



Transmission - The inheritance of a know-how

Excellence as a family tradition

In 1952, Guy MILLET founded his cooperage in Puisseguin, next to Saint-Emilion, in the heart of the Bordeaux vineyard. His son Dominique worked with him for years, thus taking advantage of his experience and master cooper know-how.

In 1995, Dominique MILLET took the leading role in the family company and, in 2000, he decided to move the workshop in Galgon city, where it is located today.

Guy MILLET's work as a master cooper instilled the culture of craftsmanship excellence in the heart of the company: each barrel is manufactured and personalized with particular attention. We are a family cooperage, on a human scale, and our priority is a direct relationship with our customers: it is the only way we can meet everyone's specific expectations.

A legacy for future generations

To inherit a know-how is a wonderful opportunity and Dominique MILLET is striving to share it now. He is much involved in different training structures and thus ensures the transmission of his knowledge to new generations of coopers. His technical expertise is being used for boards of examiners.

Selecting the oak - The origin, the forest

French oak

We work mainly with French oak selected among the finest trees grown in the great state-owned forests. We search for a particular type of grain, fine or extra-fine, in order to perpetuate the French tradition of coopering excellence.

All our French oak is carefully selected to best meet winegrower's needs, with different certified origins available:

- "Origine Aquitaine", firmly rooted in our local region,
- "Origine Centre-France", for the purest tradition of French forestry,
- Our "Forest Selection", offering stock from forests known for the quality of their staves. For the 2018 vintage, our purchaser has chosen Perseigne, Orléans, Bellême and Russy forests.

Other types of wood

Some grape varieties or vintages require a different approach to the way barrels are used. In order to achieve certain aromatic qualities, we also work with white American oak, wild cherry or acacia wood, for which we have developed a particular expertise.

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Sustainable management & traceability

The French National Forestry Office (ONF) is a key player and partner of the coopering industry and manages 11 million hectares of public forest. Forest maintenance, development and sustainable renewal are the guiding principles of its work.

To guarantee irreproachable traceability of all the products we manufacture, we have put in place a numbering system for each batch of staves and barrel. The geographic origin of the oak used to build each barrel can thus be determined from its unique number.

Maturation

Letting nature do its work

Ever since our cooperage creation by Guy MILLET in 1952, we cultivate the art of natural drying of our staves. Time and nature are our greatest allies in refining the heart of the oak staves destined to compose the body of your barrels.

Knowing the environment

All our rough staves are matured freely in the open air in the dedicated staveyard located in the front of our workshop. The maturation process is therefore subject to the weather and, just like winegrowers are familiar with the meteorological components of their terroir, our cooper know-how also

involves being familiar with our own!

Having been established on the Right Bank of the Garonne for almost 70 years now, we have acquired significant experience on this subject.

In practical terms, all year round we take temperature and rainfall measurements. This careful monitoring, in association with our knowledge of the different wood types, allows us to better adjust the maturation time required for each batch of rough staves.

Crafting the oak

To optimise the effects of the weather, we have adopted a stave stacking method known as "open stack". This notably allows better distribution of exposure to the sun and rain on all sides of the wood and across the full height of the pallet.

The oak matures this way for 18 to 36 months. The sun, wind and rain alone help to obtain optimum moisture level and release its full aromatic and tannic range.

Did you know?

A freshly cut piece of oak has a moisture level of nearly 70%! The rough staves are considered to be "through-dried" when this level descends to approximately 15%. It is a required condition for good coopering to guarantee the dimensional stability of the barrel over time.

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Toasting

Revealed by the fire

Terroir, grape variety, plot selection and vintage require each barrel to be specially designed and made for the wine it will hold. Once the wood type and volume have been chosen, we toast the barrel according to your requirements through a careful combination of heat intensity and duration.

Toasting over fire

Since the origins of coopering, toasting was notably used to gradually bend the oak staves and give them their curved shape, without altering their physical resistance. The empirical practice of the work has nevertheless led coopers to understand the effect of toasting on wines aged in oak barrels, including the release of oak aromas, the addition of grilled or smoked notes and the reduction of tannic structure. This has led to the art of « bousinage », the key stage in the heating process, which is now carried out after bending.

Toasting over a wood fire is the traditional method, which consists in burning the oak offcuts to enhance the aromatic character of the toasting process, while also recycling them for energy recovery. Choosing the size and weight of the offcuts is also part of the master cooper's expertise.

Our range of toasts

In our workshop, the only expertise coming into play during the toasting process is that of our coopers. No thermometers, sensors or other technology: human skill is at the heart of the process.

We deliberately offer a small range of 4 toasts:

- "Medium" toast (M): sweet vanilla aromas, unctuousness and well-balanced tannins,
- "Medium Plus" toast (M+): grilled and toasted notes, hints of spices and coffee, soft tannic structure,
- "Medium Long" (ML): fine and discreet nose, delicate and respectful structure, length on the palate,
- "Amber" toast: great sweetness, long breakdown of tannins and maximum respect of the fruit.

Our traditional craftsmanship enables us to respond to many enquiries: we shall study any special requirement upon request.

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