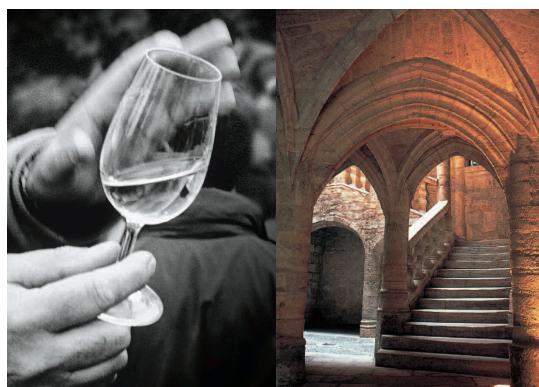


Pézenas



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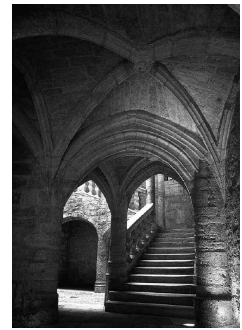
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Pézenas

Vines and wines around Pezenas : a thousand years of tradition



Viticulture has a long tradition here ; Pézenas and surrounding villages have lived off it for 27centuries. Some of the great XVI and XVII century estates are still around, living side by side with small domaines with great reputations.

Viticultural activity since 7 BCE

Wine was being produced around Pézenas as far back as the V11 century BCE. Judging by the Oppidum of Saint-Siméon in the Peyne valley there was considerable activity dating from the end of that century. History shows that Gallo-Roman establishments were involved in intensive wine making activity since the days of antiquity.

In the IV century, after the decline of the Roman Empire, monastic orders took up wine production in a big way.

How great wine estates emerged

As a result of Louis IX taking over the Seigneurie of Pézenas in 1262, the town became the area overlord, with jurisdiction spread over 32 small towns or villages. It was also given the right to organize general fairs and markets.

The first of these fairs was founded in the mid XIII century, and by the XVI and XVII centuries they were unrivalled. This period saw the creation of the great wine producing domaines which are today's independent producers. Most of them grew from XVI and XVII century farms and smallholdings ; among them are the châteaux of Nizas, Sainte-Marthe (Roujan), Belles Eaux (Caux), Montpezat (Pézenas)... Most of these great houses appear on the Cassini map*.

*The Cassini map, conceived in the XVII century, was published between 1767 and 1780. King Louis XV was behind the project whose objective was to map the whole Kingdom.

Viticulture, the source of wealth

The early XIX century saw the vine supplanting other crops in a spectacular manner.

In the canton of Pézenas alone, they soon occupied 77 % of all cultivated land.

By the century's end, viticulture represented the main source of the area's wealth.

There were 18 large wine producers, 4 traders in tartar and lees, 7 coopers and cask producers, 2 distillers and 3 plant nurseries. But then a series of diseases (Oïdium, phyloxera...) stopped this massive expansion. Innumerable hectares of vines were destroyed. It was only after a period of crisis that lasted from 1880 to 1892 that massive replanting took place.

Why Pezenas ?

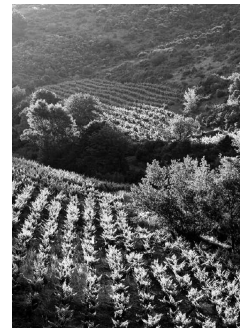
In that Pézenas developed as the area's administrative and economic capital, it has always been the natural link between local villages. Its close ties with the renaissance together with its protected architectural heritage is, according to the wine producers, the reason that the town symbolises art and history as does no other and why they recognize their identity in it.

Pezenas and Molière, a story of love and memories

It was from the Languedoc and, particularly, Pézenas, that Moliere drew his inspiration for some of his best known works : Dom Juan, Tartuffe, La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas... These memories are still alive and well, most especially in the now listed Italian Theatre in Pézenas which dates from 1804 and which, since 2007, has been given over to Moliere's memory. www.ot-pezenas-valdherault.com

Pézenas

A diverse terroir



It's hot in Pézenas. A combination of its special climate and varied soils means the area's wines have an incredible range of aromas. Covering close on 1 500 hectares, the Pézenas terroir covers 15 communes producing some 60,000 hl annually.

The climate

The low rainfall around Pézenas is typical of the Mediterranean climate.

Although it is less affected by maritime influences than the Terrasses de Beziers and the Grés de Montpellier, the climate is not as continental as on the Terrasses du Larzac. Average annual rainfall is around 700 mm.

Temperatures hardly vary throughout the area, ensuring a homogeneous climate. Summers are hot, winters soft with quite wide temperature variations, up to 40 °C between the minimum and maximum over a year.

Soil types

In the AOC Pézenas zones, the land makeup varies enormously which is one of the reasons why the wines are so special. There are three main soil types (schist, limestone and alluvial) with large quantities of volcanic origin which form an important, unique, link between the communes. The influence of volcanic fallout over a part of the countryside is strong in that it includes basalt and lava flows, hardened ash, scree and black pebbles, all of which blend with other types of soil.

The environment

The countryside is largely covered in scrubby vegetation when the underlying rock is very hard. Where it has broken down, other plants grow, especially groves of white oak.

Pezenas red wines officially recognized

As part of its long, rich history, part of the sector was well known for its white wines with the AOC Clairette de Languedoc being recognized on 12 April 1948. After a period as VDQS Coteaux du Languedoc, red, white and rosé wines from all the sector's communes were recognized as AOC Coteaux du Languedoc in the decree of 24 December 1985. The AOC Pezenas terroir was itself officially recognized by decree on 24 April 2007. It only includes red wines, made from and including the 2006 harvest. It took ten years work for the producers to reap their reward.

Décret du 24 avril 2007 - <http://admi.net/jo/20070426/AGRP0700567D.html>

Pézenas

From vines to wine



Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre are the principal grapes for AOC Pézenas wines, beside Cinsault and Carignan. These grapes ensure the wines are elegant and velvety. Delightfully rich, they are rounded, well balanced and silky with good tannins and great length.

Grapes and yields

The red wines must be assembled with grapes or wines made up from at least two of the five permitted varieties : Grenache, Mourvèdre, Syrah, Carignan, Cinsault.

Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah grapes must make up a minimum of 70 % of the blend. The same grapes may not represent more than 75 % of the total.

The proportion of Mourvedre and Syrah grapes, together or separately, must not represent less than 20 % of all the grapes. If Carignan is included, at least 20 % Grenache must be included.

The basic yield is fixed at 45 hectolitres per hectare.

Vinification and maturing

Vinification is mostly traditional with a relatively long time in vats (a fortnight or more).

The AOC Pézenas denomination can only apply to wines produced from young vines that have reached at least their sixth year. Finally, they cannot be released for consumption until they have matured until, at the earliest, 1 September of the year following harvesting (i.e at least a year).

In a glass

Pézenas wines are a lovely purple colour, brilliant with light violet highlights.

On the nose, they're thoroughly aromatic dominated by Mediterranean black fruit and berries (blackberries, mulberries, myrtle...), the scents of the garrigue (juniper, bay, rosemary, liquorice...) and spice (white pepper...). As they age, it's not unusual to discern the scent of game, leather and black truffles. Most will keep well if laid down (3 to 5 years, even more).

Wine and food

Younger, garnet coloured wines are best drunk with meals of Lacaune charcuterie, game terrines or poultry such as guinea fowl saupiquet. Older wines are just splendid with more robust dishes such as grilled or roast meat, beef with sauce, shoulder of lamb confit, wild boar stew. As for cheese, a characterful red is a perfect foil for Laguiole, Cantal, Saint-Nectaire or Reblochon farm cheese.

Pézenas

Wine producers

Domaine de Bayelle

Marie-France et Philippe Bec
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Château de Belles Eaux

Cédric Loiseau
34720 CAUX
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Cave la Carignano - Cave de Gabian

Jacques Couderc
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Clos des Carolines

Lionel Espie
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Cave La Clairette d'Adissan

Jean Renaud
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Château La Condamine Bertrand

Bernard Jany & Bruno Andreu
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Domaine Le Conte des Floris

Daniel Le Conte des Floris
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Les Coteaux de Neffies

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Domaine Durand Camillo

Armand Durand
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Domaine le Fesc

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Château de Fondouce

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Les Vignerons de Fontès

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Domaine de Gravanel

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Domaine Lacroix - Vanel

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Château Larzac

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Mas Lumen

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Les caves Molière

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Pézenas

Wine producers

Domaine Mon Mourel

Jérémy Costal

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Château Montpezat

Christophe Blanc

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Chartreuse de Mougères

Nicolas de Saint Exupéry

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Domaine de Nizas et Sallèles

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Château du Parc

Arnaud L'Epine

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Clos Sainte-Pauline

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Domaine Stella Nova

Phillippe Richy

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Anne Sutra de Germa

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Domaine les Aurelles

Basile Saint-Germain

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Domaine d'Aboville

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Château Abbaye de Cassan

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