



CÔTES DU RHÔNE

ICONIC TERROIRS OF EUROPE

Press Kit



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Iconic Terroirs of Europe: Comté and Côtes du Rhône

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PRESS KIT - Part 1

Presentation of the campaign

Comté and Côtes du Rhône PDOs: Iconic Terroirs of Europe

The Comté and Côtes du Rhône PDOs are partners in a 3-year communication campaign with support from the European Union launched in 2023. This campaign, named Iconic Terroirs of Europe: Comté and Côtes du Rhône, includes advertising, social media, events and public relations.

European Union's website <https://commission.europa.eu/>

Comté's website www.comte.com

Côtes du Rhône's website www.cotesdurhone.com

Iconic terroir of Europe website <https://iconicterroirsofeurope.eu/>

Objectives

- **Generate greater awareness** for European Protected Designations of Origin (PDO) among American thought leaders and the general public.
- **Encourage decision makers** and consumers to discover Côtes du Rhône wines and Comté cheese.
- **Increase visibility** for Comté cheese and Côtes du Rhône wines in the U.S. market and encourage easy food and wine pairing possibilities.

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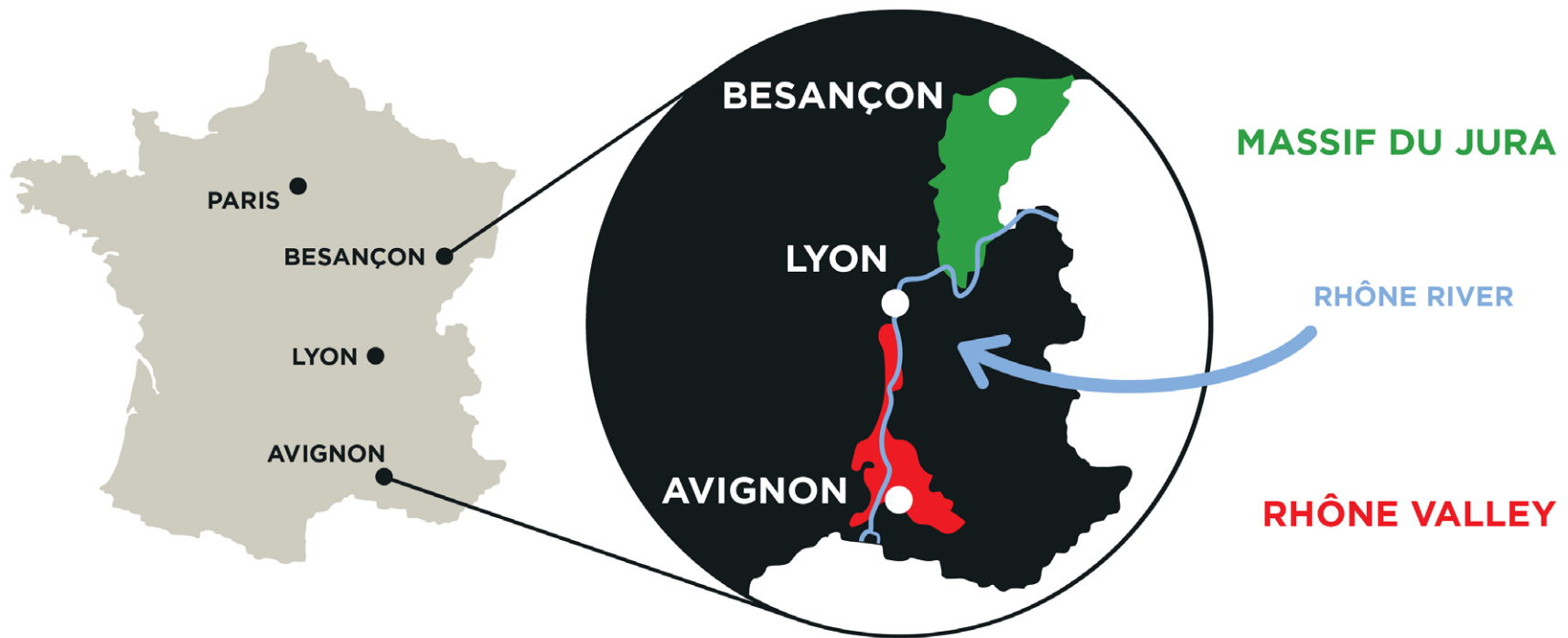
- **Comté and Côtes du Rhône PDOs have much in common.** Together they create a new dynamic based on shared values, mindsets and experiences:
 - **Love of terroir:** both PDOs express specific and beautiful terroirs, respectively the Massif du Jura in northeastern France and the Rhône Valley in southeastern France, in all their diversity.
 - **Commitment to sustainable agricultural practices:** both PDOs care for their environment and biodiversity, limit outside inputs, preserve resources and function with great transparency vis-à-vis the consumer.
 - **Passion for craftsmanship:** both PDOs rely on the skills of master craftsmen to achieve excellence from soil to table. Every step of the way, patience, dedication, passion, know-how, traditions and modernity permeate their gestures to create a legacy for the future.
- Together, Comté and Côtes du Rhône PDOs offer simple and delicious food and wine pairings for all to share. This intrinsic love of terroir, passed down through generations, resonates in the flavors and aromas found in every bite and sip.



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MAP OF FRANCE





PRESS KIT - Part 2

What is a PDO ?

Honoring the strong links between the foods and wines and the regions they hail from, the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) label celebrates a unique combination of terroir, history, and tradition.

European Union's article about PDO https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes-explained_en#geographicalindications



History

The development of the concept of Appellation of Origin started in France at the turn of the 20th century. After the First World War, the Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) was officially established into law by decree in 1935.

The organization responsible for overseeing, defining, protecting and controlling AOCs, Institut National des Appellations d'Origine, was established at the same time. INAO is now known as Institut National de l'Origine et de la Qualité. Established in 1937, Côtes du Rhône was among the first Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée or AOC, along with Champagne and Cognac. Although the first Appellation d'Origine for foods goes back to 1925 (Roquefort), the full AOC scheme was officially established in 1990 to cover products beyond wine and spirits.

In 1992, European regulators, inspired by French policy, developed a similar EU-wide scheme and the term, Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), was coined to replace the term AOC (and its equivalents in other countries) for all relevant products. A European symbol was created and appears on PDO-designated products. (In France, only wine is allowed to keep using the designation AOC (in lieu of AOP/PDO).

Today in France there are 102 food PDOs that include 51 dairy products (mainly cheese), 363 wine AOC/PDOs, 17 spirits AOCs, 5 cider PDOs and 2 forestry PDOs. (source: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes-explained_en#geographicalindications)



Guarantees

- **Guarantee of origin:**

The PDO scheme is intended to guarantee the true geographic origin of approved wines, spirits and foods. The very *raison d'être* of this system is to protect producers from fraud, as well as give consumers assurances regarding the products they purchase when they carry a geographic designation. The Côtes du Rhône PDO goes back to 1937 and Comté's to 1958.

- **Guarantee of the production method and character of the products:**

Along with its geographic area of production, the production methods of each PDO are grounded in local, fair and constant practices (*usages locaux, loyaux et constants*). Thus, the integrity and taste characteristics of the products are protected in all their diversity to satisfy consumers.

- **Guarantee of collective rights over the PDO product:**

A PDO belongs to all its members collectively. Its Specifications (*Cahier des charges*) are defined, articulated

and implemented by them after approval by the national and EU authorities. The Specifications are allowed to evolve to address new challenges linked to the environment, the climate, new technologies, economic, sanitary or legal issues, as well as changing consumers' expectations.

Each PDO has a governing body* made up of representatives of all those who are involved in the production and distribution of its products. It carries out activities in all fields of interest to the members, including research and technical issues, economics, information and communications, marketing, law and promotion of the appellation, defense of local traditions and protection of the environment.

Implementation is regularly verified by an independent auditing organization. All PDOs are protected by EU regulations.

* For Comté, Comité Interprofessionnel de Gestion du Comté (CIGC); for Côtes du Rhône, Syndicat Général des Vignerons des Côtes du Rhône (SGVCR) and Inter Rhône.



- **Guarantee of transparency of practices**

A PDO logo on a product is a promise to the consumer that this product comes from a specific geographic location and delivers singular characteristics not found elsewhere. The Specifications describing the product and the commitments on the producers can easily be accessed on the site of each PDO.

How a PDO is created : Specifications

When a group of producers wants to apply for PDO designation in France, they must present their proposed Specifications (including the precise definition of their area of production) and control procedures to INAO. After approval from INAO, the project must also be accepted by the EU commission.

Other European Labels for agricultural products

Aside from PDO, the EU offers other schemes to protect traditional products from specific territories. They include Protected Geographical Indications (PGI), Geographical Indications of spirit drinks (GI), Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG), etc.

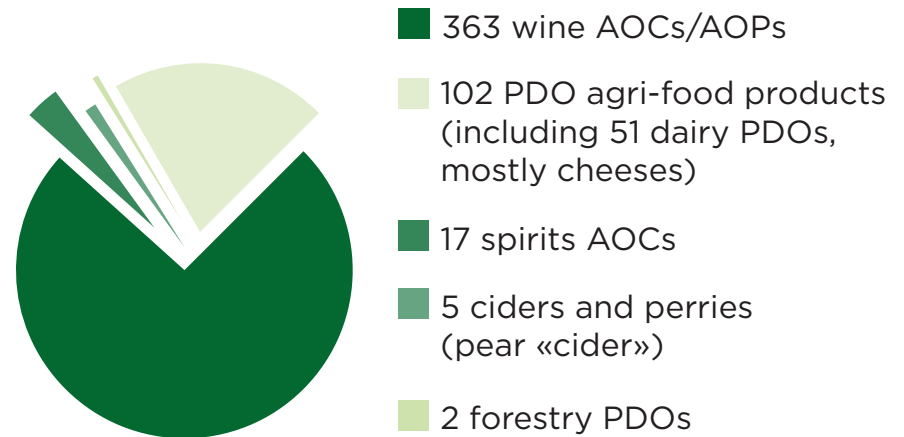




Key Figures

• In 2020, the French appellations represented a turnover of almost \$23 billion. In 2022, there were a total of 489 PDOs in France.

46% of the wine production and 5% of the cheese production in France (figures 2022) fall into the PDO category.



For food products:

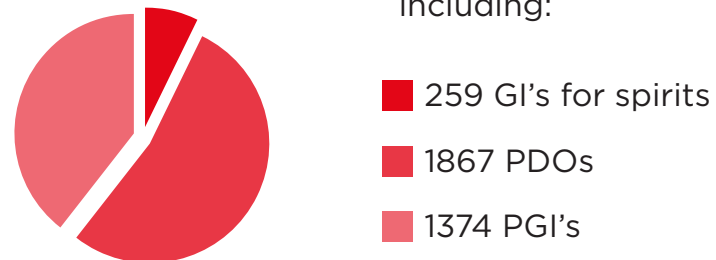
- 2.37 billion sales.

For wine and spirits:

- 74.6% of sales
- 20.6 billion in sales

In the E.U. in 2023:

- 3500 Geographical Indications (GI) are registered, including:



PRESS KIT - Part 3

As PDOs, Comté cheese and Côtes du Rhône wine share many values.

1- Sharing the love of terroir

The regions of the Comté and Côtes du Rhône PDOs are connected by the Rhône river which follows parts of the boundary of the Comté appellation to the south and then flows through the Côtes du Rhône from north to south.



What is terroir?

The concept of terroir is a complex one, at the same time geographic and cultural.

According to the French Institut National de l'Origine et de la Qualité (INAO) (The National Institute of Origin and Quality):

A terroir is a specific geographical area with a combination of unique characteristics not found elsewhere. Over time, this physical and biological environment — including climate, soil type, topography, fauna, flora, etc. — has been shaped by the human community or communities who settled there and created their own original productions out of this environment.

In short, a terroir is a well-defined territory with a unique geography, singular history and local human activities going back centuries.

The French word «terroir» comes from the Latin word «territorium», or territory, from «terra», soil.

Pronounced [tɛʁwaːʁ], [te-], the word «terroir» first appeared in an administrative text going back to 1212, meaning a territory. Its modern spelling appeared in 1229. In 1549, the expression «goust du terroir» is used to describe a wine (Dictionarium latinogallicum, Robert Estienne).

Geography

Massif du Jura ['dʒʊrə] or Jura Mountains.

The capital city of Comté is Poligny where the offices of the PDO as well as a dairy school and several research organizations are based.

Located in eastern France, this area stretches over three departments (Jura, Doubs in the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region and Ain in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region) along the border with Switzerland.

The Comté terroir runs about 140 miles north to south. The Rhône river flows to the south of the Jura Mountains.

The area is known for:

- The Jura Mountain chain which was formed during the Jurassic era.
- Its large plateaus are crowned with pine forests at elevations between 650 and 5,000 feet.
- Green valleys which cut through the fractured landscape with rivers especially rich in fish. There are also numerous lakes and caves.
- Cold winters where the snow cover gives a majestic appearance to the landscape. The coldest town in France is Mouthe, Jura.
- Natural preserves.





Geography

Vallée du Rhône or Rhône Valley.

The offices of the PDO are located in Avignon. The research and vineyard management center is based in Orange.

The Côtes du Rhône vineyards spread from the south of Lyon to Avignon on both sides of the Rhône river.

Located in southeastern France, this area includes six departments (Rhône, Isère, Drôme, Ardèche, Gard, Vaucluse) from Lyon to Avignon.

The Côtes du Rhône terroir runs about 150 miles north to south.

The area is known for:

- Being the result of an epic geological clash between the Massif Central and the Alps.
- Variety of terrains: Steep slopes with terraces, rolling hillsides, plains and plateaus.
- A huge variety of soil types with granitic rocks, limestone, sand, gravels, pebbles and round stones (the iconic galets roulés).
- A massive amount of sunshine and Mistral wind.
- Iconic garrigue, pines, cypresses, Mediterranean oaks, almond trees, and other native tree species.
- Two climates: Continental in the north and Mediterranean in the south.

History

Cheese has been produced in the Jura region as far back as the neolithic period (New Stone Age). Latin texts from the time of the Gallic Wars (58-50 BC) tell us that cheese from this region was enjoyed in Rome.

It is the harshness of the long winters of the Jura Massif which, from the Middle Ages, required local farmers to pool their milk together and make large, pressed, cooked cheeses that could last throughout winter and meet the needs of entire families.

The first written record of the word “fructerie” (fruitière) appeared in 1264. A fruitière is a the place where Comté is crafted.





History

The history of Côtes du Rhône goes back to the Greek and Roman settlers 2,000 years ago.

The development of the viticulture and winemaking culture in this region was then steady throughout the centuries.

The reputation of Côtes du Rhône wines among popes and kings encouraged growing vines and the production of wine.

Very early in the 17th century, the wine producers implemented strict regulations to protect their unique terroir and wine from fraudulent copies.

Human factor, organization and economy

Comté has been integral to the survival and livelihood of a dynamic human community in the Jura Mountains.

The production of Comté relies on three interconnected groups of artisans whose skills are often passed from one generation to another:

- farmers/milk producers
- cheesemakers/fruitières
- affineurs/affinage and sales

There are 2,500 family-owned farms (comprised of over 4,500 farmers), 140 fruitières and 15 affinage houses.

Farms producing milk for Comté sit on over 1,000 square miles of land. This makes it the largest area of production for any PDO cheese in France.

Comté plays an important role in the development of employment, creating altogether 14,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The success of the appellation has made it possible to maintain family farms and attracts new farmers in a mountainous environment.





Human factor, organization and economy

The vineyards are an essential part of the local culture and economy of the Rhône Valley.

The diversity of terroirs and grape varieties translate into different styles of wines produced in the Côtes du Rhône vineyards: reds dominate (87%), followed by rosés (7%) and whites (6%).

Viticulture and winemaking run in the families with many multi-generation wineries and land tenants. This amazing patchwork of landscapes, including man-built terraces in the steep flanks of the Rhône also attracts new passionate winemakers.

The wine production and the sales are split between: the cooperatives (and their members), the wine growers and the negociants (buy grapes or wines from the producers). Altogether, over 1,100 wineries contribute to the production of wine in the appellation.

The wine economy is hugely important to the Rhône valley. It creates over 53,000 direct and indirect jobs in the region.

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2- Sharing a commitment to sustainable practices

Sustainability includes protecting nature, climate, biodiversity but also the well-being of humans and animals and preservation of resources and heritage.

The Comté PDO has distinguished itself in terms of the environment. In 2021, Comté was recognized as a leader in environmental and socio-economic benefits in a study carried out by an independent firm for World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace. These benefits

include air and soil quality, biodiversity, socio-economic fairness, among others. The commitments of the PDO were rated on a par with those of the most demanding organic farming organizations.

The PDO's commitments are articulated around 3 pillars:

1. Nature and climate

Biodiversity is protected by taking care of landscapes. The traditional characteristics of the landscapes of the Jura Massif are preserved. The broad floristic diversity of the pastures is nurtured to support biodiversity. Only local breeds produce milk for Comté.

To respect the environment, virtuous agricultural practices are used. The extensive production of milk (as opposed to intensive) and the productivity of each herd is limited as well as the use of fertilizers.

The PDO contributes to the fight against global warming by using local resources: the traditional farming model is preserved with cows grazing in the pastures. These pastures contribute to trapping CO2 in the soil. Long car drives are limited by putting an emphasis on local supplies.



2. Well-being of humans and animals

The PDO crafts a flavorful, natural and healthy product. The diversity of taste of Comté cheese is actively pursued, while its naturalness relies on a simple recipe, without any additives, coloring or GMOs. The nutritious quality of Comté is also carefully monitored.

Special efforts are made to guarantee animal welfare. The farmers enjoy a personal connection to their animals: the cows are given access to pastures as long as the weather permits. In the farms, they benefit from comfortable housing conditions.

The PDO preserves traditional know-how and pays special attention to the working conditions of the farmers, cheesemakers and affineurs. A strong sense of pride, solidarity and belonging is actively promoted within the Comté community.



3. Our heritage and our territory

The PDO ensures that all the members of its community benefit from fair and decent revenues. Efforts are made to balance the relations between the different métiers.

The PDO fights against imitations and usurpations which cheat the consumers and depreciate the renown of Comté.

The PDO contributes to the life of its territory by sustaining the existence of numerous jobs and facilitating the transmission of farms and joining the Comté community.

With the preservation of its historic and singular model of shared governance, the PDO ensures that all its members are involved and that the cohesion of the PDO remains strong. The participation of the farmers, cheesemakers and affineurs in the collective life of the Comté PDO is a priority.





The Côtes du Rhône PDO has launched big projects since 2014 to help the PDO and its actors commit to sustainable practices

and face new challenges. Today about half of the production of Côtes du Rhône has an organic or sustainable certification.

The Côtes du Rhône AOC/PDO has put forth 4 commitments:

1. Protection of biodiversity

Since 2014, the PDO has implemented the Côtes du Rhône's Environmental Landscape Charter. It advocates a set of best practices utilizing a sustainable approach to vineyard management to encourage biodiversity while reinforcing the typical structure of a vineyard: headlands around the plots, flower-covered fallow land, hedgerows, planting of native species of trees, low stone walls, vineyard terraces, ancient stone shelters, etc.

In 2019, the appellation launched a Strategic Environmental Action Plan which resulted in several agreements with many French conservation organizations such as Observatory of Apidology (protection and defense of bees and biodiversity) and the Regional League for the Protection of Birds.

In recent years, a growing number of wine growers and wine producers, chambers of agriculture, viticultural experts, and other prominent organizations have pledged to preserve biodiversity in the Rhône Valley.

2. Respect terroir and preserve resources with adapted vineyard practices and waste reduction strategies

Viti-pastoralism (allowing sheep to graze in the vineyards) is allowed from September to March. This is beneficial because the grass grows back more slowly due to constant grazing. Furthermore, biodiversity improves due to the increase in insects, a prime source of food for birds, which regulates the populations and reduces the risk of vines developing diseases.

Over one-third of the vineyard acreage can boast one or more organic or environmental certifications.

Waste reduction measures throughout the production process: filtering side products (aiming at low-residue wines), reducing, collecting and recycling packaging.





3. Ensure transparency of practices

The Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée logo on the bottle guarantees origin and respectful practices in keeping with the Specifications of the AOC.

A unique stamp and a QR code have started to be affixed to each bottle to provide traceability of the wine from the grape to the bottle.

They are also used to combat counterfeiting and the usurpation of the wines' identity and origin.

The QR code can be scanned by consumers. A number of wineries are now conducting CSR initiatives in the Côtes du Rhône region. For instance, the 2 main organization of the region (Syndicate of the Côtes du Rhône and Trade organization of the Rhône Valley vineyards AOCs) have implemented their CSR plans.



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4. Transmission of heritage

Côtes du Rhône producers are determined to preserve the vineyards and pass on the ancestral know-how to future generations. They communicate and transmit the richness of their heritage to the widest possible audience.

Institut Rhodanien is the technical/scientific arm of the governing body of all Rhône wines, Inter Rhône. It oversees all the projects addressing needs in research and development (viticulture, winemaking, climate change) as well as societal expectations with regards to environmental issues, residues, waste, profiles of the wines, etc.

These practical measures underpin the considerable day-to-day work carried out by the producers to ensure the sustainability and continuity of the PDO.



PRESS KIT – Part 3

3- Sharing a passion for craftsmanship

Comté and Côtes du Rhône rely on skilled master craftsmen to achieve excellence from soil to table.

- Their work with nature is imbued with respect for the environment;
- Every step of the way, patience, dedication, passion, know-how inform their work;
- Traditions and modernity permeate their daily work to create a legacy for the future.

The farmers, cheesemakers and affineurs in the Comté PDO have embraced patience, dedication and know-how for as long as they probably can remember.

Comté cheese conveys the connection of people to their land. It is an expression of their territory and their culture.

It expresses a mountainous area where only family farms with small to medium-size herds can survive. The local farmers refused to let their model become industrialized and relocated.

Skills to make a singular cheese based on a unique recipe invented back in medieval times to make a large cheese which could keep for a long time through the harsh and long winters of the Jura Mountains.

Skills to enhance and carry on practices which started over 800 years ago, in the face of industrialisation and product homogenization in agriculture since the Second World War.

Skills in the management of pastures and animals. Farmers have to strategize the use of their pastures: will the grass be grazed by the cattle, or cut and dried for winter fodder? The farmers also need to carefully plan the size of their herds in keeping with available pastures, water and productivity goals to limit input.



Skills to work with raw milk while making sure it retains as much of the terroir micro-flora needed to express the diversity of Comté.

Skills to make cheeses which respect the micro-flora of the milk and its variability from pasture to pasture and from day to day.

Skills to mature and sort cheeses to sell them at their peak. Affinage requires careful training and skills handed down from affineurs to affineurs. The minimum aging time is four months and the average age for each wheel is eight months. These craftsmen strive to respect the singularity of each wheel to offer a large spectrum of aromas, texture and tastes to consumers.







CÔTES DU RHÔNE

The winemakers in the Rhône Valley rely on patience, dedication, passion and know-how passed on from generation to generation. Furthermore:

The quality of the wines produced in the Côtes du Rhône PDO would not be what it is if it were not for the creativity, craftsmanship and sheer hard work of the winegrowers and winemakers in the Rhône Valley.

They harness the challenges of the region (a very strong wind, steep and harsh terrain, drought, etc.) and deliver its full potential. The product of this skill and expertise in turn inspires generations of new winemakers across the world.

Skills to grow a broad spectrum of grape varieties:

the Côtes du Rhône PDO grow 27 varieties in total. The best-known are Viognier, Marsanne and Roussanne (whites), Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre (reds). Some of them are native to the Rhône Valley.

Skills to select grape varieties which are best suited for the diversity of soils in the PDO terroirs and which can sustain the usual droughts of a Mediterranean climate.

Skills to build terraces and grow grapes on steep slopes.



Skills to protect the plots that are most exposed to the powerful Mistral.

Skills to cultivate according to methods which have been fine-tuned over centuries. For example : pruning techniques.

Skills in winemaking: blending is one of the specialties in the Côtes du Rhône PDO. Given the large selection of grape varieties to work with, there are endless possibilities in terms of aromas and styles.

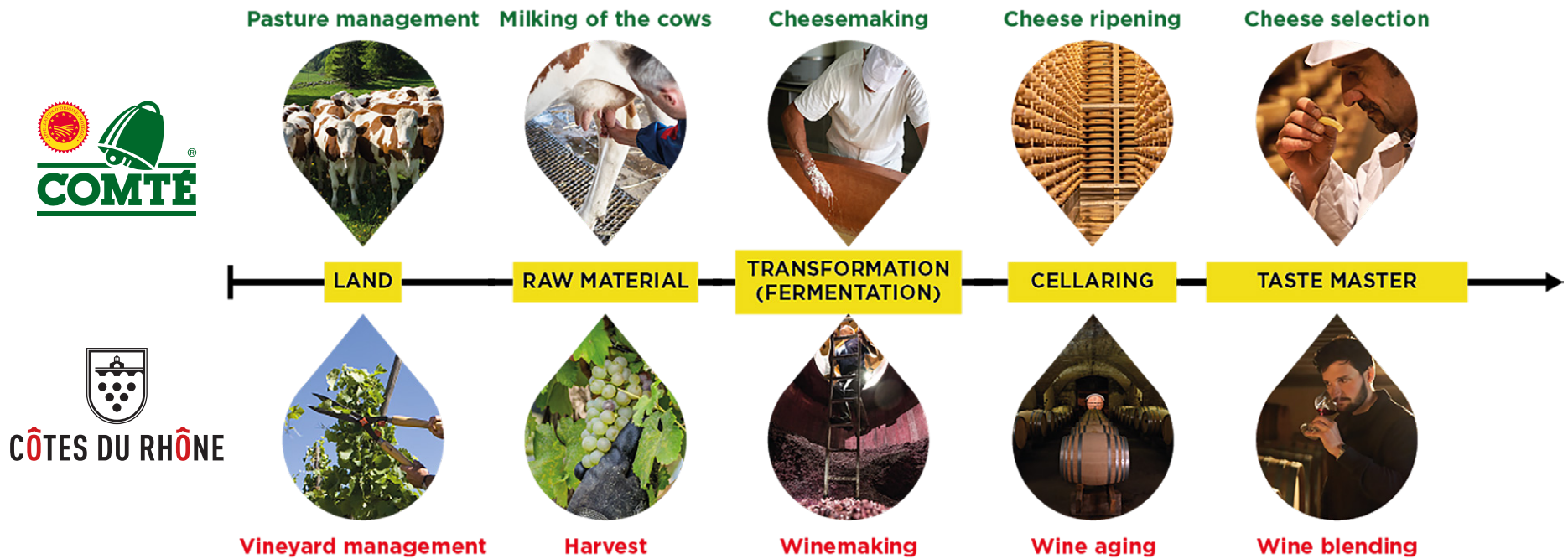
Skills in aging the wines: concrete tanks, stainless steel tanks, new and old barrels are used.



CÔTES DU RHÔNE



From Terroir to Table





PRESS KIT - Part 4

1- Comté PDO Fact sheet

Key requirements of the PDO specifications

European PDO established in 1992 (AOC, 1958). Its specifications have been regularly updated over the years. After four years of work on the part of the Comté professionals, the 10th and current version was approved by the French authorities and published in November 2024. It strengthens the PDO's strong commitments to the preservation of an economic model based on sustainable family farms, the diversity of fruitières, and the protection and preservation of the traditional skills of the affineur's profession. Protection of the environment and animal welfare are integral to the new specifications.

Milk production

- 2,400 family farms representing 4,500 farmers
- 150,000 cows (and many heifers -- young cows which do not produce milk yet).
- Delimited zone of production: Jura, Doubs, Ain.
- Co-operative model.
- Cows of Montbéliarde and French Simmental breeds.
- Minimum forage area: 1.3 ha (3.2 acres) per milk cow.
- The milk production of each farm is capped at 317,000 gallons/year.
- Fermented feed is prohibited (such as ensilage).
- No GMOs.
- Quantitative and qualitative limits are placed on inputs (e.g., feed purchased outside of the farm).
- Raw milk rich in micro-flora.
- Milking twice a day; the farmer must draw the first squirt of milk for each cow by hand.
- No milking robots allowed.

Fabrication

- 140 fruitières where the cheese is made. They generally belong to the groups of farmers whose milk they transform into cheese.
- Raw milk, 105.6 gallons per wheel.
- Respect of natural micro-flora of milk.
- Cheese crafted within 24 hours after the earliest milking in a copper vat with a maximum capacity of 12 cheeses.
- Traditional approach.
- Additives and colourings are forbidden.
- Maximum milk collection area limited to 16-mile radius (25 km).
- Each wheel weighs about 80 lbs.
- Productivity of each fruitière is limited to preserve the artisanal nature of Comté.

Affinage

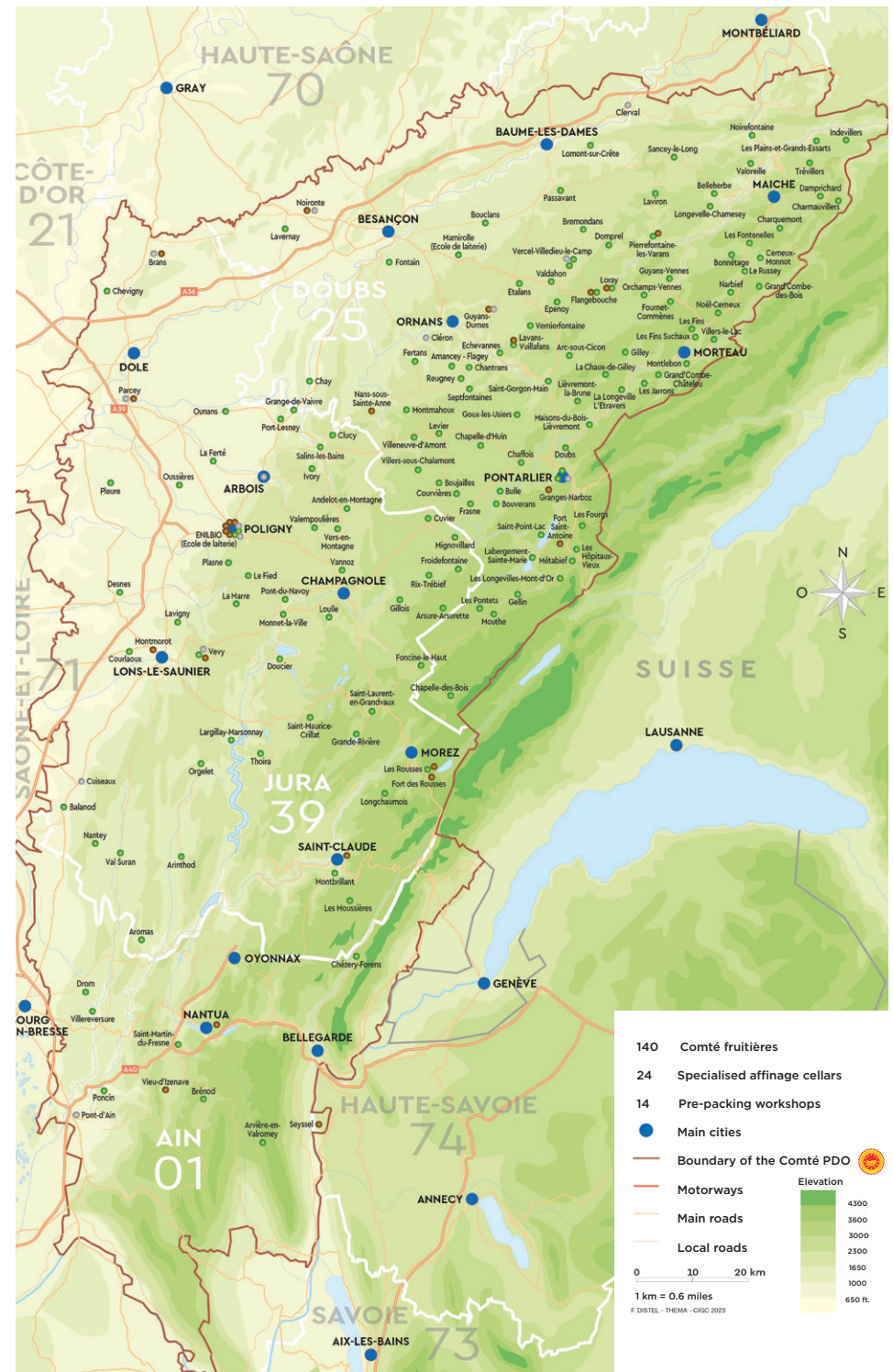
- 15 affinage houses where the cheese becomes Comté after a minimum of 4 months.
- The affineurs are responsible for aging Comté wheels, sorting and selling them when they are ready.
- Each affineur buys cheese from multiple fruitières.
- Average affinage is a little over 8 months, no maximum.

- Cheeses mature on spruce boards.
- Regular care is given to the wheels of Comté as they ripen.
- Cellars with controlled humidity and temperature.
- Each wheel is inspected and graded before it departs the cellars. The best wheels receive a green band which is affixed around them. It displays the Comté and PDO logos. If a wheel is graded less than 12/20, it is downgraded and will not be granted the Comté PDO.
- Each wheel is singular. Over eighty descriptors have been identified to characterise the aromas of Comté. These vary according to the fruitière and its location, as well as the season, the styles of the cheesemakers and the affineurs.
- Production, 1.7 - 1.8 million wheels per year depending on weather conditions throughout the year.

Impact on local and national economy

- Comté is the number one PDO in France. Among PDO cheeses, it has the largest area of production and the largest production. PDO cheese only represents about 15% of the total production of French cheese.
- 14,000 jobs direct and indirect.
- The success of the appellation has made it possible to maintain family farms and attracts new farmers guaranteeing the survival and livelihood of a dynamic human community in the Jura Mountains and its cheesemaking tradition.

The Comté production area





PRESS KIT - Part 4

2- Côtes du Rhône PDO Fact sheet

The Côtes du Rhône PDO was established in 1937, it was one of the first created in France using the acronym Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée or AOC.

Key requirements of the PDO specifications

As early as the 18th century, barrels of Côtes du Rhône were labeled CDR to guarantee the origin of the wine.

Specific area of production

The Côtes du Rhône PDO covers six French departments and offers a wide variety of crus and appellations.

The PDO has a well-defined quality hierarchy, with the majority of wines produced (64%) being part of the regional Côtes du Rhône appellation, followed by Côtes du Rhône Villages PDO (16%) and Côtes du Rhône Crus PDOs (20%).

Côtes du Rhône, Côtes du Rhône Villages and Crus cover 124,000 acres and includes 171 communes or villages, primarily in the southern Rhône valley.

The Côtes du Rhône Villages AOC area includes 95 of the southern communes and runs across 22,240 acres. 21 specific areas (named after a commune or a geographical area) have reached a standard of quality authorizing them to add a geographical name to the labels of their Côtes du Rhône Villages wines, e.g., Côtes du Rhône Villages Visan.

The Côtes du Rhône region also includes 18 Crus PDOs: 8 in the northern part of the region and 10 in the southern part, e.g. Saint-Joseph or Tavel. It is a very dynamic system and the hierarchy system encourages moving up the quality ladder.

For instance, a Côtes du Rhône Villages with a geographic designation can submit a detailed request to the INAO petitioning to become a new Cru. It is a long and collective process designed to single out the excellence of a specific terroir.

Wine production in the Côtes du Rhône (including Villages and Crus)

3 types of wine are produced: red (87%), white (7%), rosé (6%).

Red and rosé wines:

- Syrah only in the northern Côtes du Rhône
- Blends in the southern Côtes du Rhône: Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre are the 3 main grapes, 20 other black and white grape varieties are allowed, such as Cinsault, Carignan, Counoise, Caladoc, Coustou, Marselan, Picpoul, Vidoc, etc.

White wine:

In the northern Côtes du Rhône, 6 white varieties: Viognier, Marsanne, Roussane, Carignan blanc, Floréal, Rolle

In the southern Côtes du Rhône : Grenache blanc, Viognier, Roussanne, Clairette, Marsanne, Bourboulenc, Ugni blanc, Picpoul, Carignan blanc, Floréal, Rolle.

Vineyard and cellar practices must be respected in keeping with «local, loyal and constant customs» enshrined in the Specifications of the AOC.

Vineyard management:

Choice of vines and varieties, methods and density of planting, rules for pruning and trellising, maximum yields. The goal is to keep the vines and the soil in a good state of health and to balance the planting of the 27 grape varieties.

Methods of vinification (winemaking):

Blending, ageing, packaging, storage and labelling.

Enological and cellar practices are checked by mandatory analyses and tasting.

The AOC requires the producers to declare the quantity of the harvest (volume of grapes produced per AOC per year).

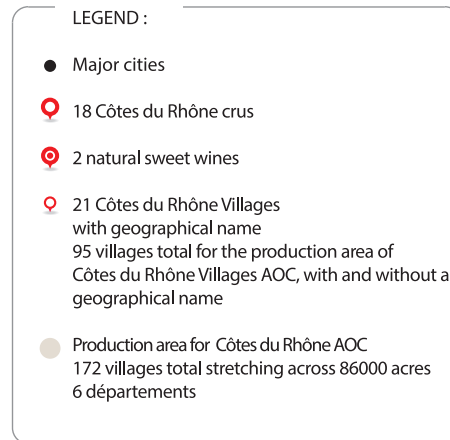
In 2024, the Rhône Valley vineyards produced over 1,222 million hectoliters of Côtes du Rhône and Côtes du Rhône Villages wines (over 32 million gallons). The US market is the second export market in volume and first in value.

Impact on local and national economy

Nowadays it is one of the most important wine PDOs in Europe. This is the French PDO with the largest number of grape varieties planted (27). Including all its AOCs, the Rhône Valley is the second largest AOC vineyard in France.

As of 2022 there are 914 privately owned wineries; 52 co-ops; 283 wine merchants (négociants) producing Côtes du Rhône PDO wines.

Overall over 1,100 wineries produce Côtes du Rhône and Côtes du Rhône Villages wines. The wine sector in the Rhône valley creates more than 53,000 direct and indirect jobs.



Southern Côtes du Rhône



Map Côtes du Rhône



PRESS KIT - Part 5

Pairing Comté and Côtes du Rhône

Comté and Côtes du Rhône, a source of infinite pleasures!

There are few cheeses like Comté that have their place at every stage of the day or meal, from breakfast to aperitif time, or on a cheese platter. It is also very easy and delicious to cook with Comté: gratiné dishes, sauces, fondue, grilled sandwiches, etc.

On their end, Côtes du Rhône wines are made with food in mind. They are as versatile as wine can be when it comes to food.

Together Comté cheese and Côtes du Rhône wines represent a broad spectrum of delicious combinations. Comté's aromatic diversity is so vast that it pairs surprisingly well, depending on its characteristics, with many types of wine, from a light and crisp rosé to a full-bodied red.

1- Comté tips



Cutting picture - www.foodette.fr

How to cut

Make sure everybody has a piece of crust, as well as paste from the side and the middle.

How to store

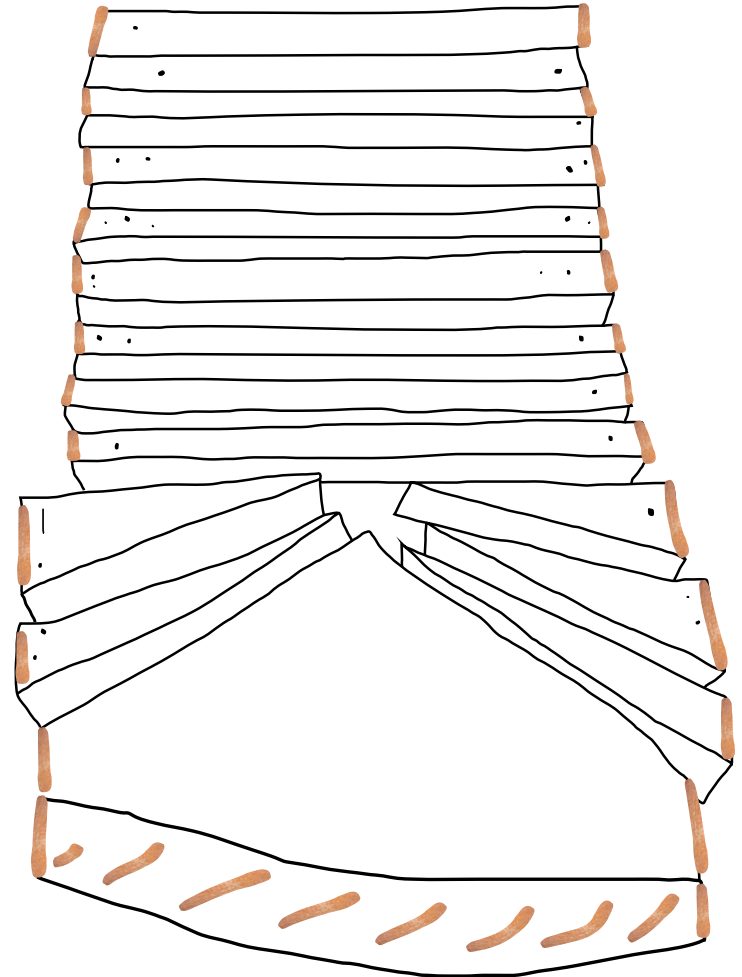
Wrap Comté carefully in cheese paper or waxed paper. Store in the refrigerator or cellar at 45° - 50°F.

How to taste comté

Savour Comté at 60° - 65° F. It's preferable to take it out of the refrigerator ahead of eating it.

Colour

Comté made with milk collected when the cows are grazing in pastures (from early spring until autumn, as long as the weather conditions allow) can vary in colour from light to a deep honey yellow colour. Comté made in the winter when the cows feed on hay displays a pale, ivory colour.



How to cut a Comté slice - © Jean-Louis Carbonnier

Aromas

Wheel of the aromas of Comté: 83 words have been identified by professional tasters to describe the aromas of Comté. They are organised according to 6 groups: spicy, fruity, roasted, vegetal, animal, lactic.

Texture

The texture of the paste ranges from supple -- a small stick of Comté bends easily -- to dense, firm and breakable. It can feel a little grainy on the palate. Even aged Comté should retain moisture and a silky softness that melts in the mouth.

Young Comté:

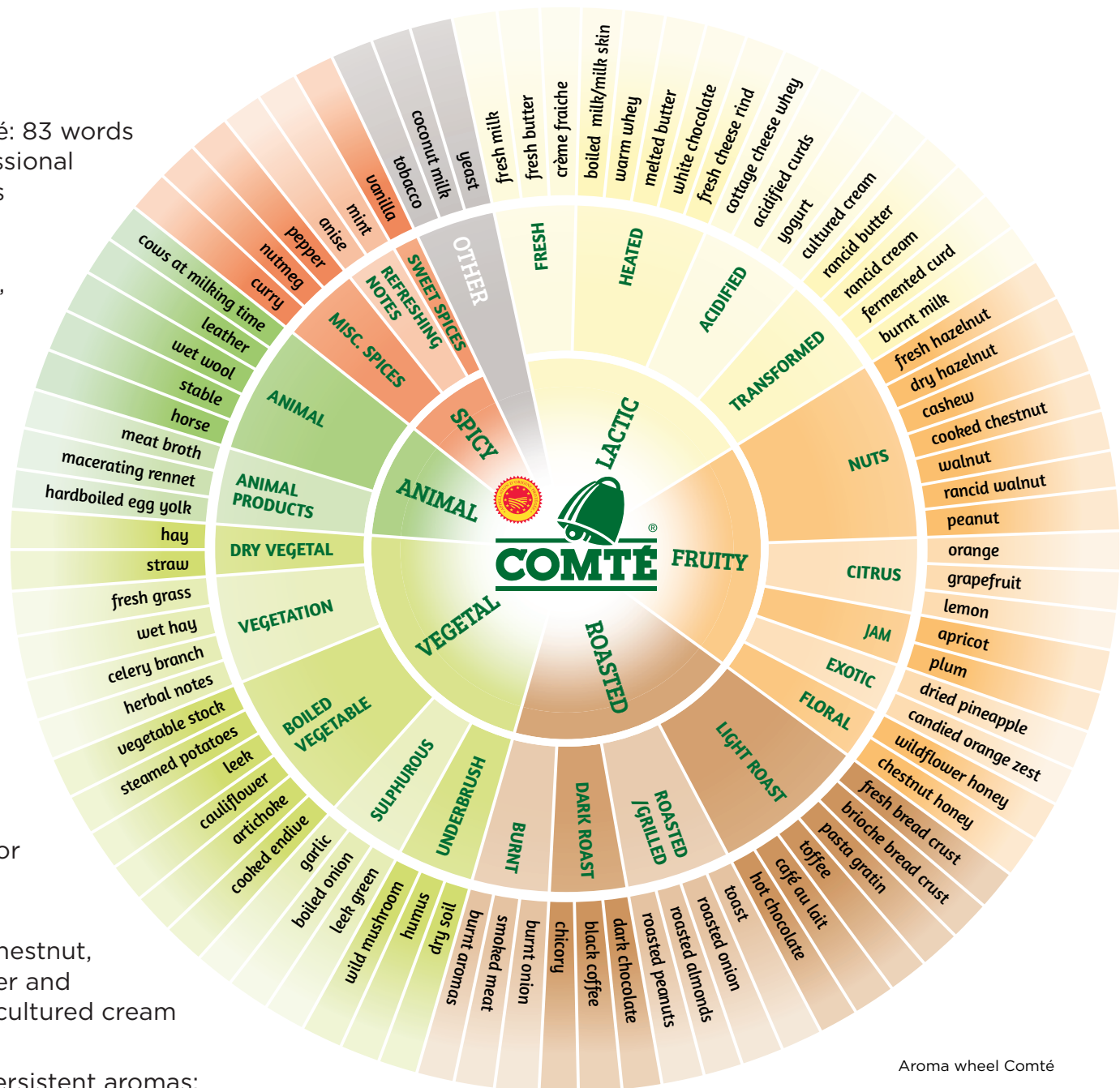
Aromas of fresh hazelnut, dried apricot, fudge, cooked milk, plus a note of vanilla

Supple, bright, creamy, ideal for breakfast.

Aged Comté:

Aromas of walnut, hazelnut, chestnut, roasted almonds, melted butter and spices, tempered by notes of cultured cream or citrus.

Softer texture with rich and persistent aromas; includes crystals of tyrosine.



Aroma wheel Comté

2- Côtes du Rhône tips

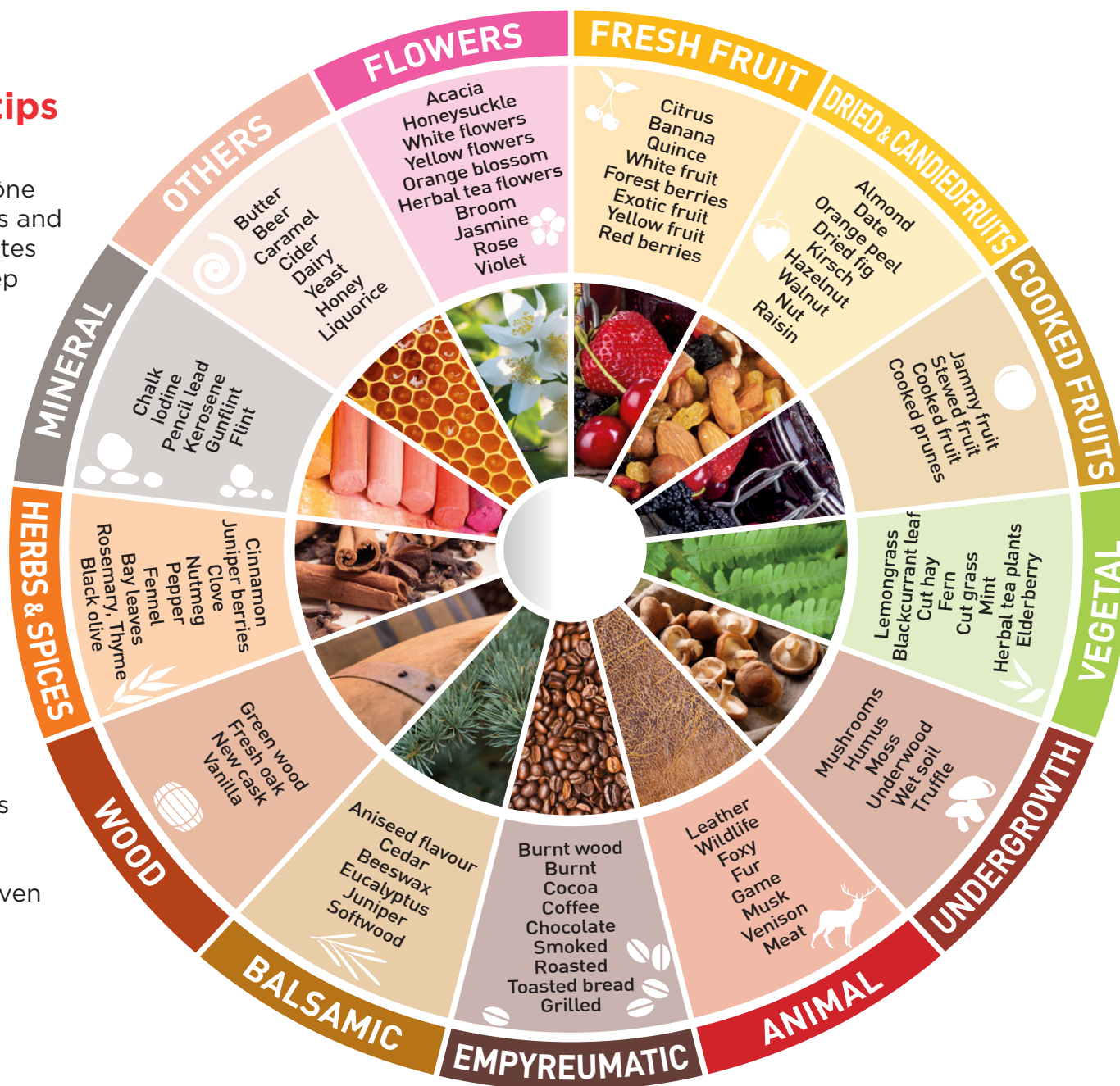
The wines of the Côtes du Rhône offer a vast diversity of aromas and tastes from light and crisp whites and rosés to powerful and deep reds.

Temperature

Enjoy your Côtes du Rhône reds at about 60° - 65°F.
Enjoy the whites and rosés, delicately chilled, at about 50° - 55°F.

Everyday wines and keepers

Côtes du Rhône whites and rosés should be enjoyed young as a general rule. Red Côtes du Rhône wines are generally at their best within 5 years of release. Côtes du Rhône Villages can usually age up to 10 years. Crus from the Côtes du Rhône can age even longer.



Aroma wheel Côtes du Rhône

Rosé

Côtes du Rhône rosé wines can be made from the same grape varieties as the reds. Typically they are fresh and delicate with red berry notes, pomegranate, sweet spices and nice acidity. Their hues vary from pale to deep pink.

White

The whites from the Côtes du Rhône are usually medium-bodied, intense aromatically with refreshing acidity and light minerality.

Their aromas are floral with a palette of perfumed peach, honeysuckle, spring blossoms, white flowers and stone fruits. Wines made mainly of Grenache blanc, Viognier, Clairette and Roussanne express notes of white flowers, peach and stony minerals.

Red

The reds from the Côtes du Rhône are easy-drinking, balanced wine with soft tannins and a lengthy finish.

Their aromas include notes of red and black berry fruits such as plum, black currant and cherries as well as subtle spices. Red blends mostly made with Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Carignan and Cinsault are round and approachable. Blends dominated by Syrah are usually spicier, sometimes with a hint of violet.



3- Pairing suggestions

Here are a few suggestions about pairing Comté cheese and Côtes du Rhône wines. They take into account the texture, the acidity, the minerality, the density or body of both.

Examples of combination Comté / white or rosé Côtes du Rhône:

A young Comté with fruity, lactic and slightly roasted aromas will pair well with wines which are round and soft.

A fresh, crisp white or a rosé allow a contrasting pairing: the acidity of the wine contrasts with the soft texture of a young Comté and reveals its fruity, floral aromas.

A denser white wine will pair well with a robust Comté with buttery and leathery aromas.

Examples of combination Comté / red Côtes du Rhône:

A light round red with black fruit and white pepper aromas will easily pair with a fruity and nutty Comté with a note of roasted onion.

A more assertive Comté with strong roasted aromas of coffee and braised onion, walnut and leather or an older Comté with notes of garlic and mushroom will pair well with more powerful and tannic red wine.

Comté also lends itself to many culinary uses, from a simple grilled sandwich or a tartine, to gougères, quiche, baked macaroni, fondue, onion soup, omelets, cakes, etc. Each of these preparations has a Côtes du Rhône wine to go with it, be it white, rosé or red. Pairings is a game that only requires a bit of imagination and stimulate one's taste buds.



Glossary

Acronym Recap

AOC - Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (PDO-designated).

The designation was officially established into law by decree in 1935. The development of the concept of Appellation of Origin started in France at the turn of the 20th century to protect winegrowers from fraud.

AOP - Appellation d'Origine Protégée.

AOP is the European equivalent of the French AOC. The scheme was developed by the EU and came into being in 1992. The designation is called Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) in English. A European symbol was created and appears on PDO-designated products. (In France, only wine is allowed to keep using the designation AOC (in lieu of AOP/PDO). For more information about the EU's Geographical indications and quality schemes:

https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes/geographical-indications-and-quality-schemes-explained_en

EU - European Union. Its common principles and values are: freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, promoting peace and stability. It is made up of 27 countries with just under 447 million inhabitants.

INAO - Institut National des Appellations d'Origine was established to oversee, define, protect and control AOCs in 1935. In 2007 the Institute was renamed Institut National de l'Origine et de la Qualité.

PDO - supra, AOP.

Glossary of Terms for Comté and Côtes du Rhône

Affinage - In French, this word means to "refine." Affinage relates to the patient caring, assessing and sorting of the wheels over months and years while the cheese continues to mature and age on spruce boards in dedicated cellars and caves. The role of the Comté affineur is to make sure each wheel reaches its maximum potential before going to market.

Fruitière - Usually a cheesemaking facility owned by a group of local milk producers. Also called a "fromagerie", "chalet" or co-op, it is the place where milk is transformed into cheese -- literally where the milk is "fructified" into cheese.

Négociant - A wine company which buys grapes, must or wine from winegrowers or co-operatives to make its own wines under its own name. This company is equipped to blend, vinify, bottle and age the resulting wine as need be. Most négociants do not own vineyards. Négociants frequently offer wine from multiple appellations.



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Benjamin Becker, Favoreat Design

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