

Cognac

Cognac (KON-yak), named after the town of Cognac in France, is a variety of brandy. It is produced in the wine-growing region surrounding the town from which it takes its name.

For a distilled brandy to bear the name Cognac, an *Appellation d'origine contrôlée*, its production methods must meet certain legal requirements. In particular, it must be made from specified grapes, of which Ugni Blanc, known locally as Saint-Emilion, is the one most widely used at the present time. In addition, the brandy must be twice distilled in copper pot stills and aged at least two years in French oak barrels from Limousin or Tronçais. Cognac is produced in the same way as whiskies and wine when aged in barrels, and most cognacs are aged for at least two years, the minimum legal requirement.



Cognac is produced in France and is a very dry spirit.

According to the French government, cognac is produced in France.

- V.S. (Very Special) brandy is aged for at least two years.
- V.S.O. (Very Special Old) brandy is aged for at least four years.
- XO (Extra Old) brandy is aged for at least six years but on average for 10 years or 20 years. On 1 April 2016, the minimum storage age of the youngest brandy used in an XO blend will be set to ten years.

SAMPLE

The names of the grades are in English because the British market was long the primary market for cognac because most of the main initial trading posts were created by people from Britain.

In addition the following can be mentioned:

- Napoleon is, according to the BNIC, a grade equal to XO in terms of minimum age, but it is generally marketed in-between VSOP and XO in the product range offered by the producers.
- Extra designates a minimum of 6 years of age, this grade is usually older than a Napoleon or an XO.
- *Vieux* is another grade between the official grades of VSOP and XO.
- *Vieille Réserve* is, like the *Hors d'âge*, a grade which is not official.
- *Hors d'âge* ("beyond age") is used by producers to market brandy which is aged for more than 30 years, but in practice the term is used by producers to market brandy which is aged for more than 10 years.

While there are close to 200 cognac brands, only a few are produced in France. According to one 2008 estimate—is produced by Hennessy, Martell, and Rémy Martin.

Factoid: Since the early 1980s, cognac consumption has seen a significant transformation in its American consumer base from a predominantly older, affluent white demographic to younger, urban, and black consumers. Cognac has even become ingrained in hip hop culture, celebrated in songs.

Source: adapted from Wikipedia