

# Where to Eat

THE ONLY BANGKOK RESTAURANT GUIDE  
TO TELL IT HOW IT REALLY IS

IMAGE asia

[Home](#) | [Print Version](#) | [Advertise](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Links](#)

[What's New?](#) | [Holes in the Wall](#) | [Features](#) | [Favourite Dish](#) | [Dining Bargains](#) | [Maps](#) | [Symbols](#) | [Directory](#)  
[Restaurant Listings](#) | [Reviews](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Places to Go](#) | [Services & Suppliers](#) | [Places on the Move](#) | [Recipes](#)

Where to Eat in Bangkok > Home > Restaurant Features > **Wines of the World: Vin de Pays from France**

## Features:

[Dining in Converted Houses](#)  
[A Primer on Booze: Rum](#)

## From Previous Issues

[Dining on Chao Phraya River](#)  
[A Primer on Booze: Tequila](#)

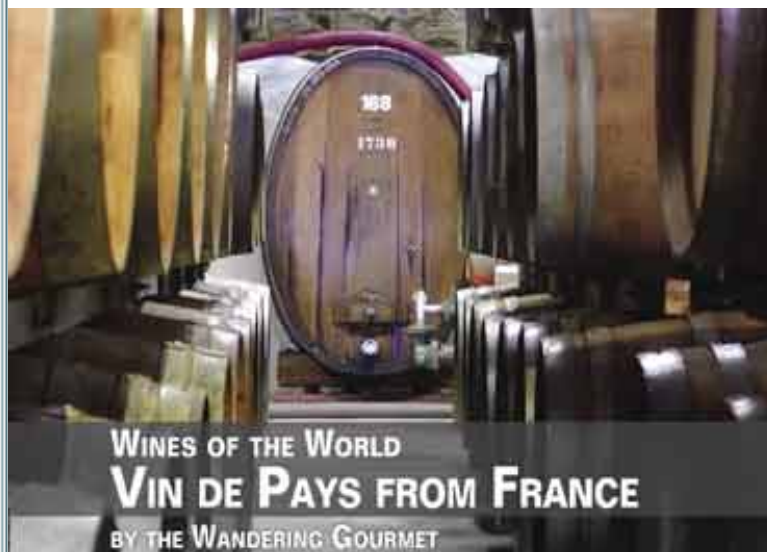
[Bangkok's Best Steaks](#)  
[A Primer on Booze: Part 1](#)  
[The Energy Food Syndrome](#)  
[Gin](#)  
[French Food in Bangkok](#)  
[Nectar from Spain](#)  
[Afternoon Tea](#)  
[Lee Café Advertorial](#)  
[Australian Wine](#)  
[Tasty New Tipples](#)  
[Little Bo Peep's Missing Sheep](#)  
[Siam City Advertorial](#)  
[Wyndham Thai Advertorial](#)  
[Castello Banfi Wine Maker](#)  
[Salad: It's good for you!](#)  
[Business Set Lunches](#)  
[Reducing Fusion Confusion](#)  
[Sunday Brunch with the Kids](#)  
[Sauvignon Blanc](#)  
[Best Burgers in Bangkok](#)  
[Aphrodisiacs](#)  
[Wines of the World](#)  
[Vin de Pays from France](#)  
[Lies We Eat](#)  
[Bakery Bargains](#)  
[Siam Winery at Samut Sakorn](#)  
[A Dummies' Guide Pizzas](#)  
[The Truth About Thai Seafood](#)  
[Disposable Restaurants](#)  
[Japanese Dining in Bangkok](#)  
[Service With a Smile?](#)  
[A Handle on Italian Wines](#)

## Wines of the World: Vin de Pays from France

### See Also

[Maps](#)  
[Bangkok](#)

## FEATURES



### Looking for some reasonably priced competition for

Bangkok's often boring selection of New World Chardonnays, Merlots and Cabernet Sauvignons? If you are, think Vin de Pays, France's surprising and increasingly significant answer to the competition from wine makers in other countries. At the present time there are about 150 different Vin de Pays designations in France and they cover about 2/3rds of the country's surface area. The wines are occasionally of dubious quality, but more often than not, they are a hit rather than a miss and almost always represent good value for money.

The French, as the world knows, take wine seriously and their national classification system shows it. There are four official categories of wine in France. The lowest category, Vin de Table, covers basic wines that don't meet the standards for being in one of the higher categories. Basically all that is required of these wines is that they be made with grapes grown in France. Although these wines are often quite drinkable, in Thailand they frequently aren't worth purchasing as better wines from other countries – Chile or South Africa for example – can be purchased at the same price.

The next highest category, Vins de Pays, the wines we are talking about, are known as 'country wines'. Created in 1968, this is the category in France where excitement and innovation is now taking place.

The category Vin D limit  de Qualit  Sup rieure (VDQS) is the third highest category of wine in France. It has many of the same requirements as the highest category, but it is shrinking in size as wines are moved up to the highest level. There has recently been talk of eliminating this category altogether.

The highest category of wine in France is Appellation

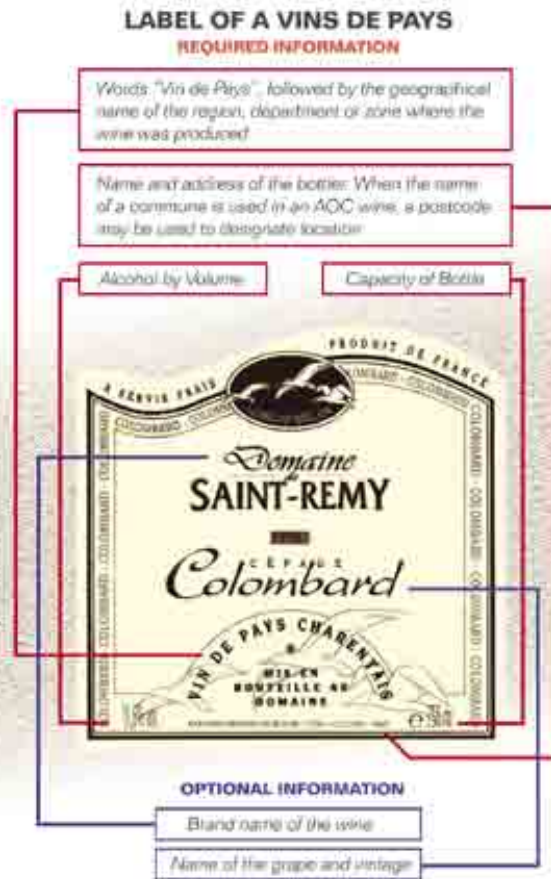
d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC or simply AC). Many people only buy French wine with this designation on the label as they assume it is synonymous with high quality. Wines of this level must meet standards concerning location, grape varieties, alcohol content, yield per acre, methods of grape growing, methods of wine making, and finally, the wine must be tasted and evaluated by a tasting panel.



There are multitudes of AOC's in France with individual standards and requirements distinguishing the wines of each AOC. These individual traits are what make the wines of one AOC different from those of another, and the wines of one AOC distinguished, and the wines of another simply ordinary. Simply put, this means that when you buy a French wine with an AOC appellation on the label, you are buying a wine crafted according to a specific set of requirements. This gives the wines of each appellation a specific personality and character, but, contrary to what many believe, it doesn't always insure quality.

There is no denying the French classification system has worked to maintain general standards, but there is a great deal of unexciting and very ordinary wine produced with AOC designations on their labels. Two important factors conspire to make this a reality. This first is that the French classification system – like any classification system – preserves the status quo and benefits those who meet the standards when the system was created. Attempts to change or improve the system are often resisted by those who meet the initial standards. Secondly, makers of AOC wines must follow an extraordinarily detailed set of requirements to make their wines. Wine makers are restricted as to what grapes they can use and how they make their wines. In other words, they are in a straitjacket that inhibits and discourages innovation and change. As the world's wine drinking preferences have changed, many AOC wine makers have found consumers turning away from their wines in favour of wines they find more exciting. The AOC makers, however, cannot change their wines because of the restrictive requirements imposed.

Vin de Pays wines, however, because of generally less restrictive requirements are not in the straitjacket. This is best illustrated by the fact they can put the name of the grape varieties used in making the wine on the label, a practice seldom allowed under AOC regulations. Consumers in areas of the world like Australia and the United States – where wines are identified primarily by grape variety – often look at a bottle of French wine and mutter, "What's this?" It's easy for a Frenchman to attribute this to ignorance, but it is equally valid to attribute it to French arrogance. Not everyone has been raised in France and premium wine is now made throughout the world, making it difficult for anyone to remember the characteristics of a wine identified solely by where it was produced. For mere mortals, wines with varietal labels add a feeling of familiarity and greatly simplify the wine selection process.



Like VDQS and AOC classified wines, terroir (location) plays a significant role in Vin de Pays classifications. Under French regulations there are three basic geographical categories available to Vin de Pays producers. The largest are regions, vin de pays régionaux, represented by well-known wines like Vin de Pays du Jardin de la France or Vin de Pays d'Oc (Languedoc). A region, in turn, can contain départements and there are vin de pays départementaux with wines like Vin de Pays de l'Aude. And finally, départements can be divided into zones with vin de pays de zone, resulting in wines like

Vin de Pays de la Vallée du Paradis or Vin de Pays de la Sainte Baume. In all instances a Vin de Pays must be made from grapes grown in the region specified on the label.



*J. P. Cheney, a Vin de Pays d'Oc, one of the largest geographical regions under French regulations*

AOC regulations restrict the type of grapes that can be used in making wines in the area prescribed by the regulations. Less restrictive Vin de Pays regulations enable wine makers to use a wider variety of grapes. An excellent example of this is Viognier, an increasingly popular white grape traditionally only permitted in AOC wines from the Northern Rhone Valley. Excellent Viognier varietal wines are now being produced as Vin de Pays in areas farther south. Similarly Cabernet and Merlot have migrated from their traditional haunts in Bordeaux to the south of France where they are made as varietals under Vin de Pays d'Oc regulations. Chardonnay, once found primarily in Burgundy, is now made as a Vin de Pays varietal all over France.

The best known of the Vin de Pays come from the south of France in Languedoc. The rules for Vin de Pays d'Oc are lenient, especially with regard to the types of grapes that can be used. This has made the region France's largest producer of varietal wines and the primary source of some of France's best wine values. Needless to say, it is also the area where the primary growth in the French wine industry has occurred in the last few years.

Don't get the impression that Vin de Pays wines aren't subject to regulation. The French take wine making seriously so the wines are subject to specific guidelines. As mentioned previously, the wine must come from grapes grown exclusively in the area designated on the label. It can only be made from designated grape varieties (usually much wider than for AOC wines) and it is subject to laboratory analysis to examine things like the amount of

sulphites used. And finally, the wine must be tasted to see that it is worthy of accreditation.

Bangkok's wine shops are filled with Vin de Pays from France, but many consumers pass them by for wines from the New World. This can be a mistake as many as Vin de Pays are of equal or superior quality and often less expensive. The next time you are in the market for a bottle of immediately drinkable wine of decent quality, do yourself a favour and think 'Vin de Pays'.



[Site Map](#)

[Go to Top](#)

**IMAGE**  
asia

62/10 Soi Prompak, Sukhumvit 49/6 Klongton, Wattana, Bangkok, 10110, Thailand Tel/Fax +66 (0) 2712 9410  
Editorial: +66 (0) 8 4914 0776 / mm@wheretoeat-bangkok.com  
Sales: +66 (0) 8 6633 6933 / yu@wheretoeat-bangkok.com  
Administration/Accounts: Tel: +66 (0) 7626 4491, Fax: +66 (0) 7626 4454, Email: nit@image-asia.com