



SOMMIÈRES LANGUEDOC

APPELLATION D'ORIGINE CONTRÔLÉE

LA PÉPITE DU LANGUEDOC



PRESS PACK

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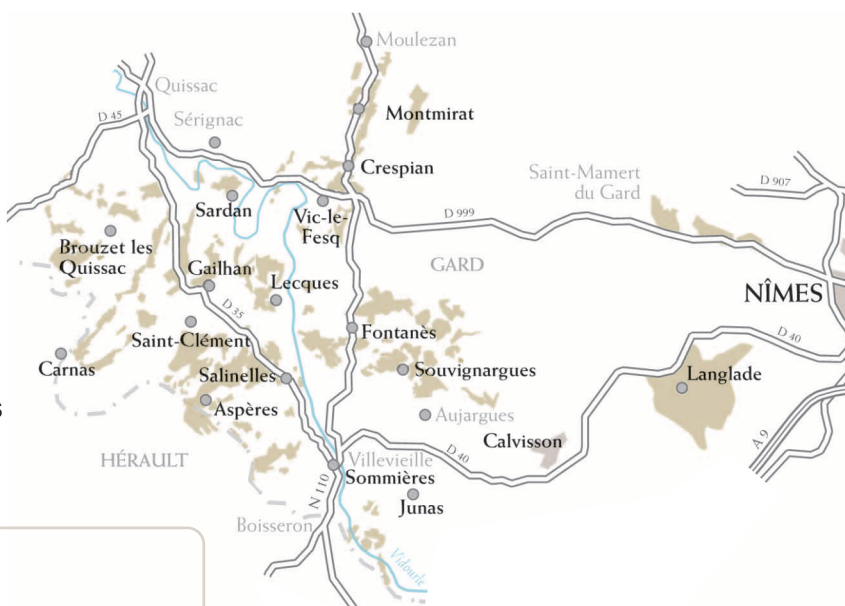
SOMMIÈRES

Environment and area

Nestling in the west of the Gard department, the 'Sommières' terroir has been recognised by the INAO (National Institute of Origin and Quality) as an AOC Languedoc denomination since the 2011 harvest. Covering some 1971 hectares (4870 acres) the Sommières terroir stretches over 18 communes and produces around 7800 hectolitres of AOC wine per annum. The vineyards nestle among olive groves, the wild garrigue and oak glades. The wines are deep red in colour, with complex aromas often reminiscent of ripe fruit, spice and garrigue herbs; they need maturing for over a year to achieve the desired body.

The most easterly vineyards of the Appellation

Situated in the far north-eastern corner of the AOC Languedoc area, 'Sommières' is the only Appellation based entirely in the Gard. It forms a circle of some 20 kilometres in diameter to the west of Nîmes and is crossed by the Vidourle river.



→ In figures

- Size of production area :
The geographical zone comprises 950 ha of which 295 ha are identified as AOC Languedoc-Sommières.

- Production area : 18 communes situated in the Gard (Aspères, Brouzet-les-Quissac, Calvisson, Carnas, Crespian, Fontanès, Gailhan, Junas, Langlade, Lecques, Montmirat, Nîmes, Salinelles, Saint-Clément, Sardan, Sommières, Souvignargues, Vic-le-Fesc).

- Number of producers :
17 independent producers
3 caves coopératives

Production

- Annual production : **1 023 hl of AOC Languedoc-Sommières in 2018**
- Maximum yield :
45 hectolitres per hectare
- Colour produced : red

SUMMER EVENTS

In May: **ESCAPADE GOURMANDE DE SOMMIÈRES** A wine-lovers walk combining wine and gastronomy in the vineyards.

LES ESTIVALES DE SOMMIÈRES

A wine and food event held every Monday evening within the walls of the medieval town of Sommières, where you can sample the local wines and regional food.

En July: the Sommières wine-makers partner a music festival, **JAZZ A JUNAS**.

14th and 15th August: **VINUM**

The Sommières wine-makers welcome you to the grounds of the prestigious Château de Pondres in Villevielle, where they hold a gastronomic dinner and wine-tasting Masterclass, allowing you to try their wines and buy them.



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SOMMIÈRES

Vines and wine : A tradition since days of yore



Since the olden day, viticulture has played a leading role in Sommières and the neighbouring villages. Recognized by the INAO in 2011, the 'Sommières' terroir has joined together 18 communes and is part of the new 'Sommières' segment of AOC Languedoc wines.

A major wine making tradition

Vines have played a major role in the Sommières area since the early days of recorded history. The first recorded plants date back to the 6th century BCE by Greek and Etruscan colonists. The Romans extended the vineyards, exporting wine to Greece and the Turkish and Egyptian coastlines. Indirectly, the great plague of the 14th century and what came after was largely responsible for the development of today's vineyards and other facets of Languedoc agriculture.

Le succès des vins du terroir « Sommières »

During and after the 15th century, vineyards started extending again, a development much enhanced with the opening of the port at Sète. Growing vines was soon on a par with cereal production. The quality of Sommières wines, especially those from the Calvisson and Langlade vineyards, was widely recognized and favourably compared with those from the Côtes-du-Rhône (see p 4). At the time, Calvisson was one of the major vineyards dedicated to export markets. Its reputation was even sufficient to attract compliments from the author Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Sommières - at the crossroads between plain and mountain - was an important trading post. From the reign of Louis XIV onwards, its gastronomic reputation led to the development of complementary businesses. Languedoc glass producers - whose seat was at Sommières - specialized in producing bottles and table glasses. In addition there were many professionals in wine related trades (barrel producers, agents, traders of vinification equipment etc). The town became a centre for the local economy and soon became well known throughout the region especially in the world of viticulture. Its current high reputation means that Sommières wines attract many buyers who are able to develop their business in a seriously dynamic commercial market.

From crises to rebirth

Even though the spread of oïdium gravely affected vines in the middle of the 19th century, treatment with sulphur from 1862 onwards led to production taking off again, a recovery linked with the development of railways. Then, after 1873 phylloxera decimated the vineyards which shrank from 562 hectares to fifteen. In Langlade, only one hectare of vines survived. Restoring the vineyards was a serious challenge which was gradually met. By 1896, vines covered 300 hectares. But in 1907, Sommières - in common with the whole region - was affected by another viticultural crisis which was finally overcome when parliament passed a law leading to the repression of fraud.

SOMMIÈRES

“Our priority is to work on the notoriety of our terroir”



The new president of the Terroir Sommières, Gilbert Robert, supports the integration of new communes on the outskirts of the geographical zone, into the AOC Languedoc-Sommières appellation. He feels that it will reinforce its identity in human, geographic and economic terms on its journey towards being recognized as an appellation in its own right.

What areas of work are you focusing on?

Gilbert Robert – *The prospect of becoming a specific AOC, with the objective of submitting our case to the INAO within the next three to five years. We are progressing every year with the volume of wines in the market and the internal tastings set up within the Syndicat are allowing us refine the quality of our wines and highlight the typicity of the Sommières terroir. The wine-makers are very environmentally aware and more than 85% of them are either organically or biodynamically certified. However, we need to work on our notoriety and get our wines out to a wider public, especially outside our region.*

What actions are you taking regarding notoriety?

Gilbert Robert – *For example, we have been present at the Wine Paris exhibition again, which generated some great feedback last year and we will continue this action. We have also decided to develop the Vinum exhibition. For the first time in 2020, it will take place at the Château de Pondres (a 4 star hotel and gastronomic restaurant). The Estivales de Sommières are permanent fixture in the summer and allowed us to reach 15 000 visitors in 2019. The Escapade Gourmande de Sommières, which we are doing again in 2020 with a different route, in order to show off the diversity of our terroir, will become an unmissable event.*

What about other subjects?

Gilbert Robert – *At the beginning of 2020 and supported by the AOC Languedoc Syndicat, we are going to present a case for extending our geographical area to include ten new communes, which will concern five private wineries and a wine cooperative. The objective is to reinforce our terroir's identity and increase our commercial capacity.*

SOMMIÈRES

Hierarchies on the move

In 1985 the wine producers became part of the l'AOC Coteaux du Languedoc which has now become the AOC Languedoc. Anxious to develop and project their quality image, they developed stricter production rules than set out in the decree. In 1991 they formed an association working towards the recognition of the 'Langlade' cru; this in turn became the 'Terres de Sommières' association in 1997 which has recently become the syndicate for the whole 'Sommières' terroir.

This terroir has been recognized by the INAO as becoming part of the AOC Languedoc under the geographic denomination of Sommières. (cf JO 15 novembre 2011).

<https://www.inao.gouv.fr/fichier/PNODULanguedoc.pdf>

« From Roman times to the present day, cultivating vines has always held a predominant place in the lives of the people of Sommières. The producers have for many years been determined to produce quality wines ».

→ Wine of the 'Sommières' terroir recognized

Langlade wines were at their apogee in 1870, a time when their reputation had widely spread. They were served at the tables of the Avignon popes, of Languedoc and Provence princes and aristocrats as well as those of the kings of France and Aragon. The vineyards covered 625 hectares (1540 acres) and included 165 properties ranging from 5 to 20 hectares. Indeed, some 19th century writers had no hesitation in pronouncing Langlade as an equal to Tavel, Chusclan, Mercurey or even Julienas ...

SOMMIÈRES

A homogenous terroir



To be found at the extreme north-east of the AOC Languedoc region, 'Sommières' is the only zone of the appellation to be wholly situated in the Gard department. Nowadays it is the most easterly in the AOC Languedoc area. The influence of the gusty Mistral wind is strong- it's responsible for the area's incredible sunshine.

The climate

The 'Sommières' terroir enjoys a Mediterranean climate with temperature variations reflecting the influence of the Mistral which is responsible for the luminous skies and incredible sunshine. There are strong sea breezes too, with squalls reaching the Cevennes hillsides.

Types of soil

AOC 'Sommières' land parcels originate in the secondary and tertiary eras. There are hard and soft limestone pebbles, calcerous clay, scree covered slopes and silica based clay.

The environment

'Sommières' natural vegetation owes its character to a combination of variable temperatures and rainfall. Aleppo pines together with green and white oak trees are predominant on the muddy limestone soil.

The introduction of truffle oaks and olive trees have also made an impact on area : wine producers in communes throughout the 'Sommières' terroir are also allowed to produce AOC 'Nîmes Olive Oil' mostly from the Picholine variety of olive.

SOMMIÈRES

From vine to wine



In a terroir noted for its homogenous character, permitted grape varieties are based on Syrah and Grenache which together must make up a minimum of 50% of the grapes in a wine. The wines are dark red, with complex aromas often reminiscent of ripe fruit, spice and garrigue herbs, with a full body that requires over a year maturing.

Grape varieties and yields

Five varieties may be included in the red wines : Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Carignan et Cinsault. They must be a blend of grape juices or wines from at least two of the following varieties : Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre which, together, must make up minimum of 70% of the whole.

Syrah is not debatable and must represent a minimum of 20% of the total. Together, Syrah and Grenache must make up at least 50% of the total, but each is limited to 75%. The maximum yield is fixed at 45hl/ha.

Vinification and maturing at the cave

Mostly carried out traditionally. The harvest is de-stemmed or sorted and placed in vats for an average of 24 days (from 15 to 45 days). During this time the producers drain and circulate the juices and often the lees, whichever suits the harvest best. 'Sommières' wines are mostly matured in vats for around 15 months. Their alcohol level must reach at least 12°. The maturing process ends on the 15th day of the November following the harvest, they are released for consumption as from 1 December.

In the glass

On the eye, 'Sommières' wines are a delightful dark colour ranging from purple to deep garnet. They are complex on the nose. Dominant aromas are reminiscent of red fruit (cherry, strawberry, mulberry, plum ...) with hints of wild garrigue herbs, spice, liquorice and vanilla. In the mouth, the wines are concentrated with rich tannins. They are creamy and well rounded whilst retaining a soft character.

« 88 % of the caves have a sales room. Direct sales mean customers can enjoy an unbeatable purchasing tour of the area. »

SOMMIÈRES

Producers' contact details

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