

From James the Sommelier -Distinctions and Appellations

'Wine honors the soul, so honor it with yours'

Distinctions and Appellations - Wine's Quality Control!

So, after last week's contemplation of terroir it would be handy to explain how you *know* you are drinking a wine that displays this unique sense of place. Start thinking about the idea of protection. Use anything you want that you know; car alarms, house security systems, the liberal agenda of some states in America, it doesn't matter. The point is we install measures to prevent those kleptomaniacs among us from invading our personal belongings. Wine, now settling into privileged seniority, also has measures protecting it and its roots.

This comes in the form of appellations, which constitute a legal area for growing wine bestowed by a country's government on a region of particular quality. The idea being that if a region, let's say Bordeaux in France, is recognized as producing consistently high quality wine then it is offered an appellation to ensure that, first, the region becomes known and, second, to protect its style from being replicated by anyone else. The importance of this potential plagiarism being that a wine of distinction is integral to the region it comes from; that it is its terroir that makes it special.

Like many things wine-orientated, there is no surprise that appellations are a French invention and are most famously characterized by France's Appellation d' Origine Contrôlée (AOC). Members of the AOC, these knights of the wine table, vigorously taste wine all over France monitoring the quality from each region. However, it does not stop there. If you're not an AOC wine then what are you? Like anything in the world, if there is a top then there is, inevitably, a bottom and this is especially true in bourgeoisie France. Top down, wines are ordered as AOC, VDQS (AOC in waiting), Vin de Pays (country wine) and Vin de Table (table wine). This hierarchy is also included in any other country with an appellation system, in some shape or form.

Appellation d'Origine Controllee (AOC)	France
Denominazione di Origine Controllata Garantita (DOCG)	Italy
Denominacion de Origin (DdO)	Spain
Qualitätswein mit Pradikat (QP)	Germany
Denominacao de Origem Controlada (DOC)	Portugal
Districtus Austria Contrallatus) (DAC)	Austria
American Viticultural Areas (AVA)	America
Vinters Quality Alliance (VQA)	Canada
Wine of Origin (WA)	South Africa

This part of the increasingly distinguishable world drink does have an international spectrum. Appellations span nine countries around the world (see table) all desperately trying to solidify the institutional protection program developing around this senior citizen of drinks. And with some success, may I add. Italy has, inevitably, turned wine political, Spain has fought off the advances of Cabernet Sauvignon in favor of more traditional grapes and France has forced even America to stop calling sparkling wine Champagne! The EU has even snuck-in its own version into the bodice of regulations governing European states in the form of the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO). Don't worry old-timer, we have your back.

TIPS: Appellation: legally defined area of growth

Do some research and become familiar with different countries' distinctions

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