GLOSSARY

Alcoholic Fermentation: the process by which yeasts convert natural grape sugars into alcohol; carbon dioxide and heat are given off in the process

Alluvium: river deposits

Alpine Climate: a climate characterized by cold winters, late springs and brief growing seasons

Ambré: label nomenclature for white vin doux naturel; refers to the amber color indicative of controlled oxidation

Amphorae: clay vessels used by the Greeks and Romans to store and transport wine

Anaerobic: without oxygen

Ancestral method [of sparkling wine production]: see Méthode Rural

AOC: Appellation d’origine contrôlée; a delineated zone of production (region, sub-region, village or specific terroir) with unique qualities and characteristics stemming from its geography, climate, topography, and viticultural and winemaking practices. AOC represents the highest rung on the French wine quality pyramid. Both the region itself and the product that comes from that region are referred to as AOC. (Example: The Bordeaux AOC refers to a geographical entity and to the wine that is produced within this zone of production)

Aquitaine: a French region whose Latin root means “well-watered place”

ATM: abbreviation for atmosphere; refers to the amount of pressure per square inch at sea level; a bottle of champagne contains approximately 6 atms of pressure

Bead: bubble

Biodynamic farming: an elaborate, organic practice whereby growers link all viticultural and vinicultural work with the movement of the sun, moon and stars

Bioherm: reef-like mound of earth composed of dead sea creatures such as corals, starfish and mollusks

Blanc de Blancs: a white wine made from white grapes

Blanc de Noirs: a white wine made from black grapes

Botrytis Cinerea: a fungus that attacks tight-clustered grape varieties whose grapes are high in sugar content. The mold penetrates the grape skin, desiccates the berry, and concentrates sugars and other flavor compounds. When conditions are right (i.e. when cool, moist mornings are followed by warm, dry afternoons), this noble rot yields unctuous, honeyed dessert wines. However, if the weather stays cool and damp all day, botrytis can swiftly turn from noble rot to gray rot and destroy the crop

Brut: a style of champagne or Crémant that contains up to 1.5% residual sugar and confers no perception of residual sugar

Brut Nature: a champagne style in which no sugar or dosage is added

Camargue: a salt marsh located west of Provence and east of Languedoc, as the Rhône River finishes its run to the Mediterranean Sea

Carbonic Maceration: a vinification technique involving an anaerobic, enzymatic fermentation carried out inside the berry resulting in a wine with intense aromas of bananas and candied fruit; the process is also known as whole-berry fermentation

Chalk: a type of porous limestone
Chaptalization: the technique of adding sugar to grape must in order to achieve a stable alcohol level in the finished wine. None of the added sugar remains in the finished wine as a sweetening agent. It is all fermented into alcohol.

Claret: a semi-red wine; darker than rosé, but less pigmented than a true red wine.

Climat: a small and distinctive parcel of land.

Colluvium: slope wash.

Continental Climate: a climate characterized by significant diurnal and seasonal temperature changes; wine regions with continental climates experience all four seasons.

Coombe: a short or shallow valley, usually dry, within a limestone escarpment.

Côte: translated from the French, “slope.”

Crau: a stony plain located in Provence, often referred to as the Desert de la Crau because it is so arid.

Crayères: in Champagne, underground chalk quarries now used as wine cellars.

Crémant: a French sparkling wine produced outside the Champagne region made in the Méthode Traditionelle.

Cuvée: blend.

Demi-Sec: a style of Champagne or Crémant containing between 3.3-5% residual sugar and possessing a slight sweetness.

Disgorging: in French “dégorgement”; the process of removing the dead yeast cells from the bottle of sparkling wine in order to deliver a clear and non-gritty sparkling product.

Diurnal: daily.

Dosage: process of adding a mixture of sugar and still reserve wine, called Liqueur de Dosage or Liqueur d’Expedition, after disgorging a sparkling wine; determines a sparkling wine’s final sweetness level.

Downy Mildew: a fungus disease that germinates in warm, humid weather. It attacks the leaves and stems, first with what appear to be “oil spots”, then with white cotton filaments. An outbreak causes the vines to lose their leaves which can delay ripening or prevent ripening altogether. Downy Mildew is also known as peronospera.

Doux: meaning “sweet”, a style of Champagne with over 5% residual sugar.

Eau de Vie: In France, a brandy or distilled spirit; literally translates as “water of life.”

Échelle des crus: a vineyard ranking in Champagne based on a scale of 80-100%. In truth, it is the wine village that is ranked; all surrounding vineyards are awarded the points that the village receives. Villages of 80-89% do not carry any special rank, but are allowed to produce champagne. Villages rated 90-99% are considered premiers crus; villages rated at 100% are grand crus.

Edelzwicker: in Alsace, a wine that is a blend of several grape varieties; these varieties can be fermented separately or fermented together.

Entre-Deux-Mers: translated from the French, “between two seas”; a sub-region situated between the rivers Dordogne and Garonne. It is also a dry-white-only AOC.

Escarpment: a cliff-like ridge of land formed by faulting.

Ethanol: the primary alcohol produced during alcoholic fermentation.

Extra-Brut: a style of Champagne with less than 0.6% residual sugar.
Extract: a representative measure of all the flavor compounds in wine

Extra-Sec: a style of Champagne containing 1.2-2.0% residual sugar, although the French translates as “extra-dry”, the wine possesses noticeable sweetness

Fines Bulles: French for “fine or small bubbles”; colloquial reference to the sparkling wines of the Loire

Finish: a lingering perception of flavor that remains on the palate after the wine is swallowed

Flute bottle: long, tapered bottles; traditionally used for the wines of Alsace and Germany

Foudre: large, inert oak barrel

Galet: large, round stones found in the Rhône region

Garrigue: an arid, stony earth that can only support lavender, herbs, dwarf oak trees and the vine

Gentil: in Alsace, a blended wine that is more than 50% Riesling, Muscat, Pinot Gris and/or Gewurztraminer; the other 50% can be comprised of other grapes. All varieties must be fermented separately

Glycerol: a sweet-tasting alcohol produced in small quantities during the fermentation process

Gobelet: a pruning system whereby vines are trained low to the ground and pruned so that the short canes grow up and outward from the center in a cup or goblet shape

Graben: topographically speaking, a large trench flanked by two uplifts [ U ]

Graves: translated from the French, “gravel”

Gray Rot: a crop-damaging form of Botrytis Cinerea; outbreaks occur when cool, moist mornings are followed by cool, moist afternoons. (Botrytis Cinerea maintains its positive attributes, i.e. noble rot, when cool, moist mornings are followed by warm, dry afternoons)

Guyot Training System: a training system that shapes the vines into one long cane (carrying eight to ten buds) and a short, two-bud renewal spur

Hors d’Age: label nomenclature for vin doux naturel; refers to wines that have aged for a long time under controlled-oxidation prior to bottling (Ex: at least five years for Rivesaltes wines)

Hybrids (Franco-American): hybrids vines were created by crossing two different vine or vitis species, in this case Vitis vinifera (the European vine stock) with Vitis Labrusca or Vitis Riparia (American vine stocks); this was done to try to create new vine types that captured the European grapes’ flavor profiles and the American vine’s natural immunity to phylloxera

INAO: Institut National des Appellations d’Origine (INAO), founded in 1935, is the governing body responsible for French wine law. It polices and protects its 400 wine and spirit AOCs from wrongful marketing or misleading labeling, both internally and externally

Lees: dead yeast cells

Left Bank: when facing in the direction of the current, the left side or bank of the river or estuary

Libournais: the wine regions that surround the right-bank city of Libourne are collectively given this moniker

Limestone: a sedimentary soil composed of compacted and fossilized marine life

Liqueur de dosage: see dosage

Liqueur de Tirage: in méthode champenoise, a sugar/yeast solution added to the base wine to initiate a second fermentation
Liqueur d’expédition: see dosage

Liquoreux: Liquoreux wines are sweet wines made from late-harvest grapes that are always affected by noble rot. They are noticeably sweeter than the moelleux or semi-sweet category

Loess: fine wind-blown soil deposits usually comprised of silt and sand

Macroclimate: the climate of a particular region, see mesoclimate

Malo-lactic Fermentation: a secondary fermentation in which bacteria convert malic acid into lactic acid thereby lowering a wine’s acidity and changing its mouth feel and flavor profile

Mano-proteins: molecules consisting of protein and sugar; released as yeasts decompose during sur lies aging. Mano-proteins add a creamy, round mouth feel to the finished wine

Maritime Climate: a climate characterized by cloudy skies and ample rainfall in the form of squalls or storms. Large bodies of water, like the sea, prevent frosts and deep freezes and keep the weather temperate

Marl: a soil type consisting of clay and limestone in various proportions

Maturity: a complexity of flavor derived from “hang time”, the length of time the grape cluster spends hanging on the vine; also refers to phenolic ripeness, i.e. the flavor and quality of grape tannins plus the intensity of color

Mediterranean Climate: a climate characterized by hot summers, mild winters and a long and fruitful growing season; there is minimal rainfall during the summer months

Meritage: a category of upper-end, prestige bottlings in the USA that was modeled after the classic Bordeaux blend

Merle: French for “blackbird”; Merlot is named after the blackbirds that feast upon it at harvest

Mesoclimate: the climate of a particular vineyard or growing area

Méthode champenoise (also referred to as méthode traditionnelle in sparkling wine regions other than Champagne); a distinct method of sparkling wine production that involves two separate and distinct fermentations. The first fermentation changes grape juice into wine; the second fermentation, transforms the still wine into a sparkling wine and occurs in the same bottle from which it is later served

Méthode Rurale [Rural method of sparkling wine production]: process of sparkling winemaking comprising one single alcoholic fermentation that is bottled mid-ferment in order to trap the carbon dioxide gas in solution; also known as Méthode Ancestrale (ancestral method) of sparkling wine production

Méthode traditionnelle: a term used to describe the méthode champenoise when utilized outside the Champagne region

Microclimate: the climate within the vine canopy itself

Mistral: a fierce wind that blows through the Rhône and Southern France desiccating the grapes and concentrating their flavors

Moelleux: translates as “mellow”; Moelleux wines are semi-sweet wines made from late-harvested grapes which may or may not be affected by noble rot

Monopole: a vineyard under single ownership

Mousse: the frothy stream of bubbles in a glass of sparkling wine

Mousseux: translates as “frothy or bubbly”; a general term that refers to sparkling wines

Mutage: (a French term) the process of stopping a partially-complete alcoholic fermentation through the addition of spirits in order to keep some residual sugar in the finished (fortified) wine; this process is used for VDN winemaking
**Napoleonic Code**: A mandate issued by Napoleon Bonaparte (1804) that decreed that all inheritable property be divided equally among siblings

**Noble Rot**: see botrytis

**Nouveau**: translates as “new”; refers to a newly made wine released shortly after harvest (ex: Beaujolais Nouveau is released the third Thursday of November in the same year it was harvested.); also known as vin primeur

**Œil de perdrix**: a French term that translates as “eye of the partridge”, a descriptor used to describe a deep salmon pink

**Oidium**: see Powdery Mildew

**Organic farming**: Practices whereby growers eschew all agro-chemicals, use natural fertilizers, focus on building the health of the soil, and promote biodiversity

**Pelliculaire**: French for “on the skins”, usually seen as macération pelliculaire (skin contact)

**Peronospora**: see Downy Mildew

**Pétillant**: translates as “fizzy”

**Petit Château**: any unclassified or unranked property; this term is not used in France

**Phylloxera**: a small insect that kills the grapevine by attacking its roots. With each bite, it injects saliva. This creates galls or knots of uncontrolled cell growth. European vines or Vitis vinifera, do not have the ability to heal over the bite wounds. This allows bacteria and fungi to enter the plant and rot the root. The vines eventually die. The insect is native to the east coast of the USA and American grapevines are immune. Phylloxera arrived in Europe on contaminated rootstock in the late 1800s and devastated the vineyards of the Old World. Only grafting European vines onto naturally immune American rootstocks saved the European wine industry

**Pourriture noble**: French term for noble rot

**Powdery mildew**: a fungal disease indigenous to the USA. It blankets the vine with thick white filaments. If an outbreak occurs before flowering, yields are reduced. If the grape clusters become infected, they will not achieve full pigment development or grow to maximum size. The fruit will be marked by off-flavors. Powdery mildew is also known as oidium

**Prise de Mousse**: translates literally as “the seizing of the foam”; the second alcoholic fermentation which converts the dry base wine into a sparkling wine

**Rainshadow**: an area of earth that receives little precipitation due to a large landmass such as a mountain range or escarpment that blocks the moisture-laden clouds

**Rancio**: label nomenclature for vin doux naturel; refers to fully oxidized reds and whites, brown in color and boasting characteristic aromas of walnut and orange peel

**Riddling**: in French “remuage; the process of collecting dead yeast cells into the neck of the champagne bottle in preparation for disgorging. See disgorging

**Right Bank**: when facing in the direction of the current, the right side or bank of the river or estuary

**Rimage**: label nomenclature for vin doux naturel; refers to red wines that have aged reductively (i.e. without oxygen)

**Ripeness**: refers to sunshine derived sugar levels found in the grape

**Rosé de Presse**: a method of making rosé; maceration occurs only as the grapes are pressed. This extremely short amount of skin contact results in a lighter style rosé with less color, tannin and structure than those made through saignée

**Saignée**: a French term that translates as “bleeding”; used to describe the process of pulling pink juice off of the skins with which it is macerating in order to make rosé
Sandstone: a type of soil composed of quartz sand particles that become cemented together over time

Schist: a type of soil formed from clay that has been compressed within the earth’s crust

Sec: a style of Champagne or Crémant containing 1.7-3.5% residual sugar; although the French translates as “dry”, the wine possesses noticeable sweetness. With regard to still wines, the term refers to wines that usually possess less than 0.2% residual sugar

Sélection de Grains Nobles: a dessert wine made from grapes that have been affected by noble rot; these grapes are ideally individually picked from within the cluster

Semi-Carbonic Maceration: a vinification technique whereby there is both carbonic or whole-berry fermentation taking place at the top of the tank and a traditional yeast-driven alcoholic fermentation taking place in the juice at the bottom of the tank

Skin Contact: literally, the action of allowing the grape juice to contact the grape skins. This can occur pre-fermentation, during fermentation and/or after fermentation. Tannins, pigments and some flavor precursors are located within the skins. Skin contact allows for the transfer of these components into the juice. Also known as maceration

Structure: an interplay of sugar, acid, tannin and alcohol, each of which are bona fide tastes, i.e. perceived by our taste buds

Sur Lie: refers to the process in which wines age on (sur) the dead yeast cells or lees (lie) which have settled to the bottom of the tank or barrel after alcoholic fermentation. The dead yeasts impart mano-proteins, molecules of sugar-protein bonds that give wine creaminess and a rounded mouth feel

Tannin: a bitter and astringent substance present in grape skins, stems, seeds and in oak barrels; tannins may be extracted from the grape and the wood during fermentation and/or oak ageing

Terroir: a French concept that embodies the totality of everything that impacts the grape and its final flavors such as elevation, aspect, climate, soil, grape growing practices, and topographical features

Tête de Cuvée: in Champagne, a prestige bottling; the best product a Champagne house produces; this term can also refer to the very first juice to escape the wine press

Tokay: a former synonym for Pinot Gris in Alsace; outlawed in 2007

Trellising: a structure of stakes, posts and wires designed to give support to the vine and position it in space

Tramontane: a strong wind that hails from the north and blows through the southern regions of France

Tuffeau: a type of porous limestone found in the Middle Loire

Tuilé: label nomenclature for vin doux naturel; refers to slightly oxidized red wines that take a tuile (clay-tile) color

VDQS: Vin Délimité de Qualité Supérieure is an interim phase as wines transition from Vin de Pays to AOC status

Vendange Tardive: a late-harvest dessert wine; may or may not be affected by noble rot

Vigneron: grape grower in French; there is no French equivalent for “winemaker”

Vin de Médecine: a euphemism for Rhône wines sold in the Middle Age to Burgundy to add pigment, tannin and fruit to a weak vintage

Vin de Paille: a sweet wine of the Jura made from grapes air-dried on straw mats

Vin de Table: formerly known as vin ordinaire, vin de table is the lowest rung on the French wine quality pyramid

Vin Doux Naturel (VDN): fortified dessert wine

Vin Jaune: a wine of the Jura that matures under the influence of film yeasts and controlled oxidation
**Vin Primeur**: see Nouveau

**Wine**: fermented grape juice

**Yeast**: a unicellular fungus responsible for initiating alcoholic fermentations