

WINETALK

381

WINE CONNOISSEURS CLUB OF HAMILTON

April 2023

Coming Functions

Apr 16 Forrest Wines (Apr 9 is Easter)
May 14 AGM / Options (Mother's Day)
Jun 11 Cellar - Chardonnays
Jul 9

WINETALK APRIL 2023

What a happy evening with Semisi from Abbey Wine Cellars in the Pa Triangle, Hawkes Bay. Truly well-crafted and interesting wines. We are so lucky to have these enthusiastic and knowledgeable presenters with a love of their product, and the knowledge that goes with having

produced first class wines. Semisi was impressed with our knowledge of wine and winemaking, and he provided interesting anecdotes with his vast knowledge of winemaking. Having worked in the Champagne area of France was exciting and to bring these experiences to Abbey Cellars was our good luck. It was interesting Abbey always choose French Oak barrels over American Oak. So why is Oak choice critical to winemakers?

FRENCH OR AMERICAN OAK?

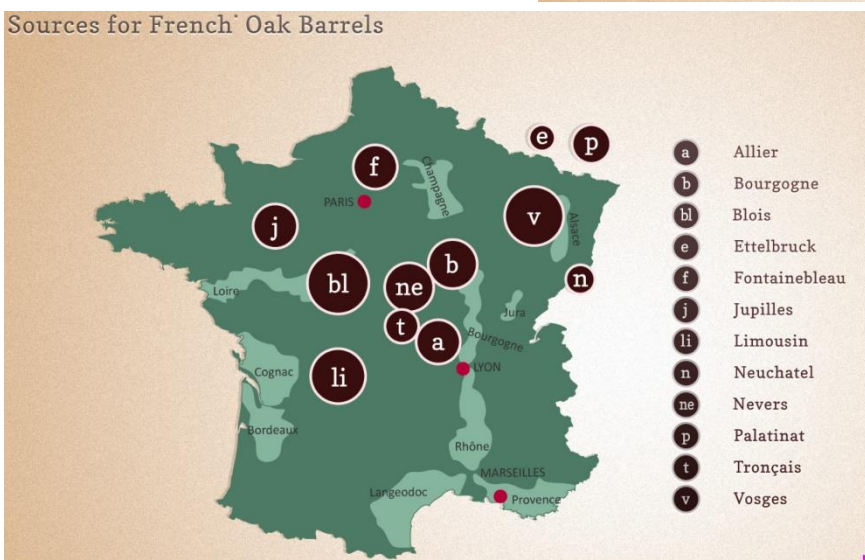
Both American and French oak are species of white oak. While there are many different types of white oak, the species most used for the production of barrels used in winemaking are Quercus Alba, Quercus Petraea and Quercus Robur.

AMERICAN OAK: Quercus Alba is the type of oak most grown in the United States, mainly grown in the Eastern states as well as California. The forests in Virginia, Missouri, Minnesota and Wisconsin are considered very good sources of oak for

Sources for American Oak Barrels



Sources for French Oak Barrels



the wine industry.

FRENCH OAK: Quercus Petraea and Quercus Robur are the two types of oak grown in France. Of the two, Quercus Petraea is considered the finest. The most important oak forests in France are Allier, Nevers and Tronçais (all in Central France), Vosges in the north east, and Limousin which is near the Cognac Region. Of the five, Limousin is the only forest to grow Quercus Robur.

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Content - Gay Main, Graphical layout - Grumpy

AMERICAN AND FRENCH OAK - THE KEY DIFFERENCES

Both American oak and French oak contribute aromas, flavours and textures, in the form of tannin, to wine. French Oak (particularly *Quercus Petraea*) is much lighter grained and less dense than the American *Quercus Alba*. As such, French oak imparts more flavours and firmer, but silkier tannins. French oak flavours are considered to be more savoury. Common descriptions for French oak include cedar, tobacco and cashew nut.

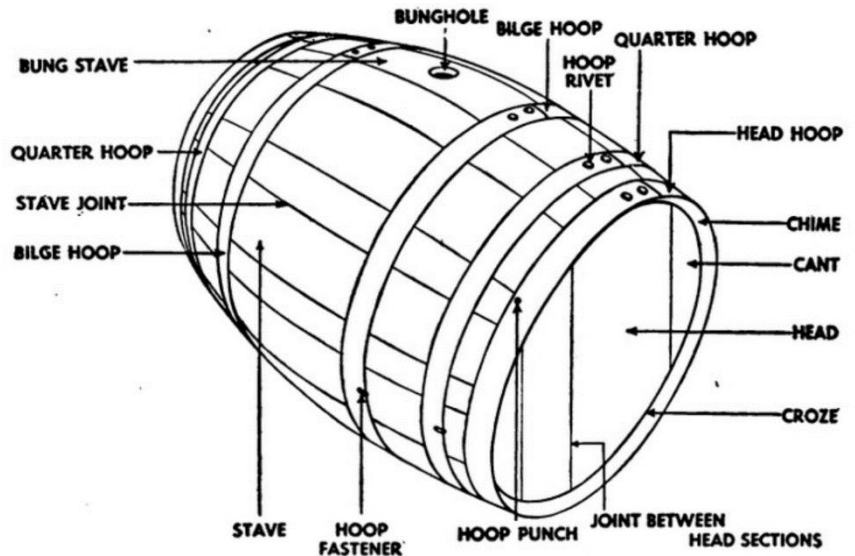
American oak being denser can be sawn instead of hand-split. This involves less labour expense which is why American oak barrels are usually cheaper than their French counterparts. American oak is sweeter and contains more vanillin compounds. American oak tends to impart more obvious, stronger and sweeter aromas and flavours. Common descriptions for American oak, as well as vanilla, are coconut and sweet spice.

OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

Where the oak tree is grown is one factor that impacts the oak influence on the wine. Other very important factors include:

The age of the oak - The newer the oak the more aromatic flavours are imparted into the wine. By the end of the 4th or 5th year of use, there is little flavour left to impart.

The level of toast (high, medium or light toast): The higher the toast the more intense the aromas and flavours along with predictable smokey characters.



The size of the barrel: The smaller the oak barrel the greater the impact of oak influence on the wine.

Of course, the skill of the cooper is also considered. Cooperage is a highly skilled trade. A cooper is a person trained to make wooden casks, barrels, vats etc. from timber staves and is a skill that has been around for thousands of years. They were originally built to store not only wine but other beverages in wooden casks bound by hoops.



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WINESPEAK: WINEMAKING 101

VINTAGE: Refers to year grapes were harvested.

NON-VINTAGE: "NV" wines are a blend of several vintages.

BLEND: A wine made by blending several varietal wines together.

FIELD BLEND: Wine made with different varieties that are harvested and vinified together.

VINIFIED: The conversion of grape juices into wine by fermentation.

MOUTHFEEL: This describes how the wine feels on the palate, such as smooth, velvety, rough.

WINE TOUR PLANNING

Currently looking to do a Hawkes Bay (depending on conditions there) or a Wairarapa Wine Trail in September/October. More details coming up.

APRIL MEETING

We are lucky to have Lily Walker of FORREST WINES just out of Renwick in Marlborough coming to do a tasting of their delicious wines for us. It will be exciting to try their award-winning wines from the heart of the famous Marlborough wine region.

See you at **The Doctors'**

Cheers,
Gay Main



Forrest Winery – Renwick, Marlborough

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