Tramontane** - between the Massif Central and Pyrenees
- Drought + summer floods can be problematic

Grape Varieties and Wine Making

Black varieties

Grenache = suited to warm/dry climate

Syrah = better in cooler sites

Carignan = **high tannin/acid/colour/lacks fruit + finesse**. Old vines on poor soil = better quality. Less plantings over time. Permitted in all AC regulations.

Cinsault = Rosé production/ red fruit flavours in blends

Mourvèdre = ripens in warmest sites - adds richness, colour, complexity to blends

Merlot/Cab Sauvignon - IGP wines

Winemaking (red)

- WM improving = equipment/cellar management/oxygen management/judicious oak use. Carbonic Maceration to soften Carignan.

White varieties

Chardonnay/Sauvignon Blanc = IGP production

Viognier = small, significant plantings

Muscat = sweet fortified wines and dry wines (aromatic/grapey)

Grenache Blanc = dry/full body/low acid/peachy - can oxidise easily. Blended with other Rhone/local grapes.

Picpoul (Pinet), **Mauzac** (Limoux), **Maccabeu** (Roussillon), **Rolle** (Provence), **Clairette** (Languedoc)

Languedoc and Roussillon

Appellation wines

- Languedoc = generic appellation
 - Sub regions can add names to Languedoc AC, example, Picpoul-St-Loup
 - Some geographically specific appellations, ie, Minervous
 - Some have sub appellations, ie, Minervous-La Livinière
- Subregions continues to apply for full status
- 4 key grapes: **Carignan, Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre**
- No 'type' of wine = difference geographical areas and different soil types (cooler regions more finesse - best: Syrahs). Warmer areas - Mourvèdre - gamey/meaty.
- **Best = full bodied/spicy red fruits/oak. Rosés = soft/fruity.**

Key areas

Côtes du Roussillon = rugged/mountainous - concentrated wines (bright sun/low rainfall/strong winds)

Côtes du Roussillon Villages = north best vineyards

Fitou = 2 areas (warm coastal strip - full bodied wines + cooler, high-altitude inland area - lighter wines)

Corbières = vineyards near coast + altitude - cooled by *Tramontane*. 11 sub regions. **Boutenac** has its own AC.

Minervois = on slopes of Massif Central. Varying quality due to dif. altitudes/soils/cooling influences. Subdivided too. **La Livinière** has its own AC.

Picpoul de Pinet = near coast, cooling breeze - grapes retain acidity.

Limoux = cooling effect - premium oaked Chardonnay.

IGP Wines

Important high-volume area for commercial success

Pay d'Oc - encompasses all départements of Languedoc-Roussillon

Success due to (a) wider permitted grape varieties and (b) warm, sunny climate = high grape yield - (good value for money)

Provence

- Landscape broken by hills - protection against *Mistral* - varying site climates/soils
 - Rosé (main production) = **pale colour/light-bodied/dry/delicate grapefruit/red fruits**
 - Red wines = fresh → full-bodied/barrel matured
 - Best whites = aromatic Rolle or Clairette
 - **Côte de Provence** (largest appellation)
 - 3 pockets of vineyards along coast - Bandol included
 - **Bandol** - east of Marseille - premium reds (Mourvedre based) - can ripen on S-facing terraced slopes.
 - **Dark/full-bodied/tannic - bottle age before they show best - bramble/meat/licorice-spice.**
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Multiple Choice Practice Questions

1) In what region would you find Bandol?

- a) Provence
- b) Languedoc
- c) Roussillon
- d) Bordeaux

2) Provence is renowned for its production of which style of wine?

- a) Full-bodied red wines
- b) Rich and aromatic white wines
- c) Sparkling wines
- d) Pale, dry rosé wines

3) Which winds have an influence in the Southern France region?

- a) Sirocco and Mistral
- b) Mistral and Tramontane
- c) Bise and Etesian
- d) Trade Winds and Tramontane

4) In what region of Southern France would you find La Livinière?

- a) Corbières
- b) Fitou
- c) Limoux
- d) Minervois

5) The Languedoc wine region in Southern France benefits from which climatic influence, making it suitable for viticulture?

- a) Maritime
- b) Continental

- c) Mediterranean
- d) Alpine

Answers

1. a) Provence

2. d) Pale, dry rosé wines

3. b) Mistral and Tramontane

4. d) Minervois

5. c) Mediterranean