



# JEANYS

FINE WINES AND SPIRITS

## BRANDY

Grapes were one of the earliest fruits used to make spirits. Distillation was not known in Europe before the 9th or 10th centuries and the first comprehensive publication of brandy making was about 1500.

Anyone can make a brandy, simply by distilling the fermented juice of any fruit. We have apple brandy (calvados), plum brandy (slivovitz) and cherry brandy (kirsch).

The most famous brandy is Cognac, that French spirit of the highest quality and considerable maturity. Cognac was first noted by name in 1678. Armagnac, a close relative of the Cognac claims to be the first brandy with a birth date of 1411. The main difference between the two (besides grape and area) is that Cognac is 72% alcoholic product of double distillation in a pot still, where the Armagnac comes off a continuous still at 55% alcoholic.

A brandy can only be called cognac if it is made in the French region of the same name. Cognac, on France's west coast is an area of some 93,000 hectares and involves 30,000 growers.

There are seven defined sub-regions in Cognac, in descending order of quality they are: Grand Champagne, Petite Champagne, Borderies, Fins Bois, Bon Bois, Bois Ordinaire and Bois a Terroir. If it is a blend of at least 50% Grand Champagne, with the remainder from Petite Champagne,

the Cognac can be labelled Fine Champagne. Champagne, on a Cognac label, has nothing to do with sparkling wine, and refers only to open fields.

A three star Cognac is matured in white oak casks for a minimum 5-7 years. The legal minimum is 30 months, about the same as an Australian commercial brandy.

Three Star: VS, Celebration, signature of Deluxe. They usually have an average age 15 to 25 years. Cognac like all spirits ceases to age once it has been bottled.

XO: Most of the large cognac houses produce a small amount of XO. Most of the large Cognac houses produce a small amount of

XO also called extra, Ville Reserve, Cordon Bleu. These brandies have had 40 or 50 years in oak. There are rarer and more expensive blends that may reach 100 years of age.

Some examples are Hennessy Paradis, Remy Martin Louis XIII and Centaure Cristal. The first pot still made in Australia was installed in the 1890's in the Horndale distillery, north of Adelaide. Seppelt's records note that the first distillery at their Barossa Valley operations was erected in 1877.

By the 1920's brandy making was firmly established in SA and Mildura. Today, these areas and Griffin are the main brandy producing areas.

Two distinct types of Australian Brandy are marketed, the first our commercial brands like Black Bottle, Mildara, and Tolleys. The second type may have aged in wood for 20 years or more, like Seppelt's field Show VSOP, Yalumba Old Pot Still, and Mildara Pot Still 25 years old.

In Australia, the brandy drinker is fortunate that only fresh grapes can be used in its production, dried grapes, or grape concentrate are not allowed. Most cheap imported brandies are made by distilling pressings, the pomace, and there is no guarantee that non grape spirit has not been used.