

Wines in Languedoc-Roussillon

The Languedoc region, covering the Mediterranean coastal plain west of the Rhone, produces a lot of fairly ordinary red wine, much of it marketed as VDQS or Vin de Pays. Languedoc is the largest French wine producing area in terms of volume. There are seven Appellations controlées in the area, the best-known of which is Corbières, and possibly the best average quality of which is Fitou. AOC wines account for some 10% of the region's production, but the proportion is increasing as Languedoc producers concentrate more on quality, rather than quantity, and strive to reposition their wines higher up the market. Thanks to the long hours of summer sun, grapes ripen well and quickly in this region, which means that Languedoc wines are rich and full bodied, and often have high alcohol content. The wines of Roussillon are very similar, this area being particularly noted for its fortified wines such as Banyuls.

Rather different from the rest are the sparkling wines produced in Limoux, near Carcassonne. "Blanquette de Limoux" is reputedly the oldest sparkling wine in France; and according to the story, it was a Benedictine monk, Dom Pérignon, who introduced the Limoux method of producing good sparkling wine, to the monks in Champagne who were looking for ways to improve the quality of their rather nondescript dry white wines. Regarding Dom Pérignon, the myth is almost certainly untrue; but it is well documented that Limoux was already producing sparkling wines in the 1540s, half a century before the technique took hold in Champagne.

