Winemaker: Olivier Bourdet-Pées
Generation: 2nd

PLAIMONT
VIGNERONS EN GASCOGNE
& PIÉMONT PYRÉNÉEN

Elia Colombard Cotes de Gascogne IGP

Naturally low in alcohol, this zippy, crowd-pleasing white is crafted from one of SW France's lesser-known varieties: Colombard. While more often seen in blends, this grape is the likely offspring of Chenin Blanc and delivers plenty of aromatic stone fruit and crisp green apple all on its own. Adding to the fresh style are cooler expositions, an early harvest, and constant breezes from the nearby Pyrenees and Atlantic. With an ABV of just 9%, Elia is the perfect companion to a light-hearted luncheon or picnic at the beach!Best Best Buy - WE

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

With the majestic Pyrénées towering in the distance, the Plaimont Cooperative of SW France sits tucked some 50 miles from both snow-capped mountain and Atlantic sea. Over the past few decades, they have single-handedly revived a host of historic grape varieties - from Manseng Noir to Arrufiac - putting their region back on the enological map and making them one of France's most exciting "new" producers.

ENOLOGIST

Olivier Bourdet-Pé
es

TASTING NOTES

Color	Light straw
Nose	Stone fruit, lemon pith, and nettles
Palate	Tangy and slightly sweet - with ripe peach, tangerine and green apple
Finish	Clean and bright

VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

	12
Vineyard Location	Côtes de Gascogne, South-West France
Vineyard Size	450 ha
Varietals List	100% Colombard
Farming Practices	Organic (non-certified); grapes dry-farmed and picked by hand
Elevation	200 m
Soils	Calcareous clay and limestone
Maturation Summary	In Steel for 6 months and Bottled for 1 month
In Steel	6 months
Alcohol	9.0 %
Acidity	4 g/liter
Residual Sugar	14 g/liter
Annual Production	120 bottles

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PLAIMONT

In the mid-1970s, winemaker Andre Dubosc set out to revive the "lost" appellations of South West France - lost in terms of quality and also, due to the eclipsing effect of nearby Bordeaux, lost to the commercial ages. For decades, the region had simply been equated with Armagnac and inexpensive, Tannat-based wines, which in turn had quashed the enthusiasm of local producers. With an eye on reviving historic grape varieties along with the region's sense of pride, he helped create the Plaimont Cooperative in 1979, which joined the wineries of Plaisance (PL), Aignan (AI), and Saint Mont (MONT), incorporating virtually all of the region's most important estates and chateaux. Today, Plaimont has an impressive 600 growers and 5300 hectares under vine, and accounts for 98% of the Saint Mont appellation, including the gorgeous monastery of Saint Mont, whose own vineyards can be traced back over 1000 years. In addition, 55% of the Madiran AOC, 65% of the Pacherenc de Vic-Bilh AOC and 30% of the Cotes-de-Gascogne IGP are produced at Plaimont. Now with decades of experience and a palpable wind in their sails, this forward-thinking coop has attracted the attention of critics on both sides of the Atlantic, and the region has been flagged as one of the most exciting new frontiers in French wine.

Like so many European producers, Plaimont is wholly devoted to sustainable farming, and their goal is to have 100% of their farmers under HVE certification by 2025. Adding to its appeal, Plaimont has also been credited with leading the fight against climate change in SW France - in part through the revival of pre-phylloxera grape varieties more resistant to big swings in temperature. Serving as prime example is Manseng Noir, a low alcohol red grape related to Tannat. Nearly extinct in the 1970s, it has now been fully restored to the region, along with a handful of other autochthonous red varieties such as Tardif. The white grape Arrufiac - with its floral nose and supple mouth feel - is another local success story. This rare variety now has 17 hectares under vine, growing alongside Gros Manseng and Petit Courbu, Overall, the estate has been using grapes like these to create wines which display a high degree of freshness despite the ascent of regional temperatures. Lead winemaker, Olivier Bourdet-Pées, has also chosen to downplay the use of new oak: steel is used to age most whites and for reds, barrels from Burgundy and Beaujolais (versus Bordeaux) are often used to keep the focus on the fruit.

REGION

SOUTH-WEST FRANCE

Known locally as the Sud-Ouest, this lush, hilly, and historic region is the least populated corner of France but is home to some 47,000 hectares of vineyards along with a vast array of vignerons - with influences ranging from Bordeaux to Basque – with over 2000 years of winemaking behind them. In addition, this large geographic swath contains an enticing list of indigenous grape varieties (roughly 120 of the 300 cultivated there) including Malbec (aka Cot) and the rustic, big-boned Tannat. Located south and east of Bordeaux, in whose shadow the region has lingered for over 600 years, South-West France has more recently emerged as a global wine destination in its own right. It borders the Atlantic Ocean to the west and the Pyrénées Mountains to the south, with Toulouse serving as cultural center.

The Sud-Ouest has four distinct sub-divisions, each with its own distinct voice. The most northernmost of these is Dordogne, named after the river which it shares with Bordeaux. Beginning 50 km upriver and to the east, the Bergerac AOC largely shares in Bordeaux's grape varieties and wine styles, as does Monbazillac. Moving further south and inland, one finds the Garonne & Tarn sub-region, along with the Lot River (notably Cahors, where Malbec reigns supreme), and finally the wild and wind-blown Pyrénées sub-region, which includes the Madiran AOC (known for its brazen, Tannat-based reds), the sweet wines of Jurançon, the tangy whites of the Côtes de Gascogne IGP, and also the Basque AOC of Irouléiguy, whose steep mountain foothills tantalize the senses. In all, South-West France has 29 AOCs and a short but growing list of IGPs.

CÔTES DE GASCOGNE

Best known for its viscous yet fresh, often quite affordable white wines (which represent 75% of all production) the Côtes de Gascogne IGP is located in the Gers department of SW France, shares the same boundaries as the Armagnac production zone, and also overlays the Madiran and Saint Mont AOCs. Located between Bordeaux and the mountainous border with Spain, this sub-region was historically part of the Midi-Pyrénées but was absorbed into l'Occitanie in 2016. With a long history and some 12,000 total hectares currently planted, it is both one of the oldest and largest wine-growing districts in France. Pastoral, timeless, and in many ways untouched, Côtes de Gascogne centers around the town of Auch and a great swathe of hills rolling west toward the Atlantic. In between, you can find plenty of stunning Medeival villages, Mediterranean pines and Cyprus trees but no major cities (the closest being Toulouse to the east).

Founded in 1979, then elevated from Vin de Pays in 2009, Côtes de Gascogne is today enjoying a brisk renaissance, with an increasing number of vines devoted to white wines over Armagnac, and the resuscitation of ancient local varieties such as Arrufiac and Courbu. Three grapes go into a typical white blend: Colombard, Ugni Blanc, and Gros Manseng, which combine to create light-to-medium bodied whites with good structure, fresh acidity, and crowd-pleasing citrus and/or tropical components. Sweet wines are also popular (roughly 10% of production), while rosés are less common (8%) and reds are in the clear minority (7%). That said, the IGP has some notable wines crafted from the brazen Tannat, as well as Cot (Malbec), Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot.

The expansive size of this growing zone guarantees an equally large variation in soil, climate, and elevation from one end to the other, but the broader terroir can be divided into 2 categories: vineyards in the west are heavily influenced by the Atlantic Ocean, with relatively mild summers and high annual rainfall – especially in the spring. Soils here tend to be sandy and alluvial, with good drainage, meaning early-to-mid ripening white varieties tend to fare better in this area. In