

Muscadet wines introduce a hierarchy... for real

 vitisphere.com/news-88633-Muscadet-wines-introduce-a-hierarchy-for-real.htm



"We need to energise the entry-level segment", insists Olivier Martin, spokesman for the Nantes wine federation. - Photo credit : DR

Launched at least 5 years ago, the review of production specifications for the Muscadet appellations has just reached its epilogue at Inao, in the form of a sizeable 125-page file, whose contents include all the Muscadet appellations. As a reminder, there are not one but several Muscadet appellations: the generic AC, Sèvre-et-Maine, Côtes de Grandlieu, Coteaux de la Loire and the site-specific names Gorges, Clisson and Le Pallet.

Although resembling a hierarchy, it is not as well established in reality because volumes do not comply with a classic pyramid shape. Produced from an official area under vine of just over 8,000 hectares, volumes are distributed in an "average" year between 100,000 hectolitres of Muscadet AC, approximately 300,000 hl for tier-two wines, and 2,000 hl of growths. So it's more of a pear shape than a pyramid....

Redesigning specifications aims to introduce a proper hierarchy among the tiers, by clearly defining them. The segmentation is defined as follows: *"On the first level, early-drinking wines; followed by more complex wines, characterised by traditional maturation on fine lees; and at the top, wines grown on outstanding vineyard sites, matured for over 15 months"*.

For the basic appellation, the new specifications therefore provide for an end to the fallback system and use of the term "sur lie", a reduction in planting density from 6,500 to 5,000 vines/ha, and the introduction of a secondary grape variety: Chardonnay. The proportion of the secondary grape variety, coupled with Melon de Bourgogne, must be less than or equal to 10% of the varietal range.