

# The Wines of Corsica

## Press Pack

April 2009



## CIVC to showcase Corsican wines in London on 11 May

**Under the auspices of CIVC, the Corsican trade association for the promotion of the wine-growing sector in Corsica, a range of unique Corsican wines will be showcased at La Trouville restaurant in Soho (central London) on 11 May 2009, with the support of the French Trade Commission in the UK as well as ADEC, Corsica's regional development agency, and UBIFRANCE, France's export-support agency.**

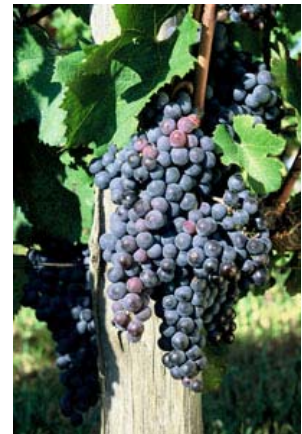


The unique quality and distinct character of Corsican wines are rooted in the island's own history and geography — an island known for its wild, mountainous interior (known as the *maquis*), its stunningly beautiful coastline, its charming and historic cities, and the proud identity and traditions of the Corsican people.

The UK is a priority market for Corsican producers, who know that the unique flavour and insular authenticity of their products appeal to British professionals and consumers alike. The Corsican companies attending the 11 May are looking for partners and distributors in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

The Corsican Wine Tasting will take place from 10.00am to 8.00pm on 11 May 2009 at La Trouville Restaurant (12a Newburgh Street, London, W1F 7RR). A buffet lunch will be served and there will be canapés in the evening.

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► Latest update: UBIFRANCE/UK: 30/04/2009 (PJ)

## CIVC – representing the wines of Corsica

CIVC represents and promotes the activities of its member-companies, and the 11 May 2009 event, organised in conjunction with the French Trade Commission in London, is part of the trade organisation's export drive.

CIVC, i.e. *CIV-Corse* (where *CIV* stands for *Comité Inter-Syndical des Vins*), the Inter-Professional Wine Board for the region of Corsica, is headquartered in Bastia and was set up in 1996.

CIVC represents a range of wines produced across Corsica. More particularly, the AOC wines of Corsica, which are part of CIVC, are unique and have no equivalent in mainland France. (AOC stands for *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* and represents the stringent system of control and certification in place in France, whereby wines are categorized officially as per their geographical origin, their quality, the grapes used to make them, etc.)

CIVC continues to promote Corsican wines through supporting wine-tastings and wine fairs, within Corsica and outside the island: all these events and related initiatives give Corsican producers the opportunity to showcase their wines and develop their business outside the island region of Corsica.



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## Corsica – the *Ile de Beauté*

Corsica does not conform to the image that many may have of a typical Mediterranean island — sun-baked, parched and arid. In fact, no other Mediterranean island has Corsica's lushness, making it truly unique in the Med. It is known as the *Ile de Beauté* – the Island of Beauty.



Corsica, which is remarkably free from pollution, boasts many conservation areas and nature reserves, which have been given national recognition by the French authorities or have been registered on Unesco's world heritage list.

Situated about 300 kilometres south of the French Riviera, Corsica is at the same latitude as Rome (in Italy) or Barcelona (in Spain). The island's Mediterranean climate is tempered by the combined influences of the sea and the mountains.

With close to 3,000 hours of sunshine per year, Corsica holds the record of all French regions, and yet the island is not arid, thanks to the maritime influence that defines the island. Above-average rainfall is another characteristic of the region: almost 10,600 cubic metres of rain per hectare and per year against an average, in mainland France, of about 8,900 cubic metres per hectare and per year.

Another feature of the region's climate is that it is windy: Cap de Corse, Bonifacio and Calvi are three points of the island that are regularly hit by winds of up to 150 kilometres per hour. Localised winds also affect certain areas, being generated by differences in temperature between the seaboard and the hinterland. Ultimately, each of the island's countless valleys and hillsides tends to enjoy a microclimate of its own, enhancing soil diversity.

While summers tend to be hot in Corsica, winters are rather mild and frosts are rare. Snow does fall on higher ground across the island in winter, however, since over 20 mountains are higher than 2,000 metres. More than half the island (55%) lies above 400 metres. Corsica's highest mountain — Mount Cinto — peaks at a height of 2,710 metres. The mountains plunge into the turquoise waters of the Mediterranean Sea, defining landscapes of breathtaking beauty: anyone who has seen Corsica's scenery will understand why the island is often referred to as *a mountain in the sea*.



The springs, in Corsica, are early and wet, making the climate particularly favourable for grape-growing. In the spring, the vegetation is in bloom and the scrubland of the mountainous interior (the *maquis*) is at its most fragrant. In the autumn, the chestnut harvest is celebrated in the hilltop villages, where the island's traditional culture has been preserved down the centuries.

As for the soil, or the soils, given their diversity — they are stony as well as humid. The region has been deemed “a sort of geological museum” combining types of soil found in regions of France as diverse as Beaujolais, Anjou or Saumur, to quote François Mercury, a retired wine-grower and professor of philosophy.

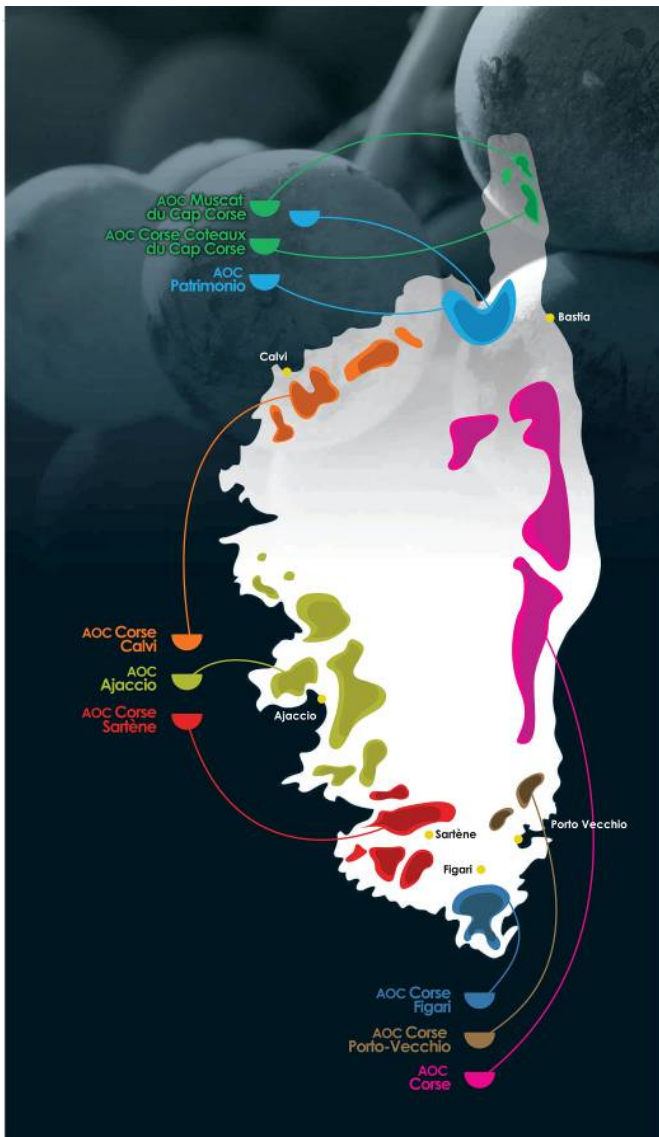


Corsica's lively and distinctive culture, together with an often pristine natural environment, has contributed towards maintaining the island's soul. The village fair is one way to discover Corsica: it is a showcase for the Corsican way of life and its winemaking tradition going back centuries, together with a gastronomic *savoir-faire* that dazzles the palate.

When, in the evening, visitors hear the *paghjelle* — the traditional three-voice singing typical of the island — they feel that they are in another world, steeped in tradition and in the pride of the Corsican people.

## Corsican wines: tradition, modernity, authenticity

Under the *Wines of Corsica* banner, CIVC promotes wines that combine modernity with tradition and quality. The largely untouched character of the island's hinterland, together with the Mediterranean climate, the sea air, the mountainous terrain, and the nature of the local soil have given Corsican wines an unrivalled appeal, which has been strengthened over the years by the local wine-growers' know-how.



Corsica boasts no fewer than nine AOC wines, as well as a range of *vins de pays* (regional specialty wines) that also have a lot to offer. The island region has a surface area of about 7,000 hectares devoted to wine-growing, which makes it the third largest wine-producing island in the Mediterranean (after Sicily and nearby Sardinia, which are both part of Italy). Corsican wine-growers produce about 400,000 hectolitres of wine per year.

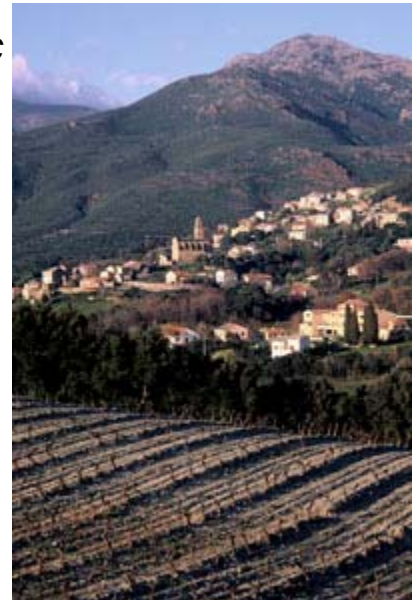
Beyond the mere statistics, Corsica's wine-growing pride resides in the fact that the Corsican vineyards are truly without equivalent anywhere else in Europe, due to the region's insular geography and its isolation over the centuries — and the origins of Corsica's vineyards go back 2,000 years...

The indigenous vines are especially resilient and of great originality. The ripening phase of the grapes starts in early August and the grape-harvest takes place in mid-September, which is 10 to 15 days longer, on average, than in mainland French wine-growing regions such as Burgundy or Champagne.

Corsican grape varieties include three main types. *Sciaccarellu*, which dominates the parts of the island characterised by granitic soils, notably around Ajaccio and Sartène, produces wines of great finesse — noble and supple reds that carry peppery and red-fruit aromas. They represent 15% of the total wine-growing area. *Niellucciu* (35%) gives the wines of *Patrimoine* their reputation. It is found on the west coast and is well-adapted to limestone soils, producing wines with a complex bouquet that is both gamey and flavoured with hints of liquorice. Finally, *Vermentinu* (17%) produces dry white wines of very high quality, with a bouquet of aromas combining flowers, apples and almonds.

Since 1977, a drive towards improving the quality of Corsican wines has had a positive impact. At the time, an uprooting programme was implemented in order to reduce the size of the vineyard and aim for quality of output, as opposed to quantity. (In the 1960s and early 1970s, the volume of wine produced had increased considerably, with output reaching 2 million hectolitres of wine per year, and a surface area devoted to wine-growing reaching 30,000 hectares.)

The *Patrimoine* AOC was created in 1968, and the *Ajaccio* AOC in 1971. The *Wines of Corsica* AOC was established soon afterwards and it includes six *Village* categories — *Calvi*, *Coteaux du Cap Corse*, *Figari*, *Porto-Vecchio*, *Sartène* and one category for *Natural Sweet Wine*. The *Muscat* AOC is more recent and was granted in 1993: it covers the Cap de Corse district.



Since 1996 and the setting-up of CIVC, the efforts aimed at improving quality have intensified, building on the traditional know-how of Corsican wine-growers. CIVC represents all Corsican AOC wine growers as well as *vins de pays* producers. Structured in co-operatives, Corsican producers are now selling increasing quantities of wine in mainland France as well as exporting their wines to North America (Canada and the USA) and to the Far East (Japan), among other destinations.



A collective action plan implemented under the auspices of CIVC (2006) currently aims to move on to the next stage and raise the international profile of Corsica's wines. Further modernisation of the production facilities and techniques is being rolled out in a strict respect for local traditions and the authenticity of Corsican wines.

## Corsican wines: Key data

At the end of 2007, there were about 450 producers of wine in Corsica — both independent and co-operatives. Wine remains Corsica's most valued and largest single export and it generates a turnover of about €120 million per year (2006 figures).



In 2006, the surface area devoted to wine-growing amounted to approximately 6,850 hectares. *Vins de Table* represented <10% of the total, against about 30% for AOC (a proportion that has been rising), and close to 60% for *Vins de Pays*.

Among *Vins de Pays*, reds and rosé wines represented about 40% of output each, with white wines amounting to the remaining 20%. Within the *Vins de Pays* category, ordinary *Vins de Pays* represented 60% of the total, while the higher-quality *Vins de Cépape* amounted to 40% of the total.

Among AOC wines, rosé wines represented nearly 50% of the total output in 2006, against 40% for reds and 10% approximately for white wines.

In terms of export markets, for *Vins de Pays*, about a third are consumed on the island, a third sold in mainland France, and a third outside France (2006 figures). For AOC wines, the proportion drunk locally is higher (70%), with 15% of total output being sold in mainland France, and another 15% being sold outside France. The domestic market remains very strong, since about 45% of Corsican wines are consumed in Corsica.

Main export markets include Germany (largest export market), followed by Belgium and the UK as well as Finland. Outside Europe, Corsican wines are sold in North America (particularly in Canada) and in the Far East (Thailand and China). There is no doubt that Corsican wines have strong export potential, which is yet to be fully realised.

## Corsican wines: 2008 Figures

For the year 2008, the key figures are as follows (in hectolitres, rounded up or down to nearest '5' or '10').

Total output for the region (wine in hectolitres)	336,590 (2006: 374,435)
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Including:

▶ <i>Vins de Pays</i> and <i>Vins de Cépages</i> (provisional)	200,000 (2006 : 245,000)
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▶ <i>Vins de Table</i>	20,000 (2006: 15,000)
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▶ AOC wines	116,590 (2006: 114,435)
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Of which:

■ AOC <i>Ajaccio</i>	7,945
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■ AOC <i>Patrimonio</i>	14,220
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■ AOC <i>Corse</i>	67,415
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■ AOC <i>Corse Calvi</i>	8,425
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■ AOC <i>Corse Coteaux du Cap Corse</i>	1,035
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■ AOC <i>Corse Porto-Vecchio</i>	2,585
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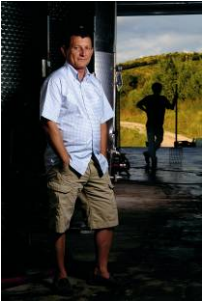
■ AOC <i>Corse Sartène</i>	7,770
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■ AOC <i>Corse Figari</i>	5,285
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■ AOC <i>Muscat du Cap Corse</i>	1,910
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## The Wine Growers

### Domaine Comte Abbatucci – Jean-Charles Abbatucci



The Comte Abbatucci Estate, located near Ajaccio, was restored by Jean-Charles Abbatucci using biodynamic principles. (Biodynamics is a technique whereby vines are grown according to the stars and to the lunar calendar.) For its wines, the estate relies exclusively on Corsican grape varieties, whether white (Bianco Gentile and Rossola Bianca) or red (Carcagholu Neru, Minustellu and Muresconu).

### Clos Canarelli – Yves Canarelli

The Clos Canarelli's vineyards receive excellent sunshine exposure and, in addition, frequent winds and mountain updrafts further improve the quality of the wine. Yves Canarelli's passion for the local soil, his meticulous approach and his ongoing research into Corsican grapes, biodynamic cultivation and indigenous yeast all help his estate create high-quality, original wines. The estate has also recently constructed a new cellar, which includes a wine-aging warehouse.



### Domaine de Vaccelli – Alain and Gérard Courrèges

Located in the Taravu Valley, the Vaccelli vineyard was founded by Roger Courrèges, the father of Alain Courrèges, the current owner. While the original plantations were sloping, when Alain Courrèges took over the estate in 1974, he decided to restructure it, adding island grape vines to the existing vines. He built his cellar in 1990 – it is partially buried under granite, which ensures good preservation and aging for the wines, which are partly aged in oak casks.

### Domaine Vico/Clos Venturi – Jean-Marc and Manu Venturi



This vineyard was planted by Jean Vico in 1902. In a pioneering move, he took the innovative but risky decision to plant vines on high ground, beyond the boundaries of traditional vineyard-planting in Corsica. François Acquaviva, Jean Marc Venturi, and Manu Venturi — two businessmen and an oenologist — took over the *domaine* in 1990 and completely restructured it. Their pursuit of quality continues, as they experiment with specific *vinification* processes for each plot within the estate. Having introduced *agriculture raisonnée* (i.e. sustainable agriculture) to

the island of Corsica, the owners of the *domaine* aim to produce modern-style wines that are nevertheless in line with local traditions, out of what is the highest vineyard in Corsica.

### **Domaine La Punta – Alain Lugarini and François Paoli**

La Punta Estate is made up of three distinct plots spread across Tallone and Aleria. Founded in 1965, then restructured in 1990, the 30-hectare estate rests upon clay-limestone soil with disintegrated granite. Traditional grape varieties — Vermentinu, Niellucciu, Syrah, Grenache and Sciaccarellu — provide about 130,000 bottles a year, most of which are sold directly by the vineyard, as well as throughout the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur region of south-eastern France.



### **Clos Culombu – Etienne Suzzoni**

The Clos Culombu vineyard, which was founded in 1973 by Paul Suzzoni, takes up 60 hectares. In 1986, Paul’s brother Etienne Suzzoni took over management of the estate. The vines, which enjoy due south exposure between the 2,000-metre Monte Grosso and the Gulf of Calvi, are cultivated according to traditional methods – neither chemical fertilisers nor weed-killers are used. Corsican grape varieties (Niellucciu, Sciaccarellu, and Vermentinu) are grown, alongside Mediterranean-type grape varieties (Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault), which round off the rosé’s composition.

### **Domaine Vecchio – Florence Giudicelli-Girard**

Florence Giudicelli and her husband Jérôme Girard, a professional oenologist, decided to found their own estate in their native Corsica, naming it the Vecchio Estate. It is a plot of sloping land in the Linguizetta municipality, enjoying excellent exposure. The 10-hectare plot benefits from an original microclimate, with upswings and downswings in temperature induced by sea breezes and the nearby mountains. The vineyard includes grape varieties such as Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay, as well as local types of grapes.

### **Domaine Pero Longo – Pierre Richarme**



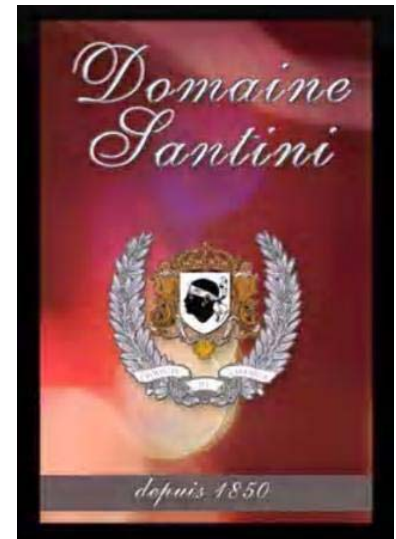
Founded early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Pero Longo estate was taken over in 1965 by Pierre Richarme, the current owner. Featuring a mix of traditional Sartène AOC grape varieties (Sciaccarellu, Niellucciu and Vermentinu), the vineyard enjoys a warm, well-ventilated climate that fosters healthy vines. Following a decision to move over to organic cultivation, the estate began its conversion in June 2000. In addition, biodynamics guidelines were already in place. Located on the route from Ajaccio to Bonifacio, the Pero Longo Estate nestles 15km south of Sartène.

### **Clos Poggiale – Elise Costa**

Clo Poggiale was founded by the Skalli family in the early 1960s. The Skalli family, which first began winemaking in 1920, now has wine-growing estates across Southern France, from the Rhône Valley to Languedoc, and from Corsica to Provence. Clos Poggiale uses traditional cultivation methods to bring out all the potential of the outstanding *terroir*, using local grape varieties such as Vermentino and Nielluccio.

### Domaine Santini – Franck Santini Montemagni

As the grandson of winegrower Louis Montemagni, Franck Santini benefited from 150 years' worth of family experience before establishing his own vineyard. Patrimoine wines are produced from the most noble island grape varieties – Nielluccio for red and rosé wines, and Malvoisie (Vermentino) for white wines. These grape varieties give Patrimoine wines their distinguished character and authentic Corsican aroma (or *nose*), while the clayey-limestone soil adds expression to the wine produced on the estate. In addition, Domaine Santini offers a range of *aperitif* drinks and various liqueurs.



### Domaine Orenca de Gaffory – Henry Orenca de Gaffory



Patrimoine's vast plains and hillsides have been home to vineyards since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Orenca de Gaffory *domaine* was founded in its present location 30 years ago. Restored by the Orenca de Gaffory family since 1989, Clos San Quilico is the oldest estate of the region, lying around farm buildings dating back to the 18th century. The *domaine* benefits from original and favourable soil and climatic conditions. The different grape varieties – Vermentinu (for the white wines), Niellucciu (for the reds and rosés) and Muscat à petit grains (for the fortified wines) – thrive in these exceptional conditions. The Orenca estate's success stems from a unique chemistry of the kind that blends traditional vine cultivation with a perfect mastery of modern winemaking techniques.

### Domaine de Piana and Clos Alivu – Eric Poli

The Clos l'Alivu estate is located at the foot of Mount Sant Angelo. Its clay-limestone and shale soil grows 40-year-old Niellucciu and Vermentino vines. The estate enjoys a microclimate influenced by the proximity of the Gulf of Saint-Florent, which helps the vines reach a fine maturity. The vines also benefit from purifying sea breezes, which reduce the need for treatment and bring beneficial freshness to the vines at dusk.

## Clos Teddi – Marie Brigitte Poli

Located within the vicinity of the Agriates Desert, this vineyard covers 43 hectares in a single, unbroken surface, which explains why it is named the *Clos* (enclosure). The vines, which enjoy the proximity of the sea and its purifying breezes, are cultivated free of all fertilisers and pesticides. The vineyard has the benefit of a fairly complex geological structure featuring disintegrated granite. It includes Niellucciu, Grenachea and Vermentinu vines, as well as Sciaccarellu vines, which are rare in the Patrimonio area: this particular grape variety gives red wines a peppery finish.

## Domaine Gentile – Jean-Paul Gentile

The estate was founded by Dominique Gentile and is now managed by Jean-Paul Gentile, his son. The estate, which is part of the Patrimonio *appellation*, offers a wide range of wines, which are made using traditional Corsican grape varieties. The estate uses an underground wine-aging warehouse to maintain a stable temperature and perfect hygrometry.



► For further information, or to register to attend the event, please contact:

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**The UBIFRANCE press office in London is part of the French Trade Commission in the United Kingdom and helps promote French companies in their export drive into the British market. UBIFRANCE is France's export-support agency. All media enquiries should go to Ms Kate Ambler, Press Officer. This press pack is issued by the UBIFRANCE press office in London on behalf of CIVC, the Corsican wine-growers' trade association, based in Corsica (France).**