Vin Doux Naturel

**Vocab**:

* **Vin Doux Naturel:** fortified wines based mainly on Muscat or Grenache Noir. The Muscat wines are typically released unaged. Made by mutage, or artificially arresting the conversion of grape sugar into alcohol by adding a spirit (of about 95%) before the fermentation is complete (when wine is around 6%), thereby killing yeasts and making a sweet “half-wine” in which grape flavors dominate wine flavors. Normally have an alcoholic strength of 15-18%. Min RS levels vary depending on style. Non-vintage VDNs are common, particularly in Languedoc.
* **Banyuls**: One of most complex VDNs of Roussillon.
  + Location: very southern part of Roussillon on coast, 10 mi from Spanish border
  + Climate/Weather: Mediterranean. super hot summers, very windy
  + Grapes:
    - W: Grenache Blanc, Grenache Gris, Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains, Muscat d’Alexandrie, Macabeu, Tourbat or Malvoisie du Roussillon.
    - R: Grenache Noir must dominate blend (min 50% of Banyuls and min 75% of Banyuls Grand Cru), Carignan, Cinsault, Syrah
  + Soils: Gray schist
  + Viti: Grapes usually shrivelled when they are picked. Vineyards on mix of terraces and slopes
  + Vini: Alcohol added when must is still on skins, then extended maceration takes place of about 5 weeks. Min RS of 45 g/l
  + Aging: Oxidative, bonbonnes-aged style is traditional, while fruitier, earlier-maturing style is modern. Austere, solera-aged rancio is rarest.
    - Grand Cru must be aged for 30 months
* **Maury:** VDNs in Roussillon that were super prominent until an appellation for the red wines were authorized and they became more popular.
  + Location: On high inland schist at northern limit of Cotes-du-Roussillon villages in Agly Valley. Farther inland than Banyuls
  + Climate: Mediterranean. Summers are hot and dry. Cooling influence of Tramontane winds.
  + Grapes:
    - R: Grenache Noir (min 75%) with some Carignan, Mourvedre, and Syrah. Labeling terms include *grenat* and *tuile*; these are based on Grenache Noir (min 75% with possible additions of Grenache Blanc, Grenache Gris, and Macabeu). However, *ambre* or *blanc* VDNs can be created using Grenache Blanc and Grenache Gris.
  + Soils: black and chalky schist
  + Vini:
  + Labeling Terms:
    - Wines labeled with *récolte*, *vendange* or vintage must have aged a minimum of 12 months in an airtight environment, making them a nonoxidative style of VDN.
    - Maury hors d’âge: requires at least five years of aging in an oxidative environment, resulting in wines with mature aromas and flavors, great depth and long cellaring potential.
  + Commercial/econ:
    - Notable Producers: Mas Amiel
* **Rivesaltes**: Town north of Perpignan on Roussillon coastline. 2 VDN appellations here: Rivesaltes and Muscat de Rivesaltes.
  + Muscat de Rivesaltes AOC
    - Grapes: Muscat of Alexandria, Muscat Blanc a Petits Grains
    - Viti: Grapes can be grown throughout most of Roussillon, low-trained vines, often on terraces
    - Vini: Mutage and skin contact helped to improve quality
    - Commercial: Represents 70% of France’s total Muscat production
  + Rivesaltes AOC
    - Grapes: Grenache Blanc/Noir/Gris, Maccabeo, Vermentino, Muscat of Alexandria, Muscat BAPG
    - Viti: Grapes can be grown throughout most of Roussillon, but specifically excludes vineyards that produce Banyuls
    - Vini: can be fermented without skins or macerated for weeks. Can be fermented in stainless and bottled young or fermented and aged in wooden casks. Can be put in a solera.
    - Aging: Some rancio, some aged in glass bonbonnes. Cannot be released until 16 months after harvest
      * Ambre: Aged blanc or rose, must be aged in oxidative environment until at least March 1 of the 3rd year following harvest
      * Rouge
      * Grenat: min 75% Grenache. Wines bottled in youth after 12 months
      * Tuile: Min 50% Grenache, must be aged in oxidative environment until at least March 1 of the 3rd year following harvest
      * Hors d’Age: a term that can supplement Ambre and Tuile wines that have been aged for at least 5 yrs.
* **(Muscat de) Beaumes-de-Venise**:
  + Location: A Cotes du Rhone village that was awarded its own AOC in 2005. vines are grown on the slopes around the foot of the Dentelles de Montmirail, a vertical comb of rock jutting out of the plain between the Rhône river and the Luberon-Ventoux mountains.
  + Grapes: Muscat Blanc a Petits Grains
  + Viti: A unique feature of the way the grapes ripen is the way in which the warmth of the sun reflects and radiates down over the vines from the huge vertical limestone slabs of the Dentelles de Montmirail - the 'Lace of Montmirail'. Just under 500 hectares are currently under cultivation. The average yield is approximately 28 hectolitres per hectare.
  + Vini: About 15% abv, delicate and refreshing. Rhone’s only sweet, still white. Min Mutage must be performed with pure alcohol of at least 96%, when the musts contain 5% to 10% alcohol. The wines must contain at least 100g/L of sugar and feature at least 15% alcohol content.
* **St-Jean-de-Minervois**:
  + Muscat de St-Jean-de-Minervois AOC
    - Location: Small mountain village in far northeast of Minervois region of Languedoc.
    - Grapes: Muscat Blanc a Petits Grains.
    - Soils: Limestone
    - Viti: Unlike other Muscats in Languedoc produced closer to Mediterranean (Muscat de Mireval, Muscat de Lunel), St-Jean’s vineyards are carved out of stoney limestone and garrigue at 250 m above sea level, grapes ripen 3 weeks later
    - Vini: Wines have about 15% abv and 125 g/l RS.. Makes delicate and refreshing wines.
* **Rancio**: term used to describe a VDN that has deliberately been maderized. Style achieved by exposing wine to heat and/or oxygen by leaving casks in rafters in hot climate or putting it in glass bonbonnes outdoors. Key flavors achieved by Maillard reaction and oxidation.
* **Grenache Noir:** Red grape variety grown in S France. Produces very fruity, rich wines with varying degrees of tannin depending on water stress. Well-suited to bush vine cultivation in warm and windy climates. Early-budding, prone to coulure, ripens late. Needs long growing season to achieve physiological ripeness. Wine has tendency to oxidize early.
* **Muscat**: White grape, many varieties. Heavily-perfumed (high monoterpene level). Most need relatively hot climates to ripen.
  + **Muscat Blanc a Petits Grains**: Oldest and “noblest” of Muscat varieties. Has greatest concentration of grape, floral, and orange spice flavors. Berries and seeds are small, yields often low. Different colors exist (pink, red, and black). Parent of Muscat of Alexandria. Early-budding, susceptible to disease. White grape well-suited to the production of VDNs since the floral grapeyness is the point.
  + **Muscat of Alexandria**: Variety of Muscat considered to be inferior to Muscat Blanc a Petits Grains. Thrives in hot climates and produces high yields of sweet, ripe grapes. Vaguely grapey with more geranium than Muscat Blanc.
* **Location**:
  + Rhone: Muscat de Beaumes de Venise
  + Languedoc: Muscat de Saint-Jean-de-Minervois
  + Roussillon: Banyuls, Maury, Rivesaltes, Muscat de Rivesaltes
* **Climate**:
  + Warm Mediterranean
  + High altitude important for acid retention and freshness of wines
* **Soils/Topography**
  + DEPENDS ON REGION: LOOK UP
* **Grape Varieties**
  + W: Muscat Blanc a Petits Grains, Muscat of Alexandria (Rivesaltes)
  + R: Grenache Noir
  + Other local varieties often permitted in blends
* **Viticulture**
* **Winemaking/Aging**
  + Muscat wines: Winemakers seek to maximize aromatic intensity of grape, so they do not oxidize them and they are released young
  + Rivesaltes: can undergo extensive oxidative aging
  + Grenache: (2 styles)
    - Ruby: Can either be fruity and youthful for early consumption or more concentrated and benefit from longer bottle aging
    - Rancio: oxidative aging that can take place in oak vessels or partly-sealed glass bonbonnes.
* **Commercial/Economics**
  + Domestic consumption on the decline, weird because France is largest export market by volume for Port.

Rutherglen Muscat

Vocab:

* **Topaque**: VDN made from Brown Muscat, traditionally known as Tokay in Australia.
* **Location**:
  + North East Victoria, around towns of Rutherglen and Glenrowan.
* **Climate**:
  + Warm, high levels of sunshine with wide diurnal range and long, dry autumns
* **Soils/Topography**:
  + Deep, moisture-retaining, alluvial red loam (produces richer and headier wines)
* **Grape Varieties**:
  + Brown Muscat (Muscat Blanc a Petits Grains Rouge) and Muscadelle
* **Viticulture**
  + Long growing season, grapes shrivel and achieve 17-18 Baume. NO Botrytis.
  + Dry farming common
* **Vinification/Aging**
  + Fermentation achieves only a few degrees of alcohol before wine is fortified to about 18% abv with highly rectified grape spirit.
  + Wine then aged in various sizes of old oak casks, frequently in hot conditions
    - Evaporation, heat, and oxidation play into final style
  + Blending (sometimes in soleras) vital to maintaining style and consistency of brand
  + Aging is like a cross between a solera and a Madeira estufagem!
  + Min 160 g/l of RS, oven over 200 g/l
  + You can drink them when bottled, and they don’t benefit from bottle age
  + Rarely bottled as a single vintage wine. Each house has “house style”
* **Classifications (4)** 
  + Rutherglen Muscat: the foundation of the style; displaying the fresh raisin aromas, rich fruit, and great length of flavour on the palate which are the mark of all the Muscats of Rutherglen. Average age 3-5 years. Residual sweetness 180-240 grams per litre.
  + Classic Rutherglen Muscat: Displays a greater level of richness and complexity, produced through the blending of selected parcels of wine, often matured in various sizes of oak cask to impart the distinctive dry ‘rancio’ characters produced from maturation in seasoned wood. Average age 6-10 years (min 5 years average age). Residual sweetness 200-280 grams per litre.
  + Grand Rutherglen Muscat: Takes the flavour of Rutherglen Muscat to a still higher plane of development, displaying a new level of intensity, depth and concentration of flavour, mature rancio characters, and a complexity which imparts layers of texture and flavour. Average age 11-19 years (min 10 years average). Residual sweetness 270-400 grams per litre.
  + Rare Rutherglen Muscat: Rare by name and by nature. These are the pinnacle Rutherglen Muscats – fully developed and displaying the extraordinary qualities that result from the blending of selected parcels of only the very richest, and most complete wines in the cellar. Rare Rutherglen Muscats are only bottled in tiny quantities each year, but for those privileged to taste them, these are wines of breathtaking complexity, texture and depth of flavour. Min 15 years avg age, but usually 20+ years. Residual sweetness 270-400 grams per litre.
* **Commercial/Econ**:
  + Notable Producer: Chambers