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Guardian
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Vive la vodka!

Vive la vodka: the unmistakable Frenchness of Grey Goose

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Sarah Gillespie

Fri 5 Nov 2021 15.08 GMT

Stretching from the Parisian suburbs to the vineyards of Champagne, Picardy is a flat, low region dotted with medieval churches and pastel-hued resort towns. The oceanic climate – mild, wet and windy – ensures perfect wheat without irrigation. Sown in autumn, this soft winter wheat matures over nine months. It retains consistent quality year after year, earning Picardy the nickname “the breadbasket of France”. Some of this wheat, however, is destined to be fermented – not baked.

“If this wheat is good enough for French bread, then it is good enough for Grey Goose,” says François Thibault, the man who drew on his 25 years of wine and cognac-making

expertise, knowledge of French culinary values such as quality and provenance, and a touch of inspiration, to create Grey Goose French Vodka. "From simplicity and quality," he says sagely, "comes incredible complexity."

Grey Goose uses just two ingredients: spring water from Grey Goose's own well in Gensac-la-Pallue, Cognac; and soft winter wheat from Picardy. Even in the potato-rich countries of eastern Europe, wheat is the number one ingredient in its vodka - making wheat provenance of crucial importance. French wheat is renowned for its quality - and the best wheat in France is grown in Picardy.

All the wheat used in making Grey Goose comes from fields within 30 miles of the distillery. Just as a single-origin coffee allows distinctive characteristics to come to the fore, using a single wheat for Grey Goose enables its uniquely French qualities to shine through.

Creating an "icon"

Having trained as a winemaker, Thibault spent 25 years in cognac-making, rising from apprentice to *maître de chai* (cellar master), before being approached by the American businessman Sidney Frank. Frank had an audacious plan: to launch the world's first super-premium vodka in France, even though vodka is traditionally associated with eastern Europe.

Seeing the potential, Thibault accepted the challenge. "I saw a gap in the market and wanted to create a real icon," he says. Thibault had a staunch belief in the quality of French produce, a belief formed by his years of experience in cognac-making. "It introduced me to all the fine ingredients that France has to offer - from waters rich in calcium to the best-tasting wheat," he says.



📷 François Thibault

Over the four-day production process, the spirit is subjected to a staggering 550 quality checks – both human and technical. Thibault personally tastes and approves every batch. “I am controlling every single aspect of how the alcohol is transformed and refined,” he says.

The proof is on the palate

All these aspects – from single-origin ingredients to rigorous final checks – combine to make a vodka that is as French as haute couture and gourmet cuisine. The spirit is crystal clear, with a faint hint of fresh bread and lemon zest on the nose. The taste is superbly clean: peppery heat tempered by creamy almond and apple notes. An aftertaste of cracked black pepper and faint aniseed lingers on the palate.

Swirling the spirit around the glass confirms the quality. The “legs” of the vodka (the pattern that forms on the inside of the glass) have substantial body – and they don’t fall quickly. In other vodkas they can, which is a sign of added sugar. While Grey Goose is perfect alone, it also elevates any cocktail you make.

By creating a spirit as complex and versatile as Grey Goose, Thibault has dispelled the image of vodka as tasteless mixer fodder. “I wanted to prove that with a thoughtful distillation process, you can reveal the unique aromas of our wheat and even the fermentation,” he says. “Personally, I think a quality vodka is best enjoyed in a martini cocktail, where there are few ingredients and nowhere to hide.”

But although Grey Goose is high-end, Thibault maintains that it is not exclusive. “Don’t just save Grey Goose for rare special occasions,” he says. “People should treat themselves to quality more often.”

Classic martini cocktail

The ultimate expression of sophistication, vodka has nowhere to hide in this simple but effective cocktail. *Serves one.*

50ml Grey Goose Vodka

10ml extra dry vermouth

A dash of orange bitters

Add all the ingredients to a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Vigorously shake, before straining into a chilled martini cocktail glass. Garnish with a twist of lemon (use any other citrus if you prefer bright flavours), or try olives, capers or even pickled onions if you prefer a slightly salty and savoury taste.

Try Grey Goose Vodka for yourself to find out why its quality and flavour make every cocktail a special occasion