

UK judges Marcel Orford-Williams, Ana Sapungiu, Beth Willard and Ben Cahill



ANIVIN  DE FRANCE  
National Wine Trade Organization

# FRENCH revolution

**Results from the 2014 Best Value Vin de France Selection  
have highlighted the increasing consistency and creativity to emerge  
from the Vin de France wine classification**

**IT'S OFTEN** said that the French winemaker's skill is blending. Whether within Bordeaux or Champagne, it's the marriage of complementary flavours from different sites which brings that important facet to French wine: taste. But blending has a further purpose: it can bring a consistent style. And this latter advantage is highly appreciated by consumers too.

Of course France has always allowed winemakers to blend for balance, complexity and consistency but only within specified terroirs. However, since

2009 a major revision to French wine law ushered in a new classification: Vin de France wines. With this producers could blend across regions, and specify the grape variety/ies and vintage on the front label – while clearly stating the source country: Vin de France. They could also use whatever grapes or combination of grapes they wanted. In effect it began a new chapter for French wine, allowing the same cross-regional blending which has made the likes of Australian wine so successful. It also opened up a new era of innovation among French producers.

Now, four years on, Vin de France wines have become an established part of France's international wine business and represent as much as 25% of all French still wine exports. Producers can exploit the freedom to blend fruit from different terroirs; retailers can benefit from varietal labelling, and consumers are able to enjoy a consistent and carefully engineered style. For instance, a company might sell a Syrah using fruit from a range of sources, such as the Languedoc for richness and the Rhône to add elements of earthiness and texture.

But producers can also use the category to try something new and experimental to suit consumer expectations. As a result, there are now Vin de France brands that comprise Chardonnay and Muscat, using grapes from the Loire and Languedoc respectively to bring freshness as well as floral sweetness.

Red blends have also emerged to embrace the less restrictive winemaking practices of Vin de France, and some examples now have reasonably high levels of residual sugar to give a richer fruitier character – as well as tap into the growing demand for sweeter reds.

But, despite the freedom to innovate, Vin de France wines employ strict quality control. Indeed all growers and producers supplying Vin de France wines must be

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certified by FranceAgriMer, a branch of the French Ministry of Agriculture. This means customers can benefit from wines that are tailored to suit the needs of the market with documented proof of source and winemaking procedures.

But for those looking for further proof of quality, there's also independent recognition from international judges. This is because in 2010, ANIVIN DE FRANCE, the French trade organisation for Vin de France wines, introduced the Best Value Vin de France International Selection – a competition using an experienced jury to award medals to wines of quality. This means buyers can benefit from all the advantages of Vin de France, as well as an assurance of quality that comes with a medal, particularly when professionally judged.

In previous years this competition has also served to highlight the stylistic direction of producers, who are attempting new wines to tap into consumer trends. As a result last year's

### Interview with Bruno Kessler, president of ANIVIN DE FRANCE

#### How do you see the Vin de France wines category developing in the next few years?

We have seen great interest in the wines across Europe – with Germany, UK and Netherlands leading the way, and I expect these figures to grow. But we are also seeing increasing sales in China and the US has huge potential. Today around 25% of French still wine exports are Vin de France. I want to see volume grow!

#### What changes would you like to make for the year ahead?

ANVIN DE FRANCE's priority remains economic efficiency. We will continue our promotional and marketing campaigns in key markets, but a change this year is a focus on the US and Japan.

#### What does Vin de France represent for you?

This is a new way of thinking about French wines. It works around a completely different commercial logic and complements the other French categories. The production of our wines is not entrenched in French historical wine culture and laws, but focuses on the grape, the taste, and what the consumer wants. It's a sea change in terms of attitude and can only benefit the consumer and brand France.

#### Are Vin de France wines more suitable for certain parts of France, and more suitable for certain styles or grape varieties?

No. They can be made anywhere in France, and, like our New World counterparts, producers can blend grapes or wines from different regions. This means that French winemakers can blend the best grapes from across France, giving them the potential and capacity to create high volumes of wine for strong brands designed for export markets. We are seeing success for wines made from both "international" varieties as well as innovative blends. Producers can be as audacious and creative as they wish. Ultimately it is the talent of the producers and the demand of the consumer that defines the parameters.

#### Finally, in your view what role does the competition play?

The annual selection road tests the wines in front of international wine experts. A medal means that the wine is considered to have potential by buyers in our export markets. And we use these wines throughout the year as ambassadors for the category, for example showing them at Prowein (Hall 5, Booth C01).



competition saw a notably high number of Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc entered and rewarded. Similarly this year's competition offered an insight into French winemaking trends, albeit it at the commercial end of the scale. Among the 2014 gold medal winners were many of the same producers as last year, including a number of France's largest wine exporters. Their repeat success indicates that these companies have embraced the classification's brand building opportunity for achieving a consistent style, even in challenging growing

seasons, by blending across different regions and varieties.

Meanwhile the silver medal winners illustrated a far more diverse picture. Although the Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay which have performed well in previous years retained their strong position in 2014, there was a marked increase in the number of varietal blends across both red and white categories.

Merlot broke into gold medal ranks for the first time with a strong performance at silver level too. Likewise a number of

## sponsored profile

French Malbecs also featured for the first time. In addition, this year saw rosé improve its performance, winning 10 medals.

"We have great companies playing in the Vin de France category and some of the best here are in the export markets," summed up Valérie Pajotin, director of ANIVIN DE FRANCE, as she outlined extensive plans for promoting these 87 "brand ambassadors" in key markets

around the world. The selection will be premiered at this month's ProWein.

With many of these Vin de France wines keenly positioned in the volume driving price brackets of their core target markets, this is a category with exciting potential to open some commercially crucial doors for the French wine industry.

• For more information, visit the website and blog: [www.vindefrance-cepages.org](http://www.vindefrance-cepages.org)

## QUOTES FROM THE JURY



**ZHANG YI, YHD.COM, CHINA**

"This kind of tasting event is really useful for the Chinese market. Chinese customers love Vin de France wines for their good quality and good price."



**ANA SAPUNGIU, ODDBINS, UK** "Vin de France is an opportunity for people doing the right things to build a brand and be successful. And what I like about it is that it is trying to make wine for the end consumer, not terroir driven, but grape and style driven."



**BETH WILLARD, LAITHWAITES WINE, UK**

"Vin de France allows us to shop around, be flexible and think outside the box. It allows us to do something that's more off the wall and evocative of the country as a whole."



**BEN CAHILL, THE CO-OPERATIVE, UK**

"The combination of Old World know-how and New World ideas is one you can't trump. Vin de France is France's opportunity to reinvent itself as a go-to country for everyday wine."



**GRACE CAI YINGJI, AUSSINO, CHINA**

"Vin de France wines have many competitive advantages – price, attractive packaging, the flexibility to select grapes from across France – [which] make them a creative and interesting [category]."



**JIN YANG, WINENICE.COM, CHINA**

"These wines are of a good quality and at a good price – they are very competitive against other commercial wines. The wines I tasted today were of a consistently good quality. We sell lots of Vin de France in China, and we sell them fast!"



**SHELBY HALLER LEDGERWOOD, VINESSE, USA**

"I think having more affordable options is tremendous. The most successful wines here were the ones that were fresh and fruit forward in an international style that's just made for America."



**CHRISTIAN MEWES, EDEKA STRUVE, GERMANY**

"Vin de France has the potential to be a playground for new wine styles. Over the last few years I think the quality of Vin de France wines has increased very quickly."



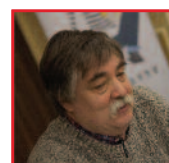
**HEIKO FIEDLER, KONSUM DRESDEN, GERMANY**

"The wines I tasted today were all very different – good wines with an easy character, good profile and experiments going in interesting directions. In terms of value/quality ratio, this is the wine range of the future!"



**WILLIAM SCHALLERT, YOUNG'S MARKET CO, USA**

"I was very pleased with the overall quality of the wines I tasted. The direction that Vin de France wines are taking will greatly benefit French wine sales across the world."



**MARCEL ORFORD-WILLIAMS, THE WINE SOCIETY, UK**

"Vin de France is more about what it offers buyers; it's giving us access to play, and blend things that you would never have done before."



**JACQUELINE SNOEKER, AHOLD, NETHERLANDS**

"Vin de France wines are very relevant on our market – there is great commercial potential. One of the key competitive advantages of Vin de France wines is the flexibility of the winemaking, which makes them able to compete well with the New World – this is very important."



## Medal-winning wines 2014

### Gold

- Lacheteau, Kiwi Cuvée Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- Domaines Paul Mas, Mas de Mas Pinot Blanc 2013
- La Compagnie Rhodanienne, Voiturette Chardonnay 2013
- Wineforces, Tussock Jumper Chardonnay 2013
- Les Grands Chais de France, JP Chenet Colombard / Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- Distillerie de Chez Sabourin, Liqueureuse de la St Martin 2011
- Bouilhac & Co, L'Inedit Par Bouilhac-Bergerat Merlot 2011
- La Compagnie Rhodanienne, L'Original French Kiss Merlot
- Les Grands Chais de France, Grand Sud Merlot 2013
- Badet Clement & Co, Le Tour des Vignes Cabernet Sauvignon 2013
- Les Domaines Auriol, Le Carla Malbec 2013
- Gabriel Meffre, Le Cirque Classique Syrah / Grenache 2013
- Wenny & Gabriel Tary, Pure Egiodola 2012

### Silver

- François Lurton, Les Fumées Blanches Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- Vindivin, La Belle Saison Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- Badet Clement & Co, La Belle Angèle Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- Val d'Orbieu Vignerons de la Mediterranée, Montpierre Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- La Compagnie Rhodanienne, Voiturette Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- Val d'Orbieu Vignerons de la Mediterranée, Plaisir de France Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- Grandissime, Le Hameau Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- Val d'Orbieu Vignerons de la Mediterranée, French Cliché Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- Les Grands Chais de France, JP Chenet Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- Maison Louis Tramier, Le Petit Panier Sauvignon Blanc 2013
- LGI Wines, Montgravet Chardonnay 2013
- Gabriel Meffre, La Chasse Chardonnay 2013
- Domaines Paul Mas, Les 5 Vallées Chardonnay 2013

- JeanJean, Lodez Chardonnay
- Les Domaines Auriol, Les Rivages Chardonnay 2013
- Val d'Orbieu UCCOAR, Brise de France Chardonnay 2013
- Maison Louis Tramier, Le Petit Panier Chardonnay 2013
- Les Grands Chais de France, JP Chenet Chardonnay 2013
- Badet Clement & Co, La Belle Angèle Chardonnay 2013
- Direct Wines Le Chai au Quai, Les Cailloux d'Orés Chardonnay 2011
- Joseph Castan, Finesse Colombard / Chardonnay 2013
- LGI Wines, Prickly French Colombard / Chardonnay 2013, white
- Les Grands Chais de France, JP Chenet Colombard / Chardonnay 2013
- Vignerons Catalans, Cellier des Vicomtes
- Les Domaines Auriol, Les Rivages "Maître Olivier" 2013
- Famille Chaudière, Terrasses Viognier / Roussanne / Clairette 2013
- Gabriel Meffre, Gabriel Chardonnay / Muscat 2013
- JeanJean, Lodez Chardonnay / Viognier
- LGI Wines, Duo des Mers Sauvignon Blanc / Viognier 2013
- Gabriel Meffre, Le Cirque Classique Chardonnay / Gros Manseng 2013
- LGI Wines, Esprit Soleil 2013
- Vins Descombe, Gourmandine
- Maison Louis Tramier, Le Petit Panier
- Rheinberg Kellerei, Le Flamand Blanc
- Val d'Orbieu UCCOAR, Brise de France Muscat moelleux 2013
- Germain Bernard, Abeillon Muscat moelleux
- Lionel Osmin & Cie, Villa La Vie en Rose Negrette 2013
- Château de Tigné, G. Depardieu Pinot Noir 2013
- Saget La Perrière, La Petite Perrière Pinot Noir 2013
- Badet Clement & Co, La Belle Angèle Syrah 2013
- Patriarche, Patriarche Père & Fils Syrah 2013
- Castel Frères, Cambras Grenache / Cabernet Sauvignon 2013

- LGI Wines, Prickly French Cinsault / Syrah 2013
- Castel Frères, Vieux Papes Grenache / Merlot
- Les Vignerons de Florensac rosé
- Les Vignerons du Quercy, Fleur des Coteaux Muscat de Hambourg
- Badet Clement & Co, La Belle Angèle Merlot 2013
- Maison Leplan-Vermeersch, Leplan Merlot 2013
- Grandissime, Le Hameau Merlot 2013
- Patriarche, Cuvée Jean Baptiste Merlot
- Les Vignobles de Montagnac Merlot 2013
- LGI Wines, Montgravet Cabernet / Merlot 2013
- Les Domaines Auriol, Les Rivages Cabernet Franc 2013
- Val d'Orbieu UCCOAR, Brise de France Cabernet Sauvignon 2013
- Badet Clement & Co, La Belle Angèle Cabernet Sauvignon 2013
- Val d'Orbieu Vignerons de la Mediterranée, French Cliché Cabernet Sauvignon 2013
- La Compagnie Rhodanienne, Voiturette Cabernet Sauvignon 2013
- Val d'Orbieu Vignerons de la Mediterranée, So Parisian Cabernet Sauvignon 2013
- Patriarche, Patriarche Père & Fils Cabernet Sauvignon 2012
- Maison Leplan-Vermeersch, Leplan Cabernet Sauvignon 2013
- La Compagnie Rhodanienne, L'Original French Kiss Cabernet Sauvignon
- Lionel Osmin & Cie, La Reserve Malbec 2011
- LGI Wines, Montgravet Cabernet / Merlot 2013
- Les Domaines Auriol, Ashgrove Malbec 2013
- Vindivin, Simply Malbec 2013
- Gabriel Meffre, La Chasse Syrah / Grenache 2013
- Badet Clement & Co, La Belle Angèle Syrah 2013
- Overland Trade, Winemaker's Reserve Syrah 2013
- Gabriel Meffre, Le Cirque Classique 2013
- Vignobles Gilles Louvet, Cuvée Saint Hubert
- LGI Wines, Chapelle du Bois 2013
- Les Domaines Auriol, Les Rivages "Maître Olivier" 2013
- Overland Trade, La Fleur Gloria 2013
- Patriarche, Cramoisay Noemie Vernaux

## GOLD MEDAL WINNERS 2014

[WWW.VINDEFRANCE-CEPAGES.ORG](http://WWW.VINDEFRANCE-CEPAGES.ORG)

