

WINE TOURISM — MAG —



WINE TOURISM MAG

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016

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THE SOUL OF A FINE DINING EXPERIENCE LIES IN ITS WINE LIST

A truly great dining experience extends far beyond what's on the plate. In the world's most refined restaurants—like Jean-Georges in New York, Le Bernardin, or La Tanière³ in Québec City—the wine list is not a mere accessory, but an essential expression of the restaurant's philosophy. It reflects the chef's artistry, the sommelier's vision, and the establishment's overall pursuit of harmony and excellence.

At Jean-Georges, the wine program is a journey through the grand crus of Burgundy and the structured classics of Bordeaux, designed to complement the chef's sophisticated French-Asian fusion. The pairing possibilities are endless, yet always precise—each bottle chosen to amplify texture, contrast, and nuance. Meanwhile, at Le Bernardin, Eric Ripert's seafood-focused menu demands an equally refined approach: crystalline Chablis, mature Rieslings, and elegant Champagnes that highlight purity and depth. Here, balance and finesse reign supreme; the wine list feels almost oceanic in its depth and precision.

Across the border, La Tanière³ in Québec City is redefining fine dining in Canada with an avant-garde tasting menu rooted in local terroir. Its sommelier team curates one of the most thoughtful wine programs in the country, blending rare Old World icons with artisanal Canadian producers. The result is not only gastronomic harmony but an emotional narrative that connects the diner to place and season.

A great wine list tells a story—it reveals the restaurant's identity and values. It's a dialogue between continents, vintages, and philosophies. Whether rooted in centuries-old tradition or embracing modern innovation, the finest wine programs share a common trait: they invite guests to experience time, culture, and craftsmanship in a single glass.

In the end, wine is not simply a pairing; it's the heartbeat of haute cuisine.

M. McDuff





PEC, ONTARIO

Taste The County

By Joanie Metivier



Prince Edward County, or “The County” as locals affectionately call it, has transformed from a quiet rural community into one of Canada’s most compelling wine regions in less than three decades. Today, it stands as a testament to how vision, perseverance, and terroir can turn farmland into one of the most dynamic viticultural landscapes in North America that now welcome over 250 000 visitors every summer.

A Short History of P.E.C. Wine

While vines were first planted in the county as far back as the 19th century, the modern story of Prince Edward County wine began in the late 1990s. Inspired by the region’s soil and climate, a handful of visionary winemakers who dared to transform cold-climate obstacles into opportunities, planted Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Cabernet Franc, betting on their potential of this limestone-kissed peninsula despite the harsh winters. Their instincts proved right. By 2007, the area was officially recognized as a VQA appellation, cementing its place on the Canadian wine map.

Since then, the county has flourished. Over 40 wineries now dot the landscape, drawing wine lovers from across Canada and abroad. What once was farmland and orchards has become a wine-driven economy, attracting not only vintners but also chefs, artists, and hoteliers who have woven themselves into the cultural fabric of the fast-paced evolving agrotourism.

The County's Unique Terroir

Prince Edward County's identity is shaped as much by its terroir as by its people. Its vineyards are planted on a foundation of limestone-rich soils, a gift of the region's geological history. This calcareous bedrock, coupled with a thin layer of clay and loam, provides ideal conditions for low-vigour vines that produce concentrated fruit.

Equally important is the lake effect from Lake Ontario. In summer, the vast body of water moderates the heat, ensuring grapes ripen slowly and retain acidity. In winter, while cold is severe, the lake tempers temperature extremes and provides essential protection during the growing season. To survive the county's icy winters, growers often employ the practice of hilling up—burying vines under soil for protection—a labor intensive practice that is harsh on vines and demand adaptative viticulture practices.

The result? Wines that speak with clarity and finesse. Chardonnays here show tension, minerality, and a deep maturity. Pinot Noir is earthy, structured, floral, elegant and bright with its own County accent.

The winemakers of Prince Edward County embody a personality that is equal parts pioneering and collaborative. Growing grapes here is not easy—the winters demand labor-intensive care, and yields are naturally low. Yet, that very struggle defines the wines' authenticity. The County has developed a reputation for small-scale, artisanal production, with many wineries still family-owned and operated.

This human dimension is as much a part of the terroir as the soil and climate. Visitors often meet the winemakers themselves at tastings, where stories of perseverance, experimentation, and community are poured alongside the wines. It is this accessibility and intimacy that distinguishes the PEC wine experience from larger, more established regions.





HINTERLAND
VQA PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY
BLANC DE BLANCS
2019
12.0% alc/vol
750mL
SPARKLING WINE/VIN MOUSSEUX

CLOSSON CHASE

Keith Tyers, Head winemaker for the past 10 years, knows the Hillier Hill site unique conditions like the back of his hand, combining technical mastery and intimate connection to the region.

A trailblazer since 1998, Closson Chase sits on a gently sloped, limestone-rich farmstead. Under winemaker Keith Tyers—who took over in 2015, whose winemaking philosophy can be summed up in one word: authenticity—the winery continues to refine its Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, and Pinot Noir with a deep commitment to expressing site and vintage. Tyers is uncompromising in his goal of producing wines that could come from nowhere else but the County. His portfolio—centered on Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Gris—is marked by precision, elegance, and a mineral-driven clarity that reflects the limestone bedrock beneath the vines. What distinguishes Tyers further is his innovative approach to sustainability and vineyard health. During drought years, when vines struggle to find balance, Closson Chase has experimented with seaweed-based nutrient sprays—a natural method that fortifies vine resilience and supports healthy ripening without compromising the purity of fruit expression. This kind of forward-thinking viticulture ensures that each vintage remains both true to terroir and resilient in the face of climatic challenges.

The results are wines that stand as benchmarks for the entire region. Closson Chase Chardonnays deliver a taut, Chablis-like minerality balanced by depth and texture, while the Pinots are perfumed, earthy, and finely structured. The estate's iconic purple barn, now synonymous with Prince Edward County wine, has become both a landmark and a symbol of the County's identity.



Norman Hardie has played a pivotal role as an ambassador for Prince Edward County, helping elevate its reputation on the world wine stage.

NORMAN HARDIE

One of the County's most recognized figures, Norman Hardie— trained in Burgundy, Oregon, and South Africa — arrived in the County with a conviction that its limestone soils and cool climate could rival the world's great Pinot Noir and Chardonnay regions. His instinct proved prophetic: today, his wines are widely regarded as benchmarks for PEC and have inspired countless others to plant vines here and are now served in over 40 michelin-starred restaurants around the world. Hardie's philosophy is rooted in restraint and balance. In the vineyard, he insists on low yields and meticulous canopy management, allowing grapes to ripen slowly while retaining their hallmark acidity. In the cellar, he adheres to a largely non-interventionist, Burgundian approach: wild fermentations, gentle handling, and long élevage in French oak, often older barrels to ensure texture without overt wood influence.

The result is wines of tension, elegance, and longevity. His Chardonnays are finely etched, balancing citrus and orchard fruit with a crystalline minerality that recalls Chablis. His Pinot Noirs, meanwhile, capture the County's duality: bright red fruit lifted by acidity, underpinned by earthy depth and fine tannins. Importantly, these wines carry not just Burgundian echoes but a clear County accent, making them unmistakably of place.

What distinguishes Norman Hardie further is his role as a regional ambassador. He has tirelessly promoted PEC wines across Canada and abroad, championing the County's potential and encouraging a culture of excellence. Many of today's PEC winemakers credit Hardie's early work as both inspiration and proof that world-class wines could emerge from this fledgling region.

In every sense, Norman Hardie embodies the County's evolution: a blend of international savoir-faire and local authenticity, knowledge of the region to every inch of soils, producing wines that tell a story uncompromising vision.



ROSEHALL RUN

A grower-producer model, Dan Sullivan crafts structured, site-specific wines. He sees PEC's terroir as a "treasure chest," rich with evolving narrative and nuance. As Sullivan steps back from the forefront of day-to-day winemaking, the estate enters a new chapter under Lee Baker. Baker, with a strong background in Canadian cool-climate viticulture, brings both respect for Sullivan's legacy and a willingness to experiment with new techniques. Rosehall Run is one of the County's most established wineries, firmly rooted in Dan Sullivan's philosophy, but also one that looks to the next chapter with confidence.

HUFF STATE

Huff Estates is as much a destination as it is a winery. The estate has developed a full agrotourism experience designed to immerse visitors in the County's viticultural lifestyle: Guided vineyard tours, tasting experiences range from curated flights of estate wines to vertical tastings highlighting vintage differences and experimental blends, are also joined by dining options and a cultural, art-focused offer. The winery's striking architecture is home to rotating exhibitions and permanent installations showcase Canadian and international artists, from sculptures and large-scale paintings to experimental media. A broader approach for travelers seeking an intersection of wine, design, and artistic inspiration.



Vibrant and modern, Hinterland specializes in traditional method sparkling wines that showcase the County's natural high acidity and limestone texture. Experimentative, Innovative and dynamic, their precise traditional method sparkling is also joined in the portfolio by fun Col Fondo, Charmat methods sparkling, ratafia and other easily enjoyable wines. A truly passionate team with owners and operators Jonas Newman and Vicki Samaras have really taken place as the experts of bubbles and made Hinterland a mandatory stop when in the County.

HINTERLAND

The 2025 Drought: A Severe Test for County Vines

Summer 2025 brought prolonged dry, hot weather to PEC, straining water resources across farms and wineries. Growers have been careful and concerned; some even fear up to 20% loss of yield. This extreme drought underscores the fragility of cool-climate viticulture and the county's reliance on innovation, labor, and adaptation.

As 2025's drought reminds us, the narrative of PEC wine is not just geological—it's human. It's the labor of protecting vines, the strategic use of cover fabrics, communal perseverance, and the quiet conviction that place defines wine. For the discerning wine tourist, "tasting the County" means tasting this story—the land, its challenges, its custodians, and the expression of their collective passion that creates unique flavors.

Merrill House

A WINE LOVER'S RETREAT IN THE HEART
OF PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY



In recent years, Prince Edward County (PEC) has emerged as one of Canada's most dynamic wine destinations—a place where limestone-rich soils, Lake Ontario breezes, and a pioneering community of winemakers converge to create a mosaic of distinctive terroirs and wines that shines with bright acidity and ripe phenolics. For the oenophile seeking both exploration and repose, there is perhaps no better home base than Merrill House in Picton, a historic boutique hotel that embodies the county's spirit of refinement, creativity, and rural charm.

A House with History and Character

Built in 1878, this Victorian mansion, on Picton main street, just a few steps away from village heart, has been reimagined into a boutique hotel that seamlessly blends heritage with contemporary design. Its rooms are an eclectic mix of antiques, bold art, and playful modern touches, creating a space that feels both sophisticated and warmly personal. Merrill House is not just a place to stay—it's a place to live, even if only for a weekend, and a place where you can keep finding little hidden gems and décor elements all around – a tiny little paper crane cradled over a door frame, the curated selection of literature, design and fashion books available all over the place, the stellar golden chandelier, eclectic, unique art pieces.

A Gateway to County Wines

Prince Edward County is Canada's youngest Designated Viticultural Area, yet it has already earned international acclaim for its vibrant Chardonnay, elegant Pinot Noir, and traditional method sparkling wines. From the doors of Merrill House, you are only minutes away from some of the region's most iconic producers. A short drive might take you to Closson Chase for benchmark Chardonnay, to Norman Hardie for Burgundian-inspired Pinot, or to Hinterland for sparkling wines that rival Champagne. For the traveler, this proximity means you can immerse yourself fully in the rhythm of the county: mornings of cellar tastings, afternoons among the vines, and evenings of reflection back at Merrill House. To stay here is to weave oneself into the fabric of the county, glass in hand, heart at ease, and curiosity alive.

For guests eager to immerse themselves fully in Prince Edward County's wine culture, Merrill House offers its very own Wine Passport—a curated invitation to discover the county glass by glass with exclusive tasting perks in 16 of the best and most renowned wineries in the region. It is an ideal way to guide your whole journey in the County with trust and feel completely VIP.



The Wine Cellar: A Journey Beneath the Surface

What sets Merrill House apart from many accommodations in wine country is not only its hospitality but also its serious dedication to wine. Beneath the property lies a cellar that houses one of the most impressive collections in PEC, featuring a thoughtful selection of local producers alongside global classics. Guests can enjoy verticals of county Pinot Noir or rare bottles from Burgundy and Champagne. This curated selection feels connected to the region and a deep knowledge and appreciation of classics.

Agrotourism and a Sense of Place

Wine tourism in Prince Edward County is inseparable from the broader culture of agrotourism. Beyond the vineyards, visitors encounter lavender farms, cheesemakers, cideries, craft breweries, and seasonal farmers' markets that reflect the county's agricultural heartbeat. Merrill House celebrates this ecosystem through its Brasserie, Alexandria.

Dining at Brasserie Alexandria is a journey that bridges Parisian brasserie tradition with the agricultural abundance of Prince Edward County. The menu pays homage to French gastronomy, offering timeless classics such as escargots in garlic butter, steak tartare, and rich terrines. These staples are elevated using fresh, hyper-local ingredients. Each plate shows technique, care and intent.



Château de Pommard and the many faces of Clos Marey-Monge

BY JOANIE METIVIER

Château de Pommard is one of Burgundy's most seductive stories: an 18th-century estate that combines elegant architecture, a very large walled monopole and a deliberate modern programme to reveal terroir in minute detail. The estate's documented origins date to 1726 when Vivant Micault (secretary to Louis XV) began building what is now one of the most recognisable houses in the Côte de Beaune. Today the domaine is centred on a 20-hectare walled vineyard – Clos Marey-Monge – a monopole whose size and internal diversity make it exceptional in Burgundy.



The château as we know it grew from the Micault house; in the second half of the 18th century the Marey family came into ownership, giving the Clos its familiar name. Over two centuries the Clos changed hands and evolved with Burgundian practice, but its historic enclosure and the quality of its soils were constant assets. In the 19th century the stone wall and parcel delineations were consolidated (Nicolas-Joseph Marey erected significant parts of the wall), and the vineyard was recognised early on in regional classifications for the quality of its terroirs.

In recent years Château de Pommard has undergone intensive restoration and rethinking under new ownership and technical teams. The estate has committed to organic and biodynamic approaches for Clos Marey-Monge, a move meant to better express the vineyard's complex soils and microclimates. The Clos itself is now presented not as a single "block" but as a mosaic of distinct parcels bottled separately to reveal different expressions of Pinot Noir.



THE SEVEN PLOTS

STYLISTIC SIGNATURES

Château de Pommard identifies seven major parcels within the Clos (Simone, Chantrerie, Les Paules, Grand Champ / Grands-Esprits, 75 Rangs, Micault and Émilie). Each plot carries a slightly different soil recipe and therefore a different voice in the Pinot Noir chorus. The following notes synthesise geological description and common tasting observations recorded by critics and the estate itself.

SIMONE

— often singled out as the Clos's jewel; extremely clay-rich soils (very high clay density in some studies) yield powerful, structured wines with ripe dark fruit, a plush mid-palate and the tannic backbone for long ageing. Simone is produced in tiny quantities and is usually the most "noble" expression.

CHANTRERIE

— another clay-heavy sector, Chantrerie shares Simone's density but can produce wines with a little more breadth and a slightly earthier, iron-tinged perfume; these wines often combine plushness with an undercurrent of saline/ferrous minerality.

VICANT-MICAULT

— a historic parcel carrying the founder's name; its fruit contributes generosity and a rounder texture. Vivant Micault is the most approachable and fruit-forward expression of Clos Marey-Monge. This cuvée comes from the younger vines and the more fertile, alluvial soils near the entrance of the Clos.

GRANDS-ESPRITS

— the heart of the Clos: mixed soils (limestone interspersed with clay and gravel). Wines from this sector frequently show a marriage of structure and perfume — red and black cherry, underbrush, spice and a mineral spine that gives tension. Critics often find this plot emblematic of Pommard's classic profile.

CLOS MAREY-MONGE



75 RANGS

— 75 Rangs deserves a spotlight of its own. Within Clos Marey-Monge, it plays a subtle yet crucial role in articulating the vineyard's range of Pinot Noir expressions. Among the seven distinct climats of Clos Marey-Monge, 75 Rangs (literally "75 Rows") is one of the most revealing when it comes to understanding the nuance of exposure, soil composition, and vine age in this exceptional monopole. Unlike the heavier clay sectors such as Simone or Chantrerie, 75 Rangs has a leaner profile. Its soils contain a higher proportion of limestone. It's a parcel defined by Balance.

ÉMILIE

— Émilie's wines are often described as the "springtime" expression of Clos Marey-Monge — vibrant, floral, and delicately spiced. In 2017, new vines were planted at the furthest eastern point of our Clos Marey-Monge on clay-limestone soils with a sandy texture. Gravel and pebbles are also found in this area of the vineyard, but become increasingly rare with depth.

NICOLAS-JOSEPH

— a cuvée named after Nicolas-Joseph Marey, who built much of the Clos's defining wall. Crafted from a careful selection of parcels, it represents the estate's purest expression of harmony and structure. Nicolas-Joseph cuvée is produced from vines growing on flat limestone rocks with red clay. A classic Pommard character. Dark cherry, spice, and graphite notes unfold over firm, velvety tannins, promising long ageing potential.

BY FILIPPO MAGNANI

SICILIA EN PRIMEUR

CELEBRATES WINE CULTURE AS A GUARDIAN OF CIVILIZATION,
STANDING STRONG IN THE FACE OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES.



The Sicilian wine community celebrated Sicilia En Primeur this year from May 6th to 10th in the baroque splendor of Modica in southeastern Sicily. One hundred international wine journalists and 57 wineries came together to experience over 300 labels for tasting, four specialized talks, and eleven wine tours. For 21 years, Sicilia En Primeur has been celebrating the evolution of a diverse wine region on the Mediterranean's largest island. Its history, culture, traditions, and gastronomy are as rich as they are diverse.

Assovinì Sicilia was founded 26 years ago by Diego Planeta, Lucio Tasca d'Almerita, and Giacomo Rallo, who launched an association to lead the way to a Sicilian wine renaissance and has since grown in membership and international success due to their visionary and collaborative approach. This year's event theme was "The Culture of Wine in Sicily: A Thousand-Year Story that Looks to the Future" and focused on wine's cultural value, responsible consumption, wine tourism, and sustainability. Mariangela Cambria, President of Assovinì Sicilia, emphasized how the association promotes wine as a product of civilization, knowledge, beauty, and tradition, positioning Sicily as defender of wine culture against restrictive global dynamics. The association's success is based on innovation and adaptability, integrating new generations into company management roles while focusing on sustainability and cultural preservation.

In addition to the conference, Sicilia En Primeur organized eleven wine press tours exploring Sicily's diverse terroirs from Etna's volcanic slopes to Pantelleria's sun-drenched vineyards, from Marsala's historic cellars to emerging zones across the island. The tours revealed the extraordinary versatility of Sicily's wine landscape and innovative approaches across different microclimates and altitudes.

Central to Sicily's identity remains Nero d'Avola, representing over 60% of Sicilia DOC production with remarkable +441% growth since 2017. Four distinct biotypes correlate to different macro-zones: Central-Southern Sicily produces deep-colored wines with high alcohol and soft tannins; Western Sicily yields lighter, consistent wines; Eastern Sicily delivers higher polyphenol wines with characteristic herbaceous notes reminiscent of Cabernet Franc, often described as caper nuances. Catarratto emerged as exceptional for Classic Method sparklings at high altitude, while beloved Frappato showcased remarkable versatility in rosés, bubbles, and blends with Nero d'Avola.

Sicily represents international significance with over 8,000 vine-growers, 530 bottlers, 24,600 hectares, 86 million bottles annually, and Europe's largest organic vineyard area with 26,000 hectares. DOC Sicily, established in 2011, serves as a powerful ambassador for the island's diverse heritage.



This year's collaboration with La Sicilia di Ulisse distinguished the event, featuring Michelin-starred chefs in the gala dinner celebrating Sicily's 2025 European Gastronomic Region designation. This collective unites Sicilian distinction across hospitality, culinary arts, and winemaking industries. Strengthened collaborations with Enoteca Regionale Sud-Est and ATS Strade del Vino Cerasuolo di Vittoria delivered concentrated regional expertise on southeastern territories.

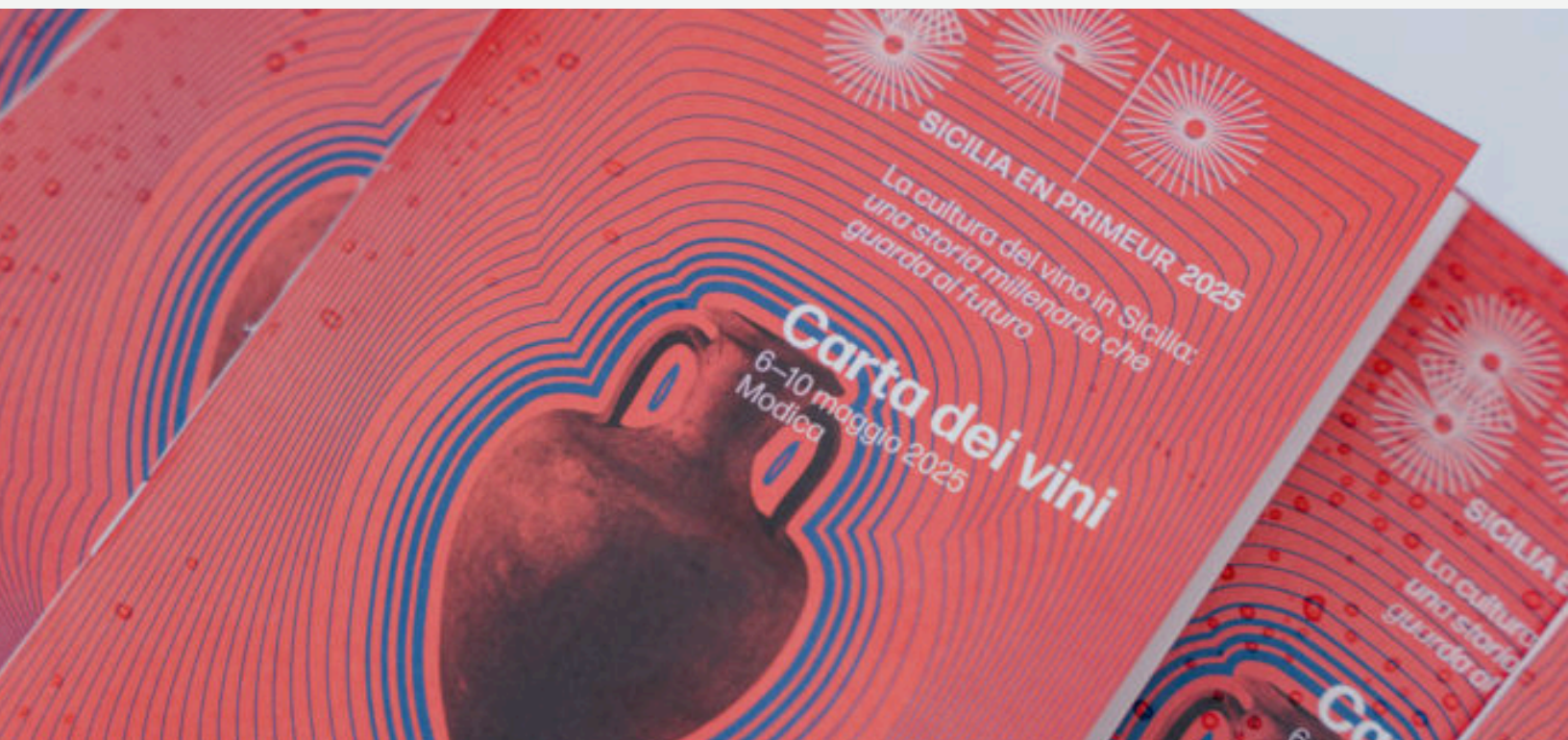
The comprehensive technical tasting showcased 300 wines from 57 producers, demonstrating Sicily's evolution from bulk production to premium, terroir-driven wines competing internationally. Four specialized talks addressed contemporary challenges, including communication strategies, neuromarketing, and new State labeling initiatives.

Sicily stands as a territory achieving worldwide acclaim through substantial environmental stewardship commitments. The 2025 Sicilia En Primeur positioned itself as a cultural declaration safeguarding wine's civilizational importance while championing innovation, ecological responsibility, and mindful consumption, demonstrating that Sicily's viticultural community spearheads international discourse regarding wine culture's evolution.

Sicily's Wine Renaissance: Tourism Meets Timeless Tradition

In addition to the broad array of high-quality wines, Sicily offers stunning scenery and a unique historical and architectural heritage. Some of the best-preserved sites of antiquity are found across the island and are layered with all the cultures that came after. In less than an hour, one can visit Sicily's largest Greek theater in Taormina and wine tasting on the slopes of Mt Etna. Optionally, visit Moorish-influenced mosaics at a Norman cathedral in Palermo, then spend the afternoon exploring the best Marsala wineries. Few places offer such rich experiences with wineries so well equipped to receive visitors. Among the members of Assovini Sicilia, almost all of them have a dedicated tasting room for visitors, and more than half offer experiences such as cooking classes and spa treatments, and winery tours that interact with the landscape and culture. The most popular experiences offered are sunset tastings, dinners in the vineyard, and a chance to join the grape harvest. One third of these wineries also have accommodation where wine enthusiasts can stay on the property, fully immersed in the terroir and culture of the winery.

During the Sicily En Primeur, some fantastic territories were explored on the press trips. Sveva Consonni, my collaborator, visited some great wineries and provided the following report.





TENUTA RAPITALÀ

Rapitalà (Arabic for "God's Garden") embodies a unique cultural fusion that began in 1968 when Laurent de la Gatinais's French father and Sicilian mother settled on the island. Their vision: "drinking Sicily from a French point of view" – marrying French winemaking expertise with indigenous Sicilian varieties.

The 225-hectare estate spans diverse microclimates, with indigenous plantings dating to 1963 and international varieties introduced systematically from 1968-1985. Today, the family produces 2 million bottles annually across their *Dominio Rapitalà* and *Horeca* lines.

After achieving organic certification in 2021 (following a careful transition that began in 2011), Rapitalà continues collaborating with the University of Palermo on innovative viticultural practices. Their harvest extends from early August through late October, accommodating the estate's varied terroir and commitment to optimal ripeness.

SERRA FERDINANDEA

A collaboration between Planeta and French financier Oddo, Serra Ferdinandea represents Sicily's most ambitious biodynamic experiment. Located in Menfi at 500m elevation, this 110-hectare estate occupies pristine territory untouched by agriculture for 300 years.

The philosophy is radical: "The place, not the producer's ego, is central." Only 15 hectares are planted to vines, with 16 hectares preserved as Mediterranean forest where semi-wild livestock graze, producing compost naturally. The remaining land grows ancient grains, indigenous chickpeas, and native figs. This holistic approach yields extraordinary 10% crop vigor compared to 3.5% on conventionally farmed land.

Biodynamic preparations (500, silica, iron, nettle) guide vineyard management, while grape placement follows terroir logic: Syrah on high slopes, Nero d'Avola on exposed rocky sites, Grillo and Sauvignon Blanc mid-slope for freshness. The wines bear no names—simply rosé, white, and red with vintage—letting the place speak for itself. Production: 30,000-40,000 bottles annually.

FEUDO ARANCIO

Named for the medieval orange groves that once covered this land, Feudo Arancio represents large-scale sustainability done right. Now part of the Mezzacorona Group, this 200-hectare estate produces 7 million bottles annually while maintaining organic certification since 2007.

Water management showcases their environmental commitment: natural springs, two estate-fed lakes, plus Lake Arancio provide irrigation only when necessary. The 60-person team hand-manages all vineyard operations except harvest, working across diverse elevations from 120m to 300m where sandy and clay soils create distinct terroir expressions.

Their altitude-driven approach produces two distinct Nero d'Avola styles: a fresh, approachable version from higher vineyards and a complex, concentrated expression from lower, clay-rich sites. Night harvesting for whites (3-9 AM) preserves aromatics, while innovative techniques include post-harvest grape drying on vineyard wires. Even their Pinot Noir, grown near shady forest cover, develops more structure than typical northern Italian versions. The estate also produces premium olive oil from 15 hectares of indigenous varieties.

FEUDI DEL PISCOTTO WINE RELAIS

Established in 2002, Feudi del Pisciotto is strategically located in southeastern Sicily, between the Roman Villa of Piazza Armerina and Caltagirone, a town famous for its ceramics, and just 5 kilometers from the Mediterranean Sea. Its 44 hectares of vineyards, situated around 250 meters above sea level, benefit from a unique terroir and climate. The altitude, combined with the nearby coastline, creates moderating influences ideal for producing premium wines.

The estate meticulously cultivates its vineyards, treating them with the care of a botanical garden. This dedication by their viticulturists contributes significantly to the high quality of their wines. Annually, Feudi del Pisciotto produces up to 400,000 bottles.

Their plantings include indigenous Sicilian red grapes such as Nero d'Avola and Frappato, along with international varieties like Merlot, Cabernet, and Pinot Nero. They also feature less common Sicilian grapes like Semillon and Gewürztraminer, used to produce an exceptional Passito dessert wine. These international varieties grown in Sicily exemplify the belief of renowned oenologist Giacomo Tachis that Sicily has the potential to cultivate almost any grape variety successfully, provided expert knowledge and careful viticultural practices are applied.

MANDRAROSSA

Part of the impressive Settesoli cooperative network (6,000 hectares, 20 million bottles), Mandrarossa emerged in 1999 as the premium expression of this collaborative model, producing 1 million bottles annually from the "Terre dei Sicani" district.

Their scientific approach centers on micro-vinification and the principle of "right grapes on ideal soils," utilizing five experimental plots across different soil types. This research-driven philosophy, supported by partnerships with the University of Milan, helped establish them as early adopters of international varieties alongside traditional Sicilian ones.

The 11-kilometer territory strip remains completely uncontaminated, supporting both VIVA certification for economic/social sustainability and low environmental impact credentials. Vineyard management combines modern techniques (90% spur-pruned cordon) with traditional methods (10% bush vines), while irrigation covers only half the plantings. Night harvesting for whites runs from midnight to 5 AM, ensuring optimal fruit quality across their diverse portfolio spanning both Menfi and Etna appellations.

GULFI CANTINA

Gulfi embodies the true essence of Sicily, crafting distinct wines deeply rooted in their specific origins. Inspired by the mythical love of Eros and Psyche, Gulfi passionately translates Sicily's beauty into wines of pure pleasure.

Vito Catania carries on his family's three-generation winemaking heritage with a profound love for wine and his homeland. Since 1996, in Chiaramonte Gulfi within Ragusa's Monti Iblei, he has expertly blended innovation with ancestral knowledge, focusing on meticulous massal selection and vine cultivation.

Gulfi's vineyards extend from the Cerasuolo di Vittoria DCG in Monti Iblei to the Etna DOC in Pachino, yielding four remarkable Nero d'Avola wines, each defined by its unique terroir. Their portfolio culminates on Etna's northern slopes in Randazzo, where ancient Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Cappuccio vines flourish at high altitudes.

Gulfi's philosophy respects nature through traditional, unirrigated bush-vine cultivation, honoring ancestral methods and natural cycles. Their commitment to organic farming stems from a deep respect for both the land and the consumer, celebrating the manual harvest as a time-honored ritual.





MOLDOVA

A WINE RENAISSANCE YOU ABSOLUTELY NEED TO DISCOVER

By Claude Lalonde

This country, nestled between the Carpathians and the Black Sea, has been cultivating vines for more than 4,000 years. In the 20th century, it became the wine cellar of the Soviet Union, supplying up to a quarter of all wine consumed in the USSR. At its peak, Moldova cultivated 193,000 hectares of vines (1982).

Since independence in 1991 – and despite Russian embargoes which severely impacted wine exports – Moldova has reinvented itself: modernization of wineries, quality upgrades, and a reopening toward Europe, which now represents more than 50% of its export market.

Today, Moldova cultivates approximately 120,000 hectares of vineyard – more than Bordeaux – and has the highest density of vineyards per inhabitant in the world (4 ha / 100 people). More than 50,000 small growers cultivate vines and around 200 wineries produce wine. Importantly: Moldova does not have cooperatives.

Wine production is mainly concentrated in four zones:

CODRU

(CENTER OF THE COUNTRY, ABOUT 60% OF PRODUCTION)

ȘTEFAN VODĂ

(SOUTH-EAST, CLOSE TO THE BLACK SEA)

VALUL LUI TRAIAN

(SOUTH-WEST, THE WARMEST ZONE)

DIVIN

(REGION DEDICATED TO SPIRIT PRODUCTION FROM GRAPES)





The country does not operate under a strict appellation or cahier des charges system. Producers therefore have full freedom of vinification, blending and style. Moldovan producers are extremely creative and produce a very large diversity of wines – which is why it is sometimes difficult to define a single Moldovan style.

In 2013, the national brand Wine of Moldova and the National Wine Office were created. A quality and classification system aligned with European Union standards followed. In 2017, a national traceability system was introduced.

In terms of marketing, Wine of Moldova has been highly active internationally: Moldovan wines have earned 962 medals including 508 gold medals in 27 competitions – and over 7,000 medals over the last 10 years.

After tasting more than one hundred wines during this trip, I can say this without hesitation: Moldovan wines are impressive. They are produced from international grapes (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, etc.), native varieties (Fetească Albă, Fetească Regală, Fetească Neagră, Rară Neagră, Viorica, Legenda, Codrinschi and others), and from some Caucasian varieties such as Saperavi and Rkatsiteli. Native grapes represent around 25% of total production and clearly represent the future identity axis of Moldovan wine.



This trip took me through a country in full viticultural reinvention – and into extreme scale contrasts. Eight wineries – some massive and industrial, others artisanal family estates – all expressing different Moldovan realities.

This contrast is Moldova today: the legacy of Soviet gigantism meeting a new era based on finesse, precision, native identity and terroir – and a clear will to reclaim international recognition.

These eight visits allowed me to understand this transformation from the inside – from the sun-driven Valul lui Traian, to Codru's rolling hills, to Cricova's underground wine labyrinths.

CHÂTEAU VARTELY → RADACINI → CRICOVA

Founded in 1996 and relaunched in 2004, Château Vartely has become one of Moldova's leading wine estates. The vineyard covers around 300 hectares in the Codru and Valul lui Traian regions, offering contrasting terroir influences. More than 2.5 million bottles are produced each year from both international and native varieties such as Fetească Regală, Fetească Neagră and Rară Neagră. In 2008, an impressive wine tourism complex opened about 50 km from Chișinău, offering hospitality, architecture, and on-site tasting experiences.

Founded in 1994, Radacini Wines is the first private winery in Moldova and today one of the largest producers in the country. The estate farms more than 800 hectares of vineyards across Codru, Ștefan Vodă, and Valul lui Traian. Both international cultivars (Pinot Grigio, Cabernet Sauvignon) and native varieties (Fetească Albă, Rară Neagră, Viorica) are grown. The main production center in Cricova, inaugurated in 2019, processes more than 20 million liters annually and produces both still and sparkling wines (Charmat and Traditional Method).

Founded in 1952, Cricova is a true underground wine city – unique in the world. Located 60 meters below ground, it comprises over 120 km of galleries with streets named after grape varieties such as Cabernet, Sauvignon or Fetească. Cricova farms more than 1,000 hectares of vines across central and southern Moldova. Its wine library holds 1.3 million bottles, including historic treasures such as the dessert wine "Jerusalim de Paști 1902" and Hermann Göring's seized collection. Cricova is considered a national symbol – where history, geology and the art of wine converge across 53 hectares underground.



DOMENIILE DAVIDESCU WINERY



FAUTOR WINERY

The story of Vinăria din Vale (Domeniile Davidescu) begins with Ilie, born in 1899, an amateur beekeeper and passionate home winemaker who produced wine from a few vines in his garden. His son Vladimir transformed this passion into a family winery more than 20 years ago. Today, the third generation – Andrian and Elena – continue to lead the estate. The winery is located in Slobozia Mare in the Cahul district, in the southern Valul lui Traian IGP, and covers around 1,300 hectares. About 1.5 million liters are produced annually, the majority in bulk (60% white, 40% red). The estate team, led by CEO Andrian Davidescu, aims to highlight the terroir of southern Moldova. The cellar combines tradition and modern technology: manual harvesting, barrel ageing (including French oak), and bottling on a modern European-spec line.

Fautor Winery is a family-owned estate founded at the end of the 20th century, located in the Tigheci micro-zone in the heart of the Valul lui Traian IGP – a zone widely recognized for its high viticultural potential. According to Wine of Moldova, the estate farms around 350 hectares, mostly planted in the 2000s with strong qualitative ambition. Since 2006, the winery has been equipped with modern vinification systems ensuring precision, hygiene, and controlled aromatic extraction. Fautor is known for rare varietal plantings and original blends – especially featuring Fetească Neagră and Rară Neagră, which have become signature wines of the estate. Fautor is among Moldova's most internationally awarded producers, frequently winning gold and grand gold medals at major international competitions including Mundus Vini.



GOGU WINERY



CASTEL MIMI



CARLEVANA WINERY

Gogu Winery is a small family winery located in Căușeni, in the Ștefan Vodă protected wine region of south-eastern Moldova. The estate is led by Ilie Gogu, a trained winemaking engineer with ten years of prior experience in a large Moldovan enterprise. The winery began as a home winemaking project before becoming officially registered in 2011. Professional wines released in 2014 quickly drew international attention, with gold and silver medals earned at competitions such as Berliner Wine Trophy, Asian Wine Trophy, Mundus Vini and International Wine Contest Bucharest. The vines (around 8 hectares) lie close to the winery, enabling Ilie to personally oversee every step of production. The terroir is sunny and gently rolling, leading to limited production (around 35,000 bottles annually) and high precision. Inspired by four generations of family tradition, Gogu wines express authentic local identity and are now exported to more than ten countries.

Located in Bulboacă in the Codru region, Castel Mimi is one of Moldova's most emblematic wine estates. Founded in 1893 by Constantin Mimi, the last governor of Bessarabia and trained in Montpellier, it is the first reinforced-concrete château in Eastern Europe, inspired by Bordeaux architecture. After long decline under the Soviet period, the estate was fully restored between 2011 and 2016 and today operates as a wine resort blending culture, gastronomy, hospitality and wine tourism. The vineyard covers clay-limestone hills in Codru, influenced by thermal amplitude and the Black Sea, producing both international varieties (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay) and native grapes such as Fetească Albă, Viorica and Rară Neagră. Castel Mimi is praised internationally as a pioneer of the Moldovan wine renaissance, combining technical precision with stylistic elegance. Today, Castel Mimi is a national symbol – historic monument, flagship wine tourism site, and ambassador of the "new face of Moldovan wine." Its modern

Located in Merenii Noi, 25 km from Chișinău, Carlevana Winery reflects the recent evolution of Moldovan wine. Founded in 1959 during the Soviet era, the estate still retains its original architecture. It was privatized in 1996 and modernized to oversee every stage from vineyard to bottling. The vineyard covers around 150 hectares across Merenii Noi and Crețoaia, cultivating international varieties (Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir) as well as native grapes such as Rară Neagră and rarer varieties such as Sauvignon Gris and Pinot Gris. The temperate climate and clay-limestone soils of central Moldova contribute to balanced and fresh wines. Carlevana was also a pioneer in Ice Wine production – a first in Moldova – and its wines have been recognized at numerous international competitions. This estate illustrates Moldova's transition toward more precise, terroir-driven viticulture, open to the world.

MONFERRATO



AUTHOR MARIÈVE ISABEL

Slow Tourism in Piedmont

DISCOVERING MONFERRATO THROUGH ITS VINEYARDS

If Piedmont has a quieter soul, you'll find it in Monferrato. Here, time seems to slow down. The rolling UNESCO hills combined with the far-stretching view of well-aligned vines fade into soft superposed layers. Morning mist drifts lazily through the vineyards, inviting for an early walk. As our eyes linger over the landscape's undulations, we are gently reminded that life doesn't need to move quickly. Less touristy than the Langhe and far more intimate, Monferrato invites travelers to slow down, meet the growers behind the wines, and explore a region.

A WINE LANDSCAPE ROOTED IN CENTURIES OF TRADITION

Monferrato's hills have been covered in vines for thousands of years. These hills are not just beautiful – they are officially treasured. In 2014, the region's vineyard landscapes were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, praised for the way human hands and natural contours have shaped each other over centuries. Here, rows of vines follow the shape of the hills, medieval villages crown the ridges, and ancient cellars (infernotti) carve into the earth.

The region's viticultural identity is also protected and promoted by the Barbera d'Asti and Monferrato Consortium, founded in 1946 and now representing 421 wineries across 13 appellations. This collective is the guardian of the region's many wine "souls": from the iconic Barbera d'Asti to tiny, hyper-local DOCs and rare native varieties that might otherwise have disappeared.

UNDERSTANDING MONFERRATO IN THE GLASS: A QUICK GUIDE TO ITS GRAPE VARIETIES

Monferrato's wines are made from historical grape varieties, some of which many wine lovers have never heard of. Here's a quick guide to these grapes that define the region.

Barbera – The Region's Lifeblood

With over 10,000 hectares planted across Piedmont and a significant share dedicated to Barbera d'Asti DOCG, Barbera is Monferrato's main grape. Expect vibrant acidity, deep color, and endless pairing versatility. From juicy, everyday wines to structured Nizza DOCG expressions, Barbera showcases the region's full range.

Ruché – The Floral Prince of Castagnole Monferrato

One of Piedmont's rarest native varieties, Ruché charms instantly with its perfumed aromas of rose, spice, and wild berries. Grown in just a handful of municipalities, it feels like discovering a well-kept secret – delicate, aromatic, and unmistakably local.

Grignolino – The Rosé-Looking Red With Attitude

Pale in color but bold in attitude, Grignolino brings firm tannins, spicy strawberry notes, and a touch of white pepper. It's quirky, expressive, and unlike anything else in Ital. It's a wine that surprises travelers and lingers in memory.



Freisa – Historic and Structured

With rustic charm and sturdy tannins, Freisa is one of the region's most traditional grapes. It can be dry, lightly frizzante, or structured for aging, but always carries a deep sense of place. Tasting Freisa feels like stepping into a more ancient Piedmont.

Moscato & Malvasia – Aromatic Signatures

Beyond reds, Monferrato delights with aromatic grapes. Moscato is bright and lightly sparkling, while Malvasia offers a playful, pale-red, semi-sparkling style bursting with fragrant fruit.



VITICULTURE IN MONFERRATO: FROM ROLLING HILLS TO WINE

As one could expect, Monferrato's rich landscape is reflected in its soils. The region's vineyards rest on a patchwork of marne, clay, sand, and limestone, a geological mosaic that changes subtly from one ridge to the next. These alternating layers of ancient marine sediments are especially favorable to Barbera, giving it both depth and tension, while other native grapes reveal completely different personalities depending on where their roots sink.

The climate is continental yet moderated by altitude: hot summers, cold winters, and significant diurnal shifts that preserve acidity and freshness. Altitude varies dramatically, and so does exposure, an essential feature of the region. A vineyard turned slightly toward the morning sun may give light, floral wines, while another, just a few hills away, will produce deeper, spicier expressions.

Another distinctive feature of this climate is the autumn mist. In the fall, the hills are often wrapped in soft morning brume, turning vineyards into floating islands above a sea of fog. It is one of the region's most photogenic signatures, and, again, an invitation to slow walks through vineyards.

VINEYARDS TO VISIT: A SLOW-TOURING ROUTE THROUGH MONFERRATO

Beyond its breath-taking landscapes, what makes Monferrato truly special is the human connection one can feel here. Most wineries are small, family-run estates where tastings turn into conversations. The people pouring your glass are often the same one who pruned the vines. There's an intimacy to these encounters, which make one feel welcomed as a traveler rather than a tourist.

Here's a list of vineyards I visited while I stayed in Asti in October 2025. While each one of them had its specialties and ways of welcoming people, them all left me with the warm impression of having made new friends and discovered little gems.



Accornero (Vignale Monferrato)

Based in the village of Vignale Monferrato, Accornero is one of those estates that defines the region. Family-run since the 1800s, it is a benchmark for native grapes like Grignolino and Ruché. The new face of Accornero is Giulia Accornero, fifth generation of the family, who now welcomes visitors, walks them through the Bricco del Bosco vineyards, and signs some of the estate's key wines.

Tenuta Santa Caterina (Grazzano Badoglio)

As you enter the tenuta from the village of Grazzano Badoglio and walk across the cortile, it's hard to imagine the breathtaking view that awaits you. The amphitheater of vines is truly stunning! Make sure your phone has enough battery for the photos you'll want to take. Barbera and Nebbiolo thrive here on shifting soils and exposures that change with every few steps.

Cascina Gilli (Castelnuovo Don Bosco)

Situated in the northern sector of Monferrato, an area historically known for aromatic and semi-aromatic grape varieties, Cascina Gilli is a reference point for Freisa and Malvasia. They produce both still and lightly sparkling versions of Freisa, as well as traditional sweet, aromatic Malvasia wines with low alcohol and partial fermentation.

Cascina Castlet (Costigliole d'Asti)

Cascina Castlèt belongs to the Borio family, and has for generations. The estate is currently run by Mariuccia Borio, who inherited it from her father in 1970. With leadership, she modernized production while preserving local traditions, also expanding the property from 5 to around 31 hectares of vineyards. She also helped revive nearly-forgotten varieties such as Uvalino. Mariuccia's warmth is unmistakable! She welcomes visitors with genuine kindness, the kind that makes you feel less like an old friend returning home.

Bersano (Nizza Monferrato)

Bersano is without a doubt a grand, historic producer with museum-like cellars and a deep love for Barbera. Their Nizza vineyards highlight why this appellation is considered one of the best expressions of the grape. Don't miss their open-air museum of wines, which contains artefacts from the region's rural past and tools that trace the evolution of Monferrato's winemaking traditions.

La Gironda (Nizza Monferrato)

Small, precise, and wonderfully placed within Nizza's prime exposures, the vineyards capture the essence of low yields, meticulous farming, and expressive Barbera. Susanna Galandrino – genuinely one of the warmest, most authentic and welcoming people I've met in my trip – emphasizes that wine for them is more than business: it's heritage, passion, and respect for the land. Visitors are welcome for tastings, but also to experience the estate: vineyards, cellar, historic hills, and warm hospitality.



Vinchio Vaglio (Vinchio & Vaglio Serra)

Vinchio Vaglio is a cooperative perched on dramatic ridges, bordered by forests and stunning nearby viewpoints. Their vineyards reflect a forward-looking approach to biodiversity and a thoughtful response to climate shifts, but also a community of 19 winegrowers from the villages of Vinchio and Vaglio Serra. The cooperative counts close to 192–200 associates who collectively manage roughly 450–500 hectares of vineyards. Rather than producing generic bulk wine, Vinchio Vaglio aims for quality at scale, showing that a cooperative can deliver wines as serious and terroir-driven as a boutique estate.



A POCKET GUIDE FOR PLANNING A TRIP TO MONFERRATO

PLANNING AND MUST TRY

- Best season: Autumn for truffles, harvest, and golden light; spring for blossoms and tranquility.
- Base towns: Asti, Nizza Monferrato, Castagnole Monferrato.
- Must-try wines: Barbera d'Asti DOCG, Nizza DOCG, Grignolino, Freisa, Ruché.

LOCAL GASTRONOMY

- Tartufi bianchi d'Alba - the prized white truffles; Monferrato is an important truffle-hunting zone.
- Agnolotti del plin - delicate, hand-pinched pasta parcels.
- Bagna cauda - the iconic warm anchovy-garlic dip, perfect in autumn.
- Hazelnut Piemonte IGP - among the world's finest hazelnuts, used in countless regional dishes.

SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

- Wine tastings in picturesque hilltop hamlets with sweeping views.
- Infernot visits. Explore these UNESCO-listed underground cellars carved directly into stone.
- Harvesting. Join harvest days or workshops mixing Barbera and truffle traditions.

In the end, what makes Monferrato unforgettable is the way it quietly reveals itself as a less-known region. It's a place where every village seems to hide a small gem waiting to be discovered. The landscape is stunning, yes, but what stays with you long after you've left are the people: growers who welcome you with sincerity, families who work the same hills their grandparents tended, and producers who chase quality through care, patience, and respect for their land.

For travelers seeking the soul of Piedmont, Monferrato offers not just great wines, but a human experience. The region that rewards curiosity, invites connections, and reminds us that some of the most remarkable discoveries happen off the beaten path.



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS : JULIEN TRIMBACH – MAISON TRIMBACH

1. How did your career journey begin?

It started with various vineyard jobs, helping my parents and grandparents. Later, after earning my general baccalaureate, I chose to study viticulture and oenology up to the first year of the Master Vin, Vignes et Terroir program in Dijon. Afterwards, I completed several internships and gained experience around the world before returning to the estate in 2018.

2. What is the most rewarding aspect of your profession?

Sharing something you've produced and seeing it bring emotion to friends and family. It's also incredibly rewarding to receive feedback from passionate wine lovers who enjoyed our wines and are eager to share them with others!

3. Can you describe the philosophy of your domain and how it influences the wines you produce?

To craft terroir-driven wines that are dry and balanced, while respecting both the environment and our traditions.

4. What do you believe is the most challenging aspect of winemaking?

Accepting doubt and being patient.

5. Do you have a favorite grape variety to work with? What makes it special to you?

Riesling, of course! Even if it's not always the easiest to work with, it's the best mirror of the terroir. Plus, it can be vinified in so many different ways!

6. Can you share a memorable vintage or wine you are particularly proud of?

2021

It came right after COVID, which left its mark on all of us. It was a very challenging year in the vineyards due to high disease pressure.

We weren't sure what to expect in terms of wine quality despite harvesting beautiful grapes. It was such a pleasant surprise to taste the first finished wines with my uncle – they immediately delighted us!

7. What makes your region and vineyard unique compared to others?

We live in one of the most beautiful regions in the world (I'll try not to sound too biased!). We're lucky to have everything we need here in Alsace. Positioned at a European crossroads, we're naturally open and connected with everyone. We have extraordinary and diverse terroirs, wonderful grape varieties, and a dream climate for producing great gastronomic wines... You really have to visit us to understand!

8. If you could make wine anywhere in the world, outside your current region, where would it be and why?

Probably between Burgundy and Beaujolais – for the beauty of the terroirs and landscapes. There are lovely granitic hills for Gamay and, a bit higher up, cool limestone slopes perfect for elegant Chardonnay and/or Pinot Noir. Mostly, though, it's because I studied there and immediately fell in love with the region. I often go back to visit my friends Chardigny, Chamonard, and Foillard over a good meal!



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS : HERVÉ DANTAN – CHAMPAGNE LANSON



How did your journey begin?

I was not destined to become a Cellar Master. Naturally curious, I developed an early interest in science. My parents instilled in me key values such as altruism, kindness, and openness to others. That's probably why I dreamed of becoming a doctor – to meet people, help them, care for them, and heal them.

At the same time, as the son of a winegrower, I was always immersed in the rich and fertile world of the vine. My growing fascination with geology and its impact on wine ultimately led me to study oenology in Reims. After several internships in various wine regions – Bordeaux, Alsace, and Burgundy – I crossed the Atlantic, diploma in hand, to work at a Californian winery before returning to my native Champagne.

At just 25, I was given the opportunity to become Cellar Master at a Champagne House, where I remained for 22 years.

In July 2013, I became the Cellar Master of Maison Lanson, one of the oldest Champagne Houses. It was a tremendous challenge: to honor the heritage I had inherited while bringing in new ideas and innovations to help this centuries-old House continue to evolve.

What is the most rewarding part of your profession?

Blending is one of my favorite – and most important – responsibilities. For several months, we taste all the wines from the latest harvest as well as our reserve wines. Lanson has the great fortune of possessing an exceptional collection of reserve wines, with impressive diversity in terms of crus and base vintages.

We proceed step by step, carefully building the blends to find the perfect combinations.

It's essential for us to reflect the full richness of Champagne's terroirs in our blends, but our primary goal remains to craft high-quality wines that embody the distinctive Lanson style. This is one of the most exciting aspects of my work.

I also greatly enjoy the harvest season, which marks the end of the vegetative cycle and a year's worth of work for our grower partners. During this period, I visit the vineyards, meet with them, and share conversations. We maintain close, long-standing relationships with many of our growers – some spanning several generations.

Can you describe the philosophy of the estate and how it influences the wines you produce?

The aromatic signature of Maison Lanson is the result of expertise built on four fundamental pillars: the meticulous selection of crus, a traditional vinification method carried out mostly without malolactic fermentation, the richness of our reserve wines, and extended cellar aging.

Lanson Champagnes are thus distinguished by their vitality, fruit character, and unmistakable freshness.

In your opinion, what is the most challenging aspect of winemaking?

In Champagne, crafting a non-vintage cuvée is always complex. Such a Champagne must maintain a consistent style year after year, regardless of the quality or character of the base vintage. This requires a long and careful tasting process to determine which years and what proportions of reserve wines will create a blend that is both unique and faithful to the House style.

Do you have a favorite grape variety to work with? What makes it special for you?

If I had to choose just one, it would be Pinot Noir – because it is a demanding grape that requires precise viticulture. It's also the dominant grape in Maison Lanson's blends, appreciated for its elegance, fruit, and structure.

Can you share a memorable vintage or a wine you are particularly proud of?

The Champagne Lanson 1921, which we tasted just last week for the launch of the Lanson Private Collection. It was a profoundly emotional and historical experience – the sensation of drinking history itself, traveling back in time through a wine with an enchanting bouquet and perfect balance.

What makes your region and vineyard unique compared to others?

Champagne combines two essential elements that define its terroir: a chalky subsoil and a continental climate – the perfect combination for ripening our Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Meunier grapes. Together, they create the ideal balance between maturity and freshness that defines our wines.

If you could make wine anywhere else in the world, outside your current region, where would it be and why?

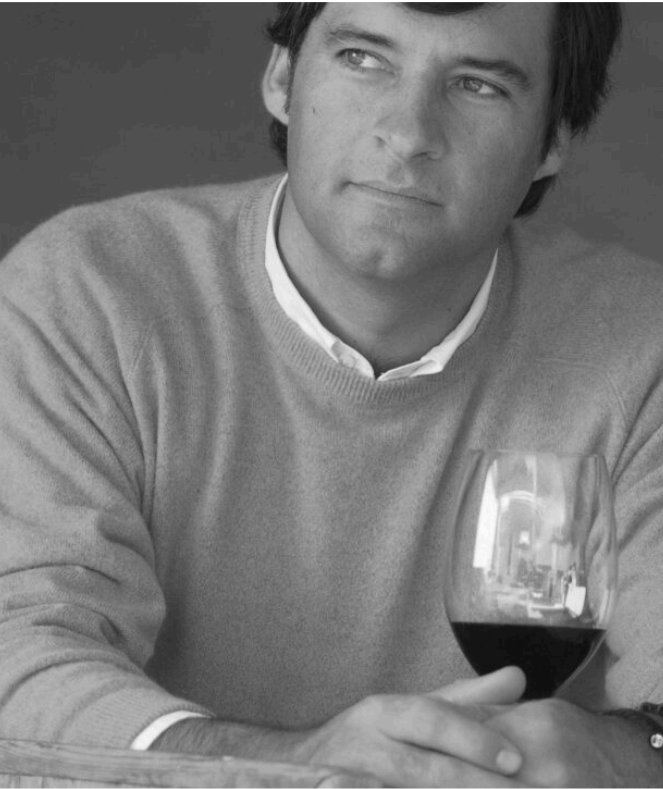
For my personal taste, I wouldn't go far. I love Burgundy wines and would dream of crafting great Chardonnays such as Meursault, Puligny-Montrachet, or Corton-Charlemagne – or fine Pinot Noirs from the Côte de Nuits or Côte de Beaune.

If I were looking for a more exotic experience, I would go to California's Sonoma Valley, where I loved working, or to South Africa's Stellenbosch region for the sheer beauty of its vineyards.



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS:

MIGUEL ROQUETTE – QUINTA DO CRASTO



How did your journey begin?

My career began in 1989, when I started as an intern at Sogrape while studying Marketing Management in Porto. In 1991, I joined Cristiano Van Zeller at Quinta do Noval, where I worked until the day before the company was sold to AXA Millésimes. During my time at Noval, I had the opportunity to travel the world, learn the intricacies of the wine business, and meet importers, partners, and international wine critics. From 1992 to 1994, I completed a professional certificate in Marketing & Communication at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD).

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

The most rewarding aspect is hosting our business partners in the Douro and sharing with them our history, traditions, and passion for this remarkable and unique wine region.

Another deeply fulfilling aspect has been the opportunity to travel the world and experience so many different cultures while promoting and selling our wines – a journey that has taken me to 57 countries in total.

Can you describe the philosophy of your estate and how it influences the wines you produce?

We are a family-owned business, now in its sixth generation.

Our work reflects our passion for what we do, our commitment to excellence, and the constant challenge of maintaining a balance between tradition – respect for the past – and innovation – anticipating the future.

Our philosophy is to produce world-class wines in a responsible, sustainable, and inspiring way, always honoring our history, our traditions, and our deep passion for the Douro region.

What do you believe is the most challenging aspect of winemaking?

The Douro is the largest mountain viticulture region in the world.

With vineyards that rise from river level up to 600 meters in altitude, diverse sun exposures, varied soils, and countless indigenous grape varieties, we often say that the Douro is like a giant puzzle. The greatest challenge in winemaking here is understanding this complexity and achieving consistent quality vintage after vintage. With over 200 hectares of vineyards across three different Douro estates, this consistency is only possible thanks to an exceptional team of professionals – both in vineyard management and oenology – who make these results possible. Yet, there is still much work to be done, and the potential remains truly immense.

Do you have a favorite grape variety to work with? What makes it special to you?

Touriga Nacional is Portugal's flagship grape variety. While we are fortunate to have so many different varieties to work with, the most fascinating aspect for me lies in our old vines – particularly Vinha Maria Teresa, where we have identified 54 different native Port varieties in this century-old vineyard planted by my great-grandfather. These old vines have always formed the backbone of our Port production, but in recent years, they've also revealed extraordinary potential for high-quality dry wines. It's both fascinating and inspiring to work with these field blends and uncover their full potential.

Can you share a memorable vintage or a wine you are particularly proud of?

Our first dry wines were produced in 1994 – Quinta do Crasto Douro Red and Quinta do Crasto Douro Reserva Old Vines. Three vintages stand out for me: 2001, 2011, and 2017.

2017 is particularly memorable – one of the earliest harvests in the history of the Douro Valley. We began picking white grapes on August 8th, and the first red grapes on August 18th. The harvest concluded on September 19th – something that had never happened before.

Warm days combined with cool nights created the perfect balance and a remarkably smooth harvest. For our super-premium 2017 wines, I believe the aging potential in bottle is enormous – time will tell if I'm right.

What makes your region and vineyards unique compared to others?

Everything about the Douro is unique. Our climate – nine months of winter and three months of hell – our terroir, with vineyards stretching from river level to more than 600 meters in altitude, and the extraordinary diversity of exposures and soils, from schist to granite as you climb the slopes.

Add to that over 60 native grape varieties, 300 years of history and tradition, and the wild, untamed nature surrounding us – all of which make this region truly one of a kind.

In my view, the Douro is where one can find the ultimate expression of microclimate and terroir.

If you could make wine anywhere else in the world, outside your current region, where would it be and why?

Although I am not officially a winemaker, I would choose Margaret River.

I've been surfing for the last 48 years of my life, and I can only imagine what a wonderful feeling it must be to catch some epic waves while gazing back at your vineyards from the ocean.