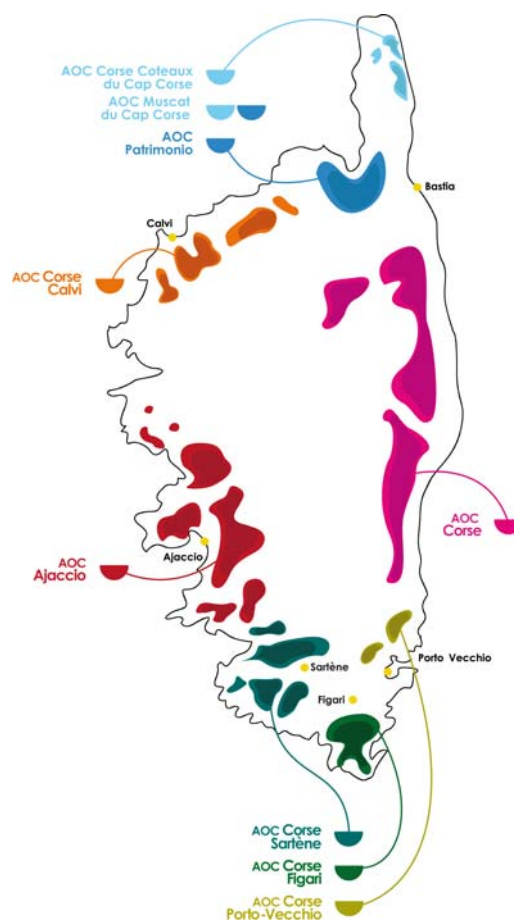


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# CORSICAN WINES

CONSEIL INTERPROFESSIONNEL DES VINS DE CORSE



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## A POWERFUL TEMPERAMENT

« The brightest future is for those who have the longest memories »

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Corsican wine producers have inherited traditions and know-how that reaches back to Antiquity: as from the 6th century BC, the Greeks enjoyed the wines of Alalia (Aléria). In recent years, these wines have clearly taken the quality route, making the most of their enviable natural environment. The use of fine local grape varieties provide welcome relief from the tendency towards « sameness », caused by the same varieties being used all over the world. The considerable diversity of natural sites, associated with perfect use of modern technical solutions, have underscored the unique character of their wines. Corsican wines have their own true style, shaped by this breathtakingly beautiful island that is sun-drenched and windswept, sometimes dizzy from heights.

With finely powerful red wines for laying down, characterful rosés, legendary muscats, and superb white wines that are amongst the finest from the whole Mediterranean, Corsica has taken its place amongst the producers of the world's great wines.

### **STRONG IDENTITY WITH ROOTS THAT GO BACK THOUSANDS OF YEARS**

Long before the Greeks cultivated them, vines were growing wild in Corsica, and, doubtless, the sweet grapes were picked to be eaten. As from the 6th century BC, the Greeks brought their wine know-how to Kallisté (the most beautiful). Wines from Alalia (now Aléria, on the eastern coast), became one of their favourite drinks. The Romans continued, and, in 35 BC, the poet Virgil spoke highly of the wines of Balagne, with their ruby red colour and pleasant taste.



From the 11th century, when the city of Pisa controlled the island, priests and nobles poured Corsican wine into their goblets. A century later, the Genoans did the same when they took over Corsica. French governance of the island as from 1769 did not stop winemaking nor exports to northern Italy.


In the middle of the 19th century, Corsica was struck with the scourges that were to overrun practically all wine-producing countries: first Oidium, then Phylloxera. The vineyards were almost totally destroyed, but, thanks to the determination of men, exports restarted at the end of the century as the large estates were replanted. The first years of the 20th century saw prices for wine fall dramatically and this expansion was brought to a halt.

The First World War was the final catastrophe, destroying not only men, but, as a result, vineyards and commercial networks. Only a few production areas survived. It was to be 50 years before wine production became a significant economic activity in Corsica again.

## SINCE THE 1970s, A PIONEER FOR MEDITERRANEAN WINEGROWING

From the outset of the 1970's, true to their centuries of tradition and aiming to improve on this, Corsican winemakers took lessons from their past in order to build a better future. They took onboard their history and acquired knowledge from the New World.

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Within this frame of mind, Corsican winemakers have continuously evolved in their specific approaches, by forming a group in 1969 (called GIVIC, the forebearer of the contemporary CIV-Corse) to push for improvements in quality and to promote their vineyards and wines: proudly independant but working together, bound to their land yet open to wider horizons. In 1977 this union continued under the leadership of Christian Imbert, within UVA Corse (see box on page 14).

The stubborn perseverance of the men and women who produce the wines of Corsica have born their fruits. Over the past thirty years, the vineyards of the island have been boldly reshaped, with this dynamic affecting over 80% of the total surfaces. A new generation has come on board, passionate and well trained in modern viticultural and winemaking techniques, as well as being market orientated.

After the push for volume production in the 1960's (the arrival of former colonists from Algeria following its independence expanded the vineyard to 74,000 acres yielding 2 million hectolitres per year), a crisis during the 1970's encouraged the setting up of an exceptional programme which involved ripping out vines. This reduced the total vineyard surface to its current level of just over 17,000 acres and forced a return to quality wines with a local accent. *Viticultural sites capable of producing wines of character*, preference given to *typically Corsican grape varieties*, and *modernistaion of equipment* have been and remain the mainstays of this movement.

The first visible signs of this renaissance was the **creation, in 1968, of the AOC Patrimonio**, followed by that of the **AOC Ajaccio in 1971**, then, soon after, of the **AOC Vin de Corse** which can be declined in 6 specific « village » denominations: Calvi, Coteaux du Cap Corse, Figari, Porto-Vecchio, Sartène. Finally in the domaine of sweet fortified wines, the birth of the **I'AOC Muscat du Cap Corse in 1993**.

By the end of the 20th century, Corsican wines had clearly become recognised as « one of the greats ». Individual producers and cooperative wineries now have their share of winelists in restaurants, wine-bars and wine stores, whether this be in France, Europe or further afield, such as in the USA, Canada or Japan.

This has given Corsica a pioneering role for Mediterranean wines, which are widely considered to have a promising future in the 21st century. The President of CIV-Corse resumes the situation thus: « *Corsican wines are to France what the New World is to the world of wine* ».

Corsican winemakers now have modern equipment, a vineyard that has been well designed around quality grape varieties, and, last but not least, an enviable and growing reputation. Wines from Corsica have their place, not only on the island, but also outside. They have their own role to play due to their quality, their diversity (they are suited to all situations and all types of food & wine combinations) and their singular character. They have their own niche in France and amongst other Mediterranean wines.

The new era will surely take the wines from Corsica to new places — places far beyond the coastline of the « Island of Beauty », as when the major sea-routes traced their paths all over the Mediterranean sea.



## 2006 – 2008, A NEW QUALITY GOAL AND PLAN, AIMED AT FURTHER IMPROVING RENOWN AND REPUTATION

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After three decades of constant development, and in a context of a world-wide crisis for the wine market, the new challenge for Corsican wines is to aim for a compromise between tradition and modernity, individual identity and integration with world commerce

**Corsican wines are well placed to take their seat on the international scene, as they have many advantages:** the quality and the singularity of their products (which have not been standardised by international grape varieties such as cabernet, merlot or chardonnay), their easily identified names of origin (the Corsican appellations with the term « vin de Corse »), their modern production tools and techniques, and the singular values of the island itself, with its physical beauty and plentiful sunshine. All this adds up to a considerable marketing advantage.

But they also have their specific handicaps: « *not only are we confronted, like everyone else, by the world crisis and a fall in consumption, but we also have to deal with the problems caused by our geographic situation as an island, and especially the cost of transport which amounts to 10 to 12% of the price of bottles of wine* » explains Jean-Marc Venturi, the President of CIV-Corse.

Gearing up therefore requires a fresh approach from the island's producers. Part of this involves an efficient collective organisation that will enable strategic objectives to be set out and fulfill the fundamental missions that behold an industry that needs to work with its markets and their requirements. This is the aim of the new **development plan for Corsican wines** that was put in place between 2006 and 2008, with collective actions managed by CIV-Corse.

This three year development plan has two main themes:

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- reinforce quality whilst diversifying styles to adjust to market requirements  
- efficiently promote Corsican wines

With a total budget of 9 million euros, this plan has been partially financed (to the tune of 3 millions euros) by CIV-Corse, and mainly (6 million euros) by the Corsican territorial administration, which has also budgeted 25 million euros for Corsican agriculture as a whole, all of which is concerned by the insular handicap.

### 10 year objectives:

- Maintain the vineyard area as close as possible to its current size. One should remember that the sizes of all French vineyards have been reduced, and that the Corsican vineyards are now a quarter of what they were twenty years ago.
- Continue the drive for quality, by increasing the share of Corsican wines under AOC status from 25% to 40%.
- Develop the range and quality of rosés, which are a category that fits well with the image of Corsica, its landscapes as well as its modern wineries. One should remember that red wines suffer from over-production in France as a whole. Corsica can also mark points with its white wines, which account for 20% of the island's production.
- Improve the presence of Corsican wines in restaurant wine-lists throughout France.

The plan has had various phases during the three years of its implementation: aides to producers, promotional campaigns, wine fairs and distribution campaigns amongst others. The first fruits are currently being gathered, as can be seen from the progress made by major players over recent years.

But a new challenge now faces Corsican wines. « *The market has simply reversed its tendency* » says Jean-Marc Venturi, the President of CIV Corse. « *Four or five years ago, we were having problems selling all the wines we made. Now we are short of stock. We have to be very careful to make every drop of wine count, and ensure that all wines are well sold.* » Another challenge to which Corsican producers will respond with their usual enthusiasm and passion.

#### Corsican wines: fact sheet summary

- Annual production: 330,000 hectolitres
- 9 AOC's
- 2 vin de pays denominations
- 450 producers
- 1500 direct employees
- 140 Million € annual turnover



- The island's no:1 export (value and volume)



With its 9 *Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée*, as well as its *vins de pays* and varietal wines, a vineyard area of just over 17,000 hectares (making it the third largest wine-producing island in the Mediterranean, behind Sicily and Sardinia), and its 330,000 hectolitres of annual production, Corsican wine is a force with which to be reckoned. An original Mediterranean style.

The vineyard is totally unique. It is France's only island vineyard, nearby and yet so far from everything. Its history stretches back more than 2000 years and yet it remains, in a sense, a dynamic 20 year-old. A place of extremes.

Snow (over 20 summits rise above 6500 feet) can be close by the turquoise blue of the Mediterranean. The soil is both rocky and well watered. Sunshine hours are exceptionally high (with 2855 hours of sunshine per year, Corsica is the record-holder for France) and yet rainfall is above average (10,590 cubic meters per hectare and per year, against an average of 8,910 for continental France). The natural environment has been wonderfully preserved and grape varieties whose origins go back to ancestral times go hand-in-hand with the latest winemaking techniques.

## A MOUNTAIN SET IN THE SEA

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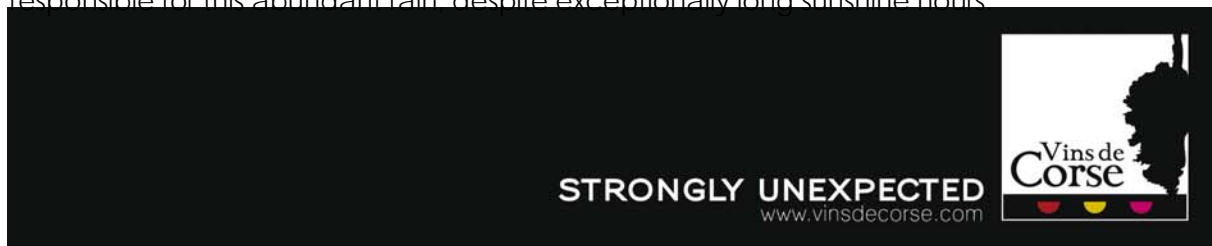
### An amazing jigsaw puzzle of meso-climates



A considerable variety of soil types on hillside vineyards that are drenched in sun whilst retaining sufficient moisture through maritime influence. This explains why there are vineyards in virtually all parts of Corsica, which is also known as the « island of vines ». Together with great soil diversity goes an amazing jigsaw puzzle of meso-climates that determine the profile of the wines just as much as do the soils.

Anchored 300 kilometres off the southern coast of France, on the same latitude as Rome or Barcelona, Corsica has a typically Mediterranean climate, tempered by the combined

influences of the surrounding sea and the omni-present mountains. Summers are hot and dry, and winters mild. This combination is favourable to the vines, especially since frosts are rare and spring comes early, accompanied by rainfall. The mountainous topography is largely responsible for this abundant rain, despite exceptionally long sunshine hours.



One should add that the relative mildness of summer temperatures, with the sea acting as a thermal regulator, is particularly favourable to the balance and quality of the grapes. The ripening phase of grapes, which spans from *veraison* in the beginning of August to harvest in mid-September, lasts between 10 and 15 days longer than in a continental region such as Burgundy or Champagne.

Corsica is also quite windy: « *the violent Mistral blows over from Provence, the powerful south-westerly Libecciu comes up from Gibraltar with its load of rain, the Tramontane brings cold dry air down from the Alps, the more humid Greggale rides in from the east and the Appenines, whilst the Sirocco sometimes bears red sand across from the Sahara...* »<sup>1</sup>

Extremely varied and often lively, these local winds (particularly in the regions of Cap Corse, Bonifacio and Calvi, which form the three extremities of the island), regularly attain 150 kilometres per hour. They are caused by temperature differences between sea and land masses, and act as thermal regulators and ventilators in the vineyard, limiting the needs for treating against fungal diseases. This also explains that the whole of Corsica's vineyard could probably claim the official status of « organic », apart from the fact that it is in any case situated in a remarkably preserved environment.

### **An extraordinary geological « museum »**

More than just an island, Corsica forms a massive mountain range: 55% of its surface lies at over 400 metres (1300 feet) above sea level, and 20% at above 1000 metres (3,300 feet). There are more than 20 peaks that rise above 2000 metres (6500 feet), and the highest, Monte Cinto, culminates at 2710 metres (8891 feet).

This tortuous topography leaves little space for wide open plains, but harbours an infinite number of tiny valleys and a mosaic of slopes, facing in all directions and lending themselves to a multitude of unique meso-climatic environments. As stated by François Mercury (a retired winemaker and former philosophy teacher), « *Corsica forms a sort of geological museum that includes, side by side, granites from Hermitage or Beaujolais, schists from Anjou or Côte Rôtie, and limestones from Saumur or Burgundy.* »

Corsica can be divided into four main geological regions:

- ♦ The western granitic zone: this accounts for about two thirds of the island's surface and is limited by the central ridge which runs from Solenzara to Corte. Riche in silica, aluminium, potassium and, locally, calcium, these granite-based soils produce wines of light colour and finesse, with intense and often floral aromas. As they age, they frequently give off « gunflint » types of aromas.
- ♦ The eastern dorsal region: this includes several types of schists, in the North and the East, which are rich in calcium carbonate and produce soft and delicate wines.

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<sup>1</sup> Vincent Pousson in « *L'Esprit Corse* » (the Spirit of Corsica)



- ♦ To the North-West and the South: In the Patrimonio region to the North-West the layers of limestone around Saint-Florent remind one of Tuscany. They produce full-bodied wines with amplitude, whose aromas encompass floral, fruity and mineral notes that are born by the Nielluciu variety which is suited to these clay-limestone soils. The calcereous limestone outcrops at Bonifacio, on the island's southern tip, produce spectacular cliff faces.

- The eastern coastal region: comprising foothill slopes, small hills and plateaux. The soils here are clay or clay-sand based. They produce harmoniously soft wines.

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## FINE LOCAL GRAPE VARIETIES

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*The fighting spirit of Corsican wines that sets out their market niche finds its roots in the local grape varieties. These have names that ring like the local language, which owes a lot to Italian dialects. They were reintroduced and encouraged with the birth of Corsican appellations, and have largely helped to develop a strong local accent for the wines.*

### Niellucciu

**35 % of vineyard areas**



This variety is the heart and soul behind the fame of the wines of Patrimonio, and can now be found in numerous other appellations. It is a twin brother of the Tuscan Sangiovese, and is called Niellucciu in Corsica because « Niellu » in the local dialect means « black, dark or hard ». It sometimes has an animal-like touch to its aromas (hare fur), or can remind one of liquorice, small berry fruit, violets, spices or dried apricots. Some show hints of wood in their youth, but spices come to the fore with age, again with animal-like accents. On the palate, the wines tend to be full-bodied, rich and long, with good structure and fruit. Niellucciu can also produce very fine and elegant rosés, with lively colour and plenty of fruit flavours.

### Sciaccarellu

**15 % of vineyard areas**



Saying « Sciaccarellu » is synonymous with saying « crispy », like biting into a tender fresh almond. This is the dominant variety in the granitic western region where it produces wines that are usually fairly supple, showing considerable finesse and an unforgettable peppery bouquet. The aromas also include wild flowers, red fruit, spices and smoky wood. Rosés made from Sciaccarellu have a pale salmon pink hue and are pleasantly fruity, fine and crisp.

### Vermentinu

**17 % of vineyard areas**

This is an old Mediterranean variety, sometimes known as « Corsican Malvoisie ». It is also widely grown in Italy (Piedmont, Liguria, Tuscany and Sardinia). It produces very fine wines that are amongst the best whites from the Mediterranean area. They have plenty of

character, with persistent floral aromas. Alcohol levels can be quite high, providing lots of depth and volume on the palate. The after-taste can be reminiscent of almonds and apples. It is sometimes used together with red varieties to produce rosés of marked character.



VECCHIO, SARTENE... AN AROMATIC POLYPHONY AND A JOURNEY TO THE ISLAND'S HEART.

Corsica's *appellations d'origine contrôlée* currently represent 33,5 % of the island's total production. 61,2 % of this is under the *vins de pays* designation, and 5,3 % is *vin de table*.

There are two « stand alone » appellations: « Ajaccio » and « Patrimoine »; 5 « village » appellations, Corse « Calvi », Corse « Sartène », Corse « Figari », Corse « Porto-Vecchio », and Corse « Coteaux du Cap Corse »; 1 regional appellation, « Vins de Corse »; and 1 appellation for fortified sweet wines, known as *vins doux naturels* (VDN): « Muscat du Cap Corse ».

### CORSICAN AOCs - FIGURES FOR 2008/2009

#### - production

116,596 hectolitres

#### - share by colour

Rosé: 54,7 %

Red: 33,1 %

White: 10,5 %

Sweet Muscat: 1,6 %

#### - volume per AOC

	hectolitres
AOC Corse	67 418
AOC Patrimoine	14 221
AOC Corse Calvi	8 427
AOC Ajaccio	7 942
AOC Corse Sartène	7 770
AOC Corse Figari	5 286
AOC Muscat du Cap Corse	1 908
AOC Corse Porto Vecchio	2 586
AOC Coteaux du Cap Corse	1 033

#### Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée « Ajaccio »

This is home to the Sciaccarellu grape, a variety of quality and great character. It produces an unusual combination of aromas: almonds and cassis (blackcurrant). Red wines here are sinewy and muscular, rosés are stylish, and whites, made with Vermentinu, are floral and distinctive.

*Area: 242 hectares (598 acres)*

*Number of producers: 12 independent wineries*

#### Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée « Corse »

Lying against the rocky faces that climb ever higher towards the rising sun, the varied sites create an infinite range of vineyard plots, each one unique and worthy of a visit. In this mineral landscape, wines that follow Corsican tradition are made, exhaling complex and singular aromas that resemble no others.

*Area: 1,456 hectares (3,596 acres)*

*Number of producers: 19 independent wineries /6 cooperative wineries*

### **Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée « Corse - Coteaux du Cap Corse »**

This land is alive with signs of those bold and hard-working Corsicans who once made this region prosperous, and in which the vineyard played a major role. Today vines only cover small plots here and there, producing red wines that will cellar well and white wines that are sought out for their remarkable elegance and strongly floral aromas.

*Area: 34 hectares (84 acres)*



A very mild climate, with only occasional frosts but strong winds that dry out the land. The vineyards are beautifully tended, like cherished gardens. The wines stand upright, true and clear-cut, with that rebel edge to their character that will delight aficionados. Their strong personality adds to their charm.

*Area: 276 hectares (682 acres)*

*Number of producers: 12 independent wineries*

### **Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée « Corse Figari »**

Lying a little inland, as if it were sheltering behind the bell-tower of Tarabucetta, the most southerly of Corsica's vineyards bears the memory of the first vines planted on the island, eons ago. The climate is so extreme that it is almost as if the vines grow thanks to the sheer willpower of the growers. They produce bottles of great finesse.

*Area: 130 hectares (321 acres)*

*Number of producers: 6 independent wineries*

### **Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée « Muscat du Cap Corse »**

The vineyards seemingly hang from the mountains on tiny terraces, vertiginous and quite inaccessible to mortals (except for Corsican vinegrowers!). On this long finger that sticks out from the fist of Corsica into the sea, the muscat grape produces rare and delicate wines.

*Area: 89,66 hectares (221 acres)*

### **Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée « Corse Porto-Vecchio »**

The land is arid and chaotic, tumbling towards the sea where vineyards buffeted by the wind bear robust and proud vines, just like the Corsican vinegrowers who work this splendidly harsh terrain. In the south-east corner of the island, the indigenous Niellucciu and Sciaccarellu varieties combine with the traditional Grenache from Spain to produce elegant and suave reds, as well as finely aromatic rosés. The whites, made from Vermentinu, are dry yet gloriously fruity and will especially enchant those who love fish and sea-food.

*Area: 89,74 hectares (222 acres)*

*Number of producers: 6 independent wineries*

### **Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée « Patrimonio »**

The hills knit together, sheltering from the wind the vines whose tendrils and leaves reach out to the warm westerly sun in the afternoon. There have always been vines here, thanks to propitious soils. The wines are grandiose, powerful and long on the palate, showing all the qualities of the fine Corsican varieties.

*Area: 907 hectares (2240 acres)*

*Number of producers: 35 independent wineries*

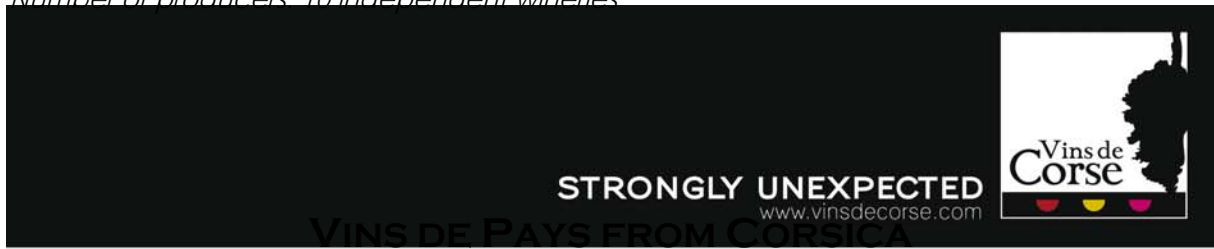
### **Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée « Corse Sartène »**

One would think that the vines emerged together with the hills. Sciaccarellu, Niellucciu, Barbarossa, Vermentinu, all the authentic Corsican varieties are here, and producing wines

that have body and stuffing. The whites, greenish gold in their youth, turn the local fish into a feast.

*Area: 163 hectares (403 acres)*

*Number of producers: 10 independent wineries*



These perfectly represent the mosaic of sites and the varied selection of grape varieties that are to be found in Corsica. *Vins de Pays de l'Île de Beauté* (99,5 %) and *Vins de Pays des Portes de Méditerranée* (just 0,5% of volumes for the moment, as this is a recent designation authorised in 2004) offer an easy entry point to discovering the wines of Corsica. Their qualities are now well known, and their diverse flavours and character are a joy to discover.

### QUALITY WINES PRODUCED BY PROGRESSIVE COOPERATIVE WINERIES

The Vins de Pays category accounts for three quarters of the wines produced in Corsica. As is often the case in France, young wines of the year (4% of the *vin de pays* category here) are sold as from the third Thursday in November. Apart from the cash flow generated by this production, with most going to export markets, these wines are well worth discovering for their excellent value for money.

As with their individual estate colleagues, the larger group structures (4 cooperative wineries, one cooperative group and several small négociants) successfully show the constant progress achieved by Corsican wines as a whole. These structures currently account for 68% of total production.

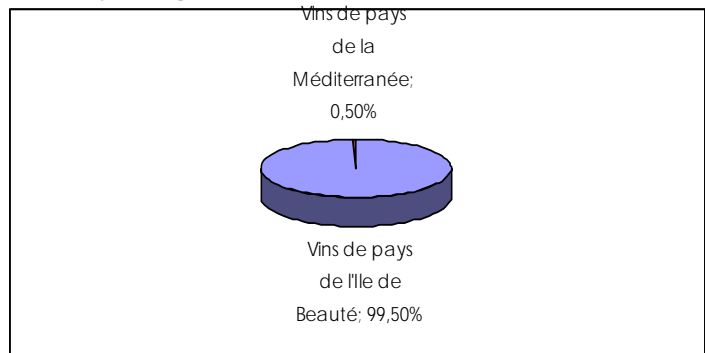
Dynamic and always ready to innovate, the cooperative wineries launched a major renovation programme during the 1980's. They modernised their equipment (temperature-controlled fermentation tanks, pneumatic presses, etc), made improvements in the vineyards including increased plantings of better grape varieties, rewarded quality crops with higher prices for the growers, hired qualified oenologists, set up rigorous quality specifications, increasingly vinified single varietals and single vineyard plots, and so on. All this contributed to a significant improvement in the quality and character of the wines.

## Corsican production Figures from 2008 / 2009

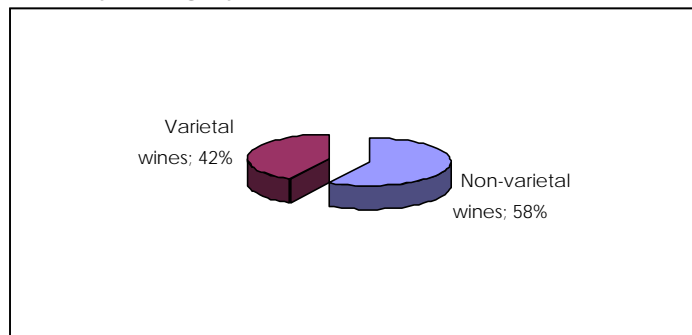


Red: 33,6 %  
White: 17,6 %

### Share by designation



### Share by category



Everything is done to make the most of the rich natural potential, including the viticultural sites, the grape varieties, and the accumulated and combined know-how. All of these contribute to produce wines that are different and full of character.

Thanks to considerable commercial efforts on the part of the cooperative wineries, such wines have conquered markets in France and in Europe, as well as further afield in countries such as the USA, Japan and South Africa.

Over the past twenty years, the progression of fine local grape varieties has been spectacular: Sciaccarellu has gone from 0 to 731 hectolitres; Niellucciu from 418 to 2805 hectolitres; Muscat à petits grains from 0 to 4786 hectolitres, and there has also been the emergence of the Bianco Gentile, an old and aromatic native variety. All these varieties have added personality and elegance to a new generation of *vins de pays*, providing at the same time historical roots and a bright future.

The cooperative wineries are now clearly part of the showcase for Corsican wines, with their tasting rooms open to the public. Their inspiration comes from the natural environment and their vineyard sites, and they produce wines that show the true character of these, with regular quality for reasonable prices. They are a sure bet, as they know what the customer expects and wants.

Rose wine is on the increase, thanks to the considerable progress made by growers. This is a delicate wine to produce, as it requires careful handling, patience and good technical skills. The market share for rose has doubled in France over the past ten years, and it is now drunk all the year round, not just during the summer months. Some wineries have followed this movement and adapted, increasing the share of rose in their total production from 32% in 1996 to 46% in 2006.

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This type of wine naturally corresponds to an important aspect of Corsican life, which is the sunshine and holiday time. But the rosés of the island also show considerable character. They have floral aromas, such as wild roses, honeysuckle and gorse, as well as fruit and some spice. The bouquet reminds one of the wild flowers and plants of the island. The flavours can be almost tannic and even oriental in the case of wines from Niellucciu; lively and peppery in the case of Sciaccarellu; tender and fruity with Grenache.

## VARIETIES AND YIELDS

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Production of a *Vin de Pays* has to comply with precise regulations. These govern yields per hectare (on average below 70 hectolitres), grape varieties, alcohol levels, chemical analysis, and a final tasting test.

As to grape varieties, the following are authorized: Chardonnay (12 %), Merlot (7 %), Pinot Noir (6 %), Cabernet Sauvignon, Vermentino, Bianco Gentile, Aleatico, Barbarossa, Carignan, Cinsaut, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Muscat à petits grains, Muscat d'Alexandrie, Niellucciu, Riminese, Sciaccarello, Syrah, and Tempranillo.

In the case of white *Vins de Pays*, Chardonnay accounts for 60 %, of plantings, and Vermentino 10 %. In the case of reds, Merlot accounts for 20 % and Pinot Noir around 18 %.

Harvests must be carried out, transported and vinified separately from wines that are not in the *vin de pays* category.

## LE CIV CORSE



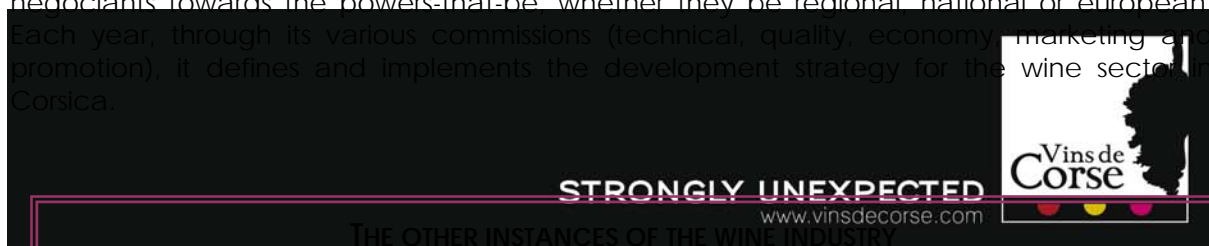
## COMING UP TO 15 YEARS

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Founded on June 21st 1996, and carrying on from the former GIVIC (Groupement Interprofessionnel des Vins de Corse), CIV-Corse became CIVC, **Conseil Interprofessionnel des Vins de Corse**, on September 10th 2008.



This interprofessional body has several functions to fulfill: it is a place to exchange ideas, to collect and communicate rules and legal decisions, and to enact promotional campaigns for all Corsican wine producers. It also has a representative role for producers and negociants towards the powers-that-be, whether they be regional, national or european. Each year, through its various commissions (technical, quality, economy, marketing and promotion), it defines and implements the development strategy for the wine sector in Corsica.



In addition to CIV-Corse, which promotes, animates and coordinates the industry, there are other organisations that structure the Corsican wine sector. Each has its own domaine of competence, all along the chain.

**The CIVAM Viticole:** is an organisation devoted to research. It leads and conducts research programmes on, for instance, the selection and reproduction of native grape varieties, local yeasts, or winemaking techniques. Thanks to such research programmes, Corsican wines are able to assert their differences and qualities and position themselves in markets.

**The GIAC (*Groupement Intersyndical des AOC de Corse*) and the *Syndicat des Vins de Pays de l'Île de Beauté*** are both official bodies who oversee wine quality and carry out all approval tests on batches of wines. These organisations will be acquiring extended powers through the new organisation of wines at a national level.

**L'UVA Corse (*Union des Vignerons Propriétaires de Caves d'Appellations Contrôlées des vins de Corse*)** was created in May 1977 and groups virtually all the independent wine producers who lie within the various AOC boundaries and who sell their wines directly. Their objectives are the defense and protection of the interests of the vineyards and the producers, the improvement of quality, and the promotion of awareness of the wines of their members. UVA CORSE has been particularly active in encouraging and sustaining the planting of native grape varieties. It also takes part in research programmes led by the CIVAM, such as setting up nurseries for mother plants and experimental vinification tests on native varieties.

Finally, the promotion and the development of the image of Corsican wines as a whole constitutes a major part of the activities of UVA Corse, in partnership with CIV-Corse: they have created the UVA Corse bottle with its traditional embossed coat of arms, they participate in major wine fairs and in the pooling of resources for shipping...

*Technical help is also supplied to vine-growers and producers by technicians and oenologists from the cooperative wineries and the Chambers of Agriculture.*

#### **And partners**

**L'ODARC**, the bureau for rural and agricultural development in Corsica  
**Local government**

Although it accounts for slightly less than one percent of all French vineyards, the Corsican vineyard and the CIV-Corse does its part in showing and explaining its differences to European consumers who are looking for quality wines that are also authentic.

Its board of Directors is composed of 16 members who represent, in equal numbers, producers and merchants.

## ACTIONS CONDUCTED IN A SPIRIT OF AUTHENTICITY AND SHARING

Presence in international wine fairs:

Corsican identity runs strong and takes many forms. CIV-CORSE ensures a presence for the island's wines in the major meeting places for the wine trade (fairs and tastings). Here the aim is to show the worth of the wines, convincing potential trade customers, importers and journalists, as well as wine lovers through tastings open to the public. This was the case during 2009 and early in 2010, with stands at Vinexpo Bordeaux and at wine fairs in London, Belgium, Montpellier (Vinisud), and the Salon of the Revue de Vin de France in Paris. There were also over 100 individual producers present at various independent producer's fairs in France.

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CIV-CORSE aims, each time they meet with wine trade professionals, to surprise them, whether at home or abroad.

### Media and communication plans for 2010:

- ◆ Collective communication campaign: press and posters (on board Corsica Ferries, in airports and in Tourist Office handouts).
- ◆ Press and public relations (a tasting and lunch during Vinisud, a promotional campaign for Corsican rosés, a press trip to the Luri Fair, a Muscat promotional campaign for the end of the year).
- ◆ Trade promotions: an annual promotion via wine shops and bars in Paris, an operation with Corsican wine shops called Corsicapassione.

### Advertising campaign: traditional varieties in the limelight!

Since 2007, Nielluciu, Sciaccarellu and Vermentinu have been the stars of the advertising campaigns for Corsican wines.

The themes for the previous two campaigns used the slogans « the secret's out », to intrigue the wine trade and informed wine lovers, and then « let Corsican wines show you the way » to reach a wider public. This campaign used visuals of some of the island's most splendid landscapes, showing its wild and rugged nature.

Now Corsican wines are aiming to develop an even more powerful image and position themselves on the market of new wine drinkers thanks to a new advertising agency, Euro RSCG 360°, which has been handling their visual identity since 2007.

The theme for this third campaign is « unexpected varieties ». The idea is to demonstrate, in an impertinent and tongue-in-cheek manner, the unique and typically Corsican character of the wines, via a powerful and modern visual treatment and words that play on the exotic nature of these Corsican grape varieties: Nielluciu, Sciaccarellu and Vermentinu. The original and energetic captions, that have different colour codes, complement the new signature for Corsican wine « Necessarily unexpected ».



There are so many opportunities to share and convince with, on the table, the juice from the grapes of Patrimonio, Aléria or Porto-Vecchio, and always with that authentic touch of hospitality.



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# ANNEXES

THE 2009 VINTAGE IN CORSICA

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## A wet and rather cold winter

For the second year running, Corsica had a very rainy winter in 2008/2009. Exceptionally high rainfall was registered all over the island during the period between October and February. In some localities, the amount of this winter rainfall (over just 5 months) was the equivalent of a normal year's rain. Water reserves and tables were reconstituted after ten years of relative drought. This wet weather was also cold, which meant abundant snowfall on high ground that continued until mid-March. The growth cycle was thus delayed in its start by repeated cold weather caused by the snow on the mountains.

Spring rainfall was also higher than usual and this meant that plant growth was rapid as there was no shortage of water. Eight months of abundant rain meant that water levels were comfortable as summer came.

Springtime work in the vineyards, and particularly treatments of the vines, were hard to complete since the soils were so sodden and sprays were washed off the leaves. Both downy and powdery mildew attacks hit hard and early, but good work by the growers managed to contain them and keep the vines healthy.

## After a damp and cool spring, the summer was hot and dry

Weather conditions at the beginning of the summer restrained the development of diseases, and parasites were kept at bay, resulting in very healthy vines as the ripening phase of the grapes approached.

Dry and mild early summer weather resulted in *veraison* taking place normally in terms of dates and harvest was predicted for the beginning of September for the early-ripening varieties. Then some exceptionally hot weather at the end of July (around 45°C/113°F on the south of the island) caused a rapid change of scenario, with grapes gaining between 2 and 3 degrees in alcohol potential per week in some cases. This resulted in harvest dates coming much earlier than foreseen: before August 15th for the early varieties and up to late September for certain plots of Niellucciu.

## Early harvest dates

The dates were comparable to those of 2007, which was a particularly precocious year. Grapes harvested were very ripe and well balanced, with generally good levels of acidity. The earliest pickings were destined, for the most part, to make rosé wines that require fresh aromas. Whereas the ripest grapes, whose skins showed fine, rounded tannins, went to make red wines.

There was more rain around mid-September than in 2008, but it was not heavy. This did no harm to the harvests, and, on the contrary, enabled some vines on the driest plots with shallow soils to ripen their grapes.

All-in-all, the grapes harvested in 2009 are comparable to those from 2008 (which was a below average crop). Yet they did vary considerably from one estate to another. Some of the vineyards in southern Corsica suffered from attacks of vine apoplexy. Fortunately this was limited to small areas, but some estates suffered crop losses of up to 30%.

## Fine quality wines in all three colours

The first tastings at the end of the winter period showed that quality levels were excellent for this vintage. The grapes were ripe and healthy and both white and rosé wines showed plenty of interesting aromas and very good acidity and balance.

The reds show well-defined and lively colour, with silky tannins, plenty of fruit flavours and usually good levels of concentration. All this is backed up by good acidity, very fine aromas and excellent balance.

Laurent BOURDE

Directeur CIVAM de la RÉGION CORSE





### The Corsican market:

Just under 45% of total production remains on the island. As with most wine producing regions, Corsica drinks much more of its wines than any other market.

This phenomenon is perhaps particularly striking in Corsica, where the islanders are particularly attached to their traditions and wines, and also on account of the considerable tourist influx to the island. Each year, more than 2 million tourists, from France and elsewhere, flock to the island. 27% are not French, and include many Italians, Swiss and Germans. They spend their holidays on the island and naturally make the most of local specialities, including wine. A captive audience in a way.

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Wishing to provide what the tourists expect, as well as helping the local economy, restaurant and shop owners play their part in this market by efficiently distributing the local wines.

One can even say that a look at the shelves of the wine section of supermarkets, or at the wine lists of specialist shops, will often reveal that the wines of Bordeaux, Languedoc or Alsace can be hard to find, and in some cases are totally absent.

### Exports:

**Each year, just over a quarter (28%) of the island's wine production travels overseas,** mainly to European countries, but, in smaller quantities, all around the world.

Tourism is again responsible for a considerable share of these exports, since buying a bottle of Corsican wine is a way of prolonging holidays spent on this magical island. Yet beyond the « holiday souvenir » cliché, the image projected by Corsica, even for those who have never set foot on the island, is very positive for its wines. « *For those who live in Northern Europe, Corsica equals the South, and the sun that warms body and soul* » says Philippe Cazali, the manger of Domaine Casabianca.

On a wider scale, the wines from all the Mediterranean islands are progressing in several countries like Germany, Belgium, or Great Britain. These wines share an undeniably exotic aura, with unique characteristics that derive from their particular sites and original grape varieties: Sciaccarellu, Niellucciu and Vermentinu in Corsica, Nero d'Avola and Grillo in Sicily, or Malvasia di Bosa in Sardinia. This last variety was made known to the public in the film Mondovino.

Finally, the reputation of certain domaines, and, more generally speaking, the qualitative efforts made by all producers over recent years, have now travelled well beyond the island.

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