



WESTSIDE LIQUOR LIQUOR NEWSLETTER



Westside Liquor Newsletter

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Cognac

Cognac is very complicated liquor. There are many different aspects to cognac. Cognac is very special liquor. There is a lot that goes into making and getting ready to sell it. I will go through the classifications, distilling process and some of the history of cognac.

First Cognac is a kind of brandy. It is named after the town of Cognac in France. Any cognac needs to be in compliance of certain legal requirements. It needs to be made from certain grapes. It must be distilled twice in copper pot stills and aged at least two years in French oak barrels from Limousin or Tronçais. Most cognacs are actually aged considerably longer than the minimum legal requirements. The way they age is similar to both whiskeys and wine in the barrels.

Cognac is a fruit brandy so the process to ferment and distill is quite a bit different than others. To start the distilling process after the grapes are pressed, the juice is left to ferment for two or even three weeks. At this point the resulting wine is about 7-8% alcohol. Distillation takes place in copper stills. This design and dimensions are legally controlled. The cognac must be distilled twice to stay up to par with the cognac regulations. The end result of this is a colorless spirit of about 70% alcohol.

Once the distillation is complete, it must be aged in oak for at least two years before it can be sold to the public. Many cognacs are aged much longer than the minimum two years. As the cognac interacts with the oak barrel and the air, it evaporates at the rate of 3% a year. This causes it to slowly lose both alcohol and water; because of this the cognac reaches the appropriate 40% alcohol in about four to five years. Most producers blend different ages together to keep the consistency the same through out their years of practice. Very few producers do not practice this technique.

There are many different grades that you may see on the labels. Usually the higher the grade the more expensive the product runs and the rarer it is. There are a few others but these are the main grades. The official quality grades of cognac are the following:

- **V.S.:** very special or three stars. This designates a blend which the youngest brandy has been stored for at least two years in a cask.
- **V.S.O.P:** very superior old pale. This designates a blend in which the youngest brandy is stored for at least four years in a cask, but the average wood age is much older.
- **XO:** extra old. This designates a blend in which the youngest brandy is stored for at least six years but on average for upwards of 20 years. In 2016 the minimum will be set to ten years.

While there is close to 200 cognac producers, a large percentage of cognac is mainly consistent of the same 4 producers. A 2008 estimate stated that 90% of all cognacs were produced by the same four companies; Hennessy, Courvoisier, Martell and Remy Martin.

Hpnotiq is a liqueur which is a blend of natural fruit juices, cognac and also vodka. This was basically produced to target female drinkers who wanted vodka or cognac but did not want an overpowering drink. Hpnotiq mainly has a passion fruit taste but they also have launched the Hpnotiq Harmonie as well now. The Hpnotiq Harmonie is more of an infused berry taste and is a light violet color. Both are very easy drinkers and are very easy to mix with. So if you're not as into straight cognac there are also alternatives that have cognac in them.

I know this was just a brief overview but I hope this gave everyone insight in what is really special about cognac. It's more complex than regular brandy and defiantly has more regulations, but if you do like brandy give cognac a try. It's amazing how many people do not realize that it is a brandy just made in a specific region in France and with a little more complex background. If you like me and personally are not much a fan of cognac, try something like Hpnotiq because it is really a treat. As always here are recipes to close out this newsletter.

Bubbles and Blue

- 2 oz Hpnotiq
- 2 oz champagne
- Pour chilled hpnotiq and champagne into champagne flute

Incredible Hulk

- 2 oz Hennessy
- 2 oz Hpnotiq

CoCo Bliss

- 3 oz Hpnotiq Harmonie
- 1 oz premium coconut vodka

Harmonie Splash

- 3 oz Hpnotiq Harmonie
- 1 oz premium vodka
- 1 oz grapefruit juice
- Splash of grenadine

Three Kings (floater)

- $\frac{3}{4}$ oz Coffee liqueur(bottom)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ oz Galliano
- $\frac{3}{4}$ oz cognac(top)

Wagon Wheel

- 2 oz southern comfort
- 1 oz cognac
- 1 oz sour mix
- $\frac{1}{2}$ oz grenadine
- Shake and strain into chilled glass