
Embedding Food and Drink Cultures: The case of Burgundy



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‘Real Burgundy is neither old Burgundy covered with forests nor young Burgundy laying its sweet carpet of meadows. It is the eternal Burgundy of vines; Burgundy in winter with its bare, shriveled stocks; Burgundy in spring with its festoons of tender little leaves; Burgundy in summer with its purple grapes full of juice; Burgundy in the fall with its lush crimson and gold leaves lit up by the October sun which is ever faithful to the vintage rendezvous.’
(Poupon, P., 1970)

Certain countries and regions are known to have strong and embedded food and drink cultures. Such cultures shape reputation, stimulate pride, define collective identity and drive local and national economies. They can also generate tourism, drawing large numbers of visitors to sample renowned produce.

Emergence of food and wine culture in Burgundy

Historical analysis reveals the emergence of Burgundy as a world-renowned centre of wine production and gastronomy, based not only on the quality of its produce, but also on instrumental business tactics employed by key individuals. The analysis starts with the rising interest in food and wine in the late 18th century. An exploration of the automobile industry and the wine roads, and also of events such as *la foire gastronomique de Dijon*, will reveal the development of gastronomic tradition, as well as contemporary trends.

Burgundians are proud of their region. They like to praise the beauty of the landscape that they have contributed to shaping: vine stocks which are impeccably aligned along straight rows, stone walls separating the plots and stone huts at the edge of the plots.

Burgundy also boasts one of the richest architectural and gastronomic heritages in France. It produces some of the world's best wines and yet, for a long time, the fame of its vineyards was not enough to attract tourists. The wine villages and the golden slopes of the Côte d'Or didn't inspire painters and artists. With the exception of painter Charles-François d'Aubigny's masterpiece: *Vintage in Burgundy* (1863) and Mr Gentet's lithographs which illustrate Doctor Lavalley's famous book of wine published in 1855, the iconographic representation of Burgundy's vineyards was very poor until the beginning of the 20th century. What is true is that before the phylloxera crisis (1878–1895) vines grew in a disorderly, unkempt, anarchic way.

Historical documents show that for a long time, travellers showed indifference to the landscapes even though they were happy to meet the growers.