



JEAN GROSPELLEIN VINTAGE COGNAC "La Gabare Collection"

GRAND CHAMPAGNE

Jean Groperrin No. 24	1924*	44 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1944	43 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1944	43 %	35cl
Jean Groperrin	1971	55 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1971	55 %	35cl
Jean Groperrin	1971	68,2 %	70cl

PETITE CHAMPAGNE

Jean Groperrin No. 14	1914	40,8%	100cl
Jean Groperrin	1958	41 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1962	44 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1974	45,3%	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1976	41,5%	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1989	46,4%	70cl

BORDERIES

Jean Groperrin	1960	49 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1961	49 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1964	50 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1989	47,5%	70cl

BON BOIS

Jean Groperrin	1944	43 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1944	43 %	35cl

FINS BOIS

Jean Groperrin	1954	43 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1954	43 %	35cl
Jean Groperrin	1968	41 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1969	44 %	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1972	53,8%	70cl
Jean Groperrin	1979	47,1%	70cl

ÖVRIGT

Le Roch XO*	20år	42,5%	70cl
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* Årgång ej på flaskan.



JEAN GROSERRIN VINTAGE COGNAC



La Gabare's Cognac de Collection begun with very modest means but with sincere aspirations. The collection emerged from the ruins of the cognac industry as it switched from the hands of family trading houses to the iron rule of wine and spirits multinationals. The entire region and many different professions were forced to adapt to survive. The first to be affected were the winegrowers who, in order to live and do business with the industry's new masters, had to accept very strict specifications that were often inversely proportionate to the payment they received.

Those winegrowers or intermediaries that were refused access to this new economic order, either because their properties were too small or because there was no place for them in this new structure, were forced to change the way they worked before it was too late. They were in danger of losing all their assets and disappearing altogether. The idea of La Gabare's Cognac de Collection range was born as a result of this pressing need for change.

In the many years I had spent developing my clientele, firstly with winegrowers as a local broker and then as a wholesaler working as an intermediary between merchants and winegrowers, I came to realize exceptional resources were sleeping in the cellars of Charentes.



Apart from the more recent harvests, a winegrower and home distiller's cellar often contains a few barrels from older harvests, sometimes several decades old. Some estate owners feel it is their duty to transmit a few barrels - produced by an ancestor or inherited over time - from one generation to the next. I had always been shocked by the casual manner in which this precious liquid was treated, often drowned through massive blending, becoming nothing more than an extra in a play where it should have held the star role!



As I decided to embark upon this adventure, I was somehow convinced that I was not the only one who would appreciate the sincerity of this cognac, straight from the grower and that had escaped the jaws of the large trading houses. I also hoped to overturn the preconceived idea that cognac is necessarily a blend of great vintages and secondary vintages. Working in the field, I had also learned that the quality of a cognac is directly related to the quality of the individual producing and maturing it. When a winegrower tells you how he takes care of his vineyard, when he talks about his distillery and ageing techniques, you are already beginning to get some precious indications about the product before even tasting it.



OUR PHILOSOPHY



By definition, a collection is perpetually changing and so does ours. Certain products go out of stock and disappear while other new products enter the collection. Our Collection was first created in 1999. Since then, La Gabare's stock has increased each year thanks to some magnificent discoveries, in particular in the Borderies region. We can now offer many different vintages covering all five cognac crus. Some vintages, mainly pre 1960, are extremely rare and only available in very small quantities, since very few winegrowers manage to conserve part of their previous harvests.

Despite an upturn in the late 1990s, the Cognac region has suffered a sharp drop in sales over the last two decades and this, combined with ever increasing costs, has forced winegrowers to sell off their production every year. At times, the year's production alone is not enough and they are forced to sell some of what their grandfather had set aside for example, in order to pay inheritance taxes or meet the financial requirements of the next generation. Most often, these very old cognacs come from winegrowers who were either already retired or reaching retirement at that time and had no heirs. As a result, they were able to keep these reserves for a later date.

HOW WE SELECT OUR COGNACS

Over the years, working as a broker, I have developed a very special and close relationship with my clients. In addition, I have been actively helped in my search by a sworn broker and colleague of mine who is systematically contacted to evaluate inheritances and who has excellent contacts with many old Cognac families. This allows me to know when a family intends to sell or divide up its inheritance. At such times, I am often presented with samples of very old cognacs.



We only select cognacs aged in casks that have not been systematically topped up over time as the quantity of liquid diminished through evaporation. I also require official paperwork or archives tracing the product from the time of distillation. I then taste the cognac, first at full strength and then with water, and if satisfied - i.e. if the aromas and ageing of the cognac are of real interest - then the cognac is carbon-dated by the French National Scientific Research Institute to confirm the age indicated. Only if these three conditions are fulfilled is the new cognac permitted to enter our own cellars.

Another source for our Collection are the state-controlled warehouses where I am occasionally able to obtain cognac that has been stored there since its distillation. However, this is mostly young cognac distilled after 1975, only a few of which actually meet our Collection's quality requirements.



AFTER DISTILLATION



Ideally, nothing should happen to it at all! Cognac should be left until, through natural evaporation, it reaches the ideal proof for drinking, 45 or 48°. This would mean patiently waiting 50 to 70 years depending on the humidity in the wine cellar, to be left at the end with just 20% of the initial volum! Financially, this is quite unfeasible which is why cognac is generally water reduced during the ageing process. La Gabare's Cognac de Collection lies half way between a collection of strictly reduced 40° cognacs and one where the whole collection is entirely naturally reduced. Such cognacs, even the non-vintage ones, are rarely found on the market and are highly sought

after by large trading houses in order to improve their blends. Furthermore, vintage cognacs of over 40 years old are practically impossible to find.

All of the cognacs I select are good enough to be drunk without reduction, much to the delight of cognac aficionados who unfortunately are quite rare these days, which is why the Collection also offers lower proof cognacs. When reduction is unavoidable, I make every effort not to distort the cognac. In particular I avoid the process of cooling the cognac to less than 5° for one week followed by ultra-filtration. This tends to remove most of the oiliness, which is where the aromas lie.

In exchange for this maximum quality, the reduced cognacs in La Gabare's Collection may appear slightly cloudy, since they have kept their oiliness and thus their rich aromas. I never add caramel to adjust the colour, nor sugar as is generally done to make the cognac suppler and easier to drink. The great cognacs of La Gabare's Collection don't need such artifice to be remarkable. The very old and great naturally reduced cognacs in our Collection are unfiltered, with the exception of a light net used to remove impurities. Each molecule contributes to the aromatic balance of the whole.

GUARANTEE OF AUTHENTICITY

- All of our cognacs have been stored under state control in ORECO warehouses from the time of purchase until bottling;
- Any intervention or handling outside the warehouses must take place in the presence of a bailiff, and seals are affixed for transport;
- The age or vintage on the label can be proved at any time, either by the archives, or by carbon dating, as well as by the duration of storage in state controlled warehouses;
- Each bottle of La Gabare's Cognac de Collection bearing a vintage or age also carries a guarantee on the cork certifying that bottling of that particular cognac took place in the presence of a bailiff.

Cognacs de Collection

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GRANDE CHAMPAGNE

1971

This cognac comes from a Parisian widow whose husband - a highly successful magistrate - had invested in cognac for tax reasons. When he died, she discovered she was now the owner of dozens of barrels of cognac, some of which had been stored in government-controlled cellars for over 30 years. We decided to buy this cognac since it had clearly been stored in a particularly dry cellar, having lost nearly half its volume yet only 2 degrees of alcohol during its 30 year stay in the barrels. The result of such extreme storage conditions is an exceptional concentration of aromas, making this vintage one of most outstanding cognacs in the Collection.

The glass should be warmed. The nose has a touch of cinnamon, Virginia tobacco, spices and liquorice. Traces of distillation, but which fade rapidly on swirling. The palate is long and sweet with a hint of vanilla. The rancio develops later, giving an oily, rather rugged palate. The empty glass is woody but a little volatile.

1944

This cognac comes from the same source as the previous ones. First recorded in the company's archives in 1944 as "Grande Champagne 1934 Criteuil" and still present in the records in 1999. Authenticity confirmed by carbon dating. The origin, percentage of evaporation and ageing were all verified in 2000 by the DDCCRF.

Bold amber color. The nose is supremely delicate and complex. A perfect balance between the magnitude of this cognac and its softness. Liquorice and mushroom, acidity and freshness with irresistible traces of tea rose and tobacco. The palate is similar to the nose, fresh and pure, tense and refined, with an impalpably delicate grain and texture, combining violets and crystallized fruit. The smoothness and length develop in stages. Persistence, mineral character, complexity and elegance all meet in this bottle which, like great wines, is a combination of contradictory qualities. Every cognac enthusiast should taste this cognac to discover the full accomplishment of a Grande Champagne. With this cognac, a simple tasting exercise turns into a highly emotional moment. Sublime. 18.5/20 (Le Rouge et Le Blanc)

1924 (No. 24)

This cognac belonged to a broker in Cognac, who passed away more than 20 years ago. He had kept for himself the finest cognacs he had acquired, rather than putting them on the market. His treasure was kept in a cellar of which only he alone had the key. It was only after this man passed away that his heirs discovered this cask and a few others containing cognacs dating back to the beginning of the last century.

This extremely rare, very old cognac originated from the broker's cellar in the Grande Champagne appellation in the Cognac area. The cognac's cask indicates the origin of the cognac, quantity acquired, alcohol level and "1924". However no documents were found. This cognac has aged in silence for many decades and, over time, has lost almost 80% of its initial volume through natural evaporation. In Cognac, we call this evaporated part the "angels' share." The cognac remains remarkably strong for its age, with an alcohol percentage of 44. This cognac reveals notes of fruits, mushrooms, spices and tobacco. As is the case with all of our Cognacs de Collection, no sugar, nor caramel were added so as to offer you a truly natural product.



PETITE CHAMPAGNE

1989

This cognac is the only one of the range which has been blended. It is the result of two 1989 cognacs from Petite Champagne. One comes from St Bonnet de Barbezieux and it gives smoothness and sweetness thanks to its storage conditions (near a river). The other one comes from Echebrune, and it gives balance and more aromas to the cognac because of storage in a very dry cellar.

Light, straw-coloured hue. The nose is delicate, floral, fresh, airy and light with a hint of citrus. The palate is slightly rough, since the wood has not been fully assimilated. Although its youth is apparent (this spirit is "only" 16 years old), it nevertheless has great delicacy. The finish leaves a slightly sweet trace of vanilla. This is one of La Gabare's less expensive products, which has been reduced over a period of four to five years.



1976

We acquired this cognac in 1999, when a merchant sold us a part of his stock of old cognacs. We decided to buy this cognac not only for its excellent quality, but also because it had been stored in government-controlled cellars since 1976. There is just a small trace of wood in this cognac, which is only slightly tinted and, though not astringent, releases a very distinct initial aroma.

Light scent of jasmine, pepper and crystallized fruits. Pleasant and supple on the palate, with no trace of heaviness. This cognac, with its characteristic lightness and delicacy, most likely originates from a friable limestone subsoil. The cognac is now half way through its ageing process.

1962

Another cognac, another legend. This cognac comes from a family that has lived for nearly 80 years in Jurignac, just a few kilometres from Chateauneuf. Some elderly members of the family sold me this remarkable cognac, which was distilled in a 10 hl. antique still heated using coal briquettes. In the past, this had been one of the region's larger properties (16 hectares of vineyards) but since there was no heir willing to take over the business, all production ceased more than 20 years ago. A few barrels of cognac were left in the cellar and these are the ones that I was able to buy little by little as I needed more stock. Here too, the archives are very well kept and carbon 14 dating has provided exact confirmation of the dates indicated by the owner.

Pale amber color. Light and floral nose, at once fresh and crystallized. Light, salty palate. Extremely soft and delicate, with a mineral structure. Pleasantly long and elegant. There is something very harmonious and airy, flattering and pretty (in the best sense of the word) about this cognac, a fine example of the delicacy of Petite Champagne.



1958

This cognac has been stored at the "Les Granges" cellar in Barbezieux since 1966. It is a cognac referred to as "Petite Champagne 55 Cottereau" in the previous owner's archives. Carbon 14 dating indicates that the harvest dates from 1958.

Very delicate, slightly floral (acacia, jasmine). Also, aromas of cigar box and cedar. On the palate we find a good balance between the alcohol and tannins and the aromas persist well. A slightly winy taste characteristic of the Petite Champagne appellation. There is a surprising presence of vanilla in the empty glass.



1914 (No. 14)

We acquired this cognac from a merchant in 1999. The archives mentioned it under the denomination "Petite Champagne Paror" and it is possible to follow its history during a few years from 1918, when World War I ended. The particularity of this cognac is that it almost certainly has been distilled by women. In 1914 women were in charge of companies, because all able-bodied men were required to fight in the war, the most fatal of the 20th century in France. This cognac lot disappeared during the years of the German occupation. In 1946, however, it re-emerged and it is possible again to follow its history. But, it disappeared once again in the archives until the 1970s. From this date onwards, this cognac is mentioned in the archive under its original denomination. We bought all the stock, 285 liters. It is one of our treasures and, for this reason, only available in very small quantities. We are not allowed to offer this cognac as a vintage cognac because of the very restrictive cognac vintage legislation.

BORDERIES

1964, 1961 AND 1960

These cognacs share the same origin and were distilled in the same still and stored in the same ageing cellar. We bought them from an 80-year-old couple. The husband had worked all his life for the department for consumer protection, competition and fraud (DDCCRF) in Angoulême, where he was in charge of officially supervising the cognac business. His father-in-law had died 20 years ago and had been a winegrower and distiller in Saint Sulpice de Cognac. Each year, he would give his children one or two barrels of that year's cognac, which this elderly couple, the Quintards, were to sell to me some 40 years later.

What makes these cognacs unique is that the barrels had been stored in a very small cellar with no electricity, and had never been topped up. After 40 years, some contained only 120 liters of the initial 350 to 400 liters of cognac they had contained when full. The rest had evaporated. Lastly, the archives for these cognacs had been scrupulously maintained and are an example of how cognac archives should be kept. When I mentioned this to Mr Quintard, he replied that this was only natural, since his job had been to penalize people who kept poor archives! These cognacs were distilled with "seconds" i.e. the cutting was done at a lower degree than normal, giving the cognac its very pleasant patisserie taste. Nervy palate, with a combination of spices and crystallized fruits. Leave the cognac for an hour in a glass and you will be surprised by its softness and the intensity of the aromas released. For all the Borderies, vanilla, very floral (white flowers and honey).



1989

Cognac aged in a dry ORECO's cellar. Beautiful expression of Borderies, with elegant and sharp flavors of white flowers. Comes from a small farm which is now in tenant farming.

1985

Same origin as the previous one, aged in the same cellar but in a cask which was more burned, conferring more roundness to this cognac.

FINS BOIS

1979

Cognac aged in dry cellar of ORECO and in a new cask, which conferred a lot of character. Flavours of wood, musk, and dried fruits. Atypical. Powerful.

1969

This cognac comes from the Prunier merchants, established in Cognac for centuries. We bought this cognac in 2000. Since distillation, it has been stored in the government-controlled ORECO warehouses, providing an absolute guarantee of the vintage. This cognac comes from a predominantly clay and marl subsoil. There is no aggressiveness on the nose or palate. Distilled with lees. Distinct aroma of wood and fruits (pear, quince). The palate is predominantly liquorice.

1968

This cognac has always been stored in the ORECO warehouses in Barbezieux in a small, damp cellar ideal for ageing. Very clear colour. The nose is very peppery and lemony, followed by violets and coffee, then smoke. The palate is light and fresh, very slightly rough and sharp. The alcohol is still sensitive. There is a constant underlying mineral presence. This is a product with great finesse, a result of Fins Bois on limestone soil. A "discreet, secret and delicate" cognac. 16/20 (*Le Rouge et Le Blanc*)

1954

We bought this cognac in 1999 when we started our Cognacs de Collection range. Thanks to the inventory books of the family business, the cognac can be traced all the way through from the first records in 1953 until 1999. Carbon 14 dating has confirmed that the cognac was produced prior to 1955. This is the only cognac in the Collection not to be stored in government-controlled cellars. It is kept in a separate room in our cellars in Chermignac. The cognac was distilled in a wood-fired still, leaving strong traces of smoke that have led many tasters to mistake this cognac for a Highland whisky.

Heavier and more marked by its terroir than the Petite Champagne 1958. Nevertheless, it is very elegant for a Fins Bois. More robust without heaviness. Mushrooms, coconut, cloves. Marked by its long stay in a damp cellar. The palate is particularly silky. A fine product, very representative of Fins Bois vineyards.



BONS BOIS

1944

This cognac appears in the archives as "Bons Bois 1938 Chermignac", indicating it comes from the family who sold it to me. It remained in the same family for more than 60 years, stored in its original location, a huge paved cellar, until we transferred it to government-controlled cellars in 1999. The owner's chateau was occupied by the German Wehrmacht and the archives dispersed at the end of the war, making it impossible to prove that it dates back to before 1944. The end of the war brought with it widespread pillaging, both by occupying forces and local inhabitants. Thanks to certified photocopies of the original documents, there is an administrative trace of the cognacs' history from 1944 to 1955 and from 1986 until they were sold to me in 1999. Carbon 14 dating has confirmed that this is definitely the same product.

A bold, shiny amber color. The nose is extremely sweet, melted and worn: prune, pear, rum, rancio, liquorice and sweet spices. The palate is paradoxical, much more violent, straight, mineral, not very complex but with plenty of personality. The finish is a little elusive, with iodine and caramel. Originally there were 434 liters of this cognac, aged in a damp cellar, and which in reality would seem to date from 1938. 15/20 (Le Rouge et Le Blanc)

