C/2025/1043

11.2.2025

Publication of a communication of approval of a standard amendment to the product specification for a name in the wine sector, as referred to in Article 17(2) and (3) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/33

(C/2025/1043)

This communication is published in accordance with Article 17(5) of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/33 [1].

COMMUNICATING THE APPROVAL OF A STANDARD AMENDMENT

'Palette'

PDO-FR-A0185-AM02

Date of communication: 15.1.2025

DESCRIPTION OF AND REASONS FOR THE APPROVED AMENDMENT

1. Geographical area

The product specification for the 'Palette' designation has been amended under point 1 'Geographical area' of Section IV 'Areas and places in which the various operations take place' of Chapter I, by adding the reference to the Official Geographic Code of 1 January 2023, without further change.

This editorial amendment allows the geographical area to be identified with reference to the 2023 version of the Official Geographic Code, which is issued by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), and gives the definition of the geographical area legal certainty.

The single document is completed with this reference to the heading 'geographical area'.

2. Cultivation method

Section 'VI – Vine training' of Chapter I of the product specification for the 'Palette' designation has been supplemented:

— under point 2°-b) Other cultivation methods: a provision has been added specifying that any chemical weed control is prohibited.

— under point 3° – Irrigation: the provisions governing irrigation have been laid down. Ferti-irrigation outside the authorised irrigation period and underground irrigation installations are prohibited. The maximum average crop load per parcel for irrigated plots has been reduced from 6 000 kg/ha to 5 500 kg/ha in order to preserve the quality of the grapes.

These provisions have been carried over to the single document under the heading 'Wine-making practices'.

3. Date of circulation of wines

Section IX 'Processing and bottling the wines' of Chapter I of the product specification for the 'Palette' designation has been amended. Under point 5°) the date from which wines can be circulated between traders and brokers has been deleted to allow wines to circulate among all operators and eliminate any risk of unfair competition.

This amendment does not affect the single document.

4. Inspection obligations with regard to producers

Chapters II and III of the product specification on reporting requirements for producers and the main points to be checked have been brought into line with the inspection plan for the designation.

[1] OJ L 9, 11.1.2019, p. 2.

This update does not affect the single document.

SINGLE DOCUMENT

1. **Name(s)**

Pallete

2. **Type of geographical indication**

PDO – protected designation of origin

3. **Categories of grapevine products**

1. Wine

3.1. *Combined Nomenclature code*

— 22 – BEVERAGES, SPIRITS AND VINEGAR

2204 – Wine of fresh grapes, including fortified wines; grape must other than that of heading 2009

4. **Description of the wine(s)**

BRIEF WRITTEN DESCRIPTION

The 'Palette' designation of origin may only be used for still red, white and rosé wines.

— The wines have a minimum natural alcoholic strength by volume of 11,5 %.

— At the packaging stage, the red wines have a malic acid content not exceeding 0,4 grams per litre.

— After fermentation, the white and rosé wines have a fermentable sugar content not exceeding 4 grams per litre.

— After fermentation, the red wine has a fermentable sugar content not exceeding 3 grams per litre.

— The total acidity, volatile acidity and total sulphur dioxide content are those laid down in EU legislation.

The red wines are dark in colour, with a fine and elegant bouquet of red fruit, often with notes of leather and cocoa and generous and rounded tannins. These are wines that keep well and need to be aged for a long period in wooden barrels to mature.

The rosé wines are well balanced and refined, with a bouquet reminiscent of flowers and fruit, and have a good structure in the mouth, a guarantee that they are suitable for ageing.

The white wines are complex and well balanced, and generally have a floral bouquet with notes of balsamic vinegar and pine kernels, an elegant vivacity, a good long-lasting finish and a remarkable capacity for ageing.

General analytical characteristics

— Maximum total alcoholic strength (in % volume): —

— Minimum actual alcoholic strength (in % volume): —

— Minimum total acidity: —

— Maximum volatile acidity (in milliequivalents per litre): —

— Maximum total sulphur dioxide (in milligrams per litre): —

5. **Winemaking practices**

5.1. *Specific oenological practices*

1. Cultivation method

— The minimum planting density of the vines is 4 000 plants per hectare.

The distance between the rows must not be more than 2,50 metres and the distance between plants in the same row must be at least 0,80 metres.

— The vines are spur-pruned (goblet or cordon de Royat) with a maximum of 12 buds per vine. Each spur has a maximum of 2 buds. By way of exception, Syrah N vines may have up to 18 buds with a maximum of 3 buds per spur.

— Vines that are over 50 years old (51st foliation) can be pruned to over 12 buds per vine.

— Irrigation during the vine growing season is only permitted in cases of persistent drought and if drought is disrupting the sound physiological development of the vines and the ripening of the grapes.

— Ferti-irrigation is prohibited outside the authorised irrigation period.

— Underground irrigation systems are prohibited.

— Where irrigation is authorised, the average maximum crop load per irrigated parcel is set at 5 500 kg per hectare.

— Chemical weed control is totally prohibited.

— The use of grape harvesting machines or any other harvesting method that does not enable the grapes to be transported to the winery in whole bunches is prohibited.

— Sorting the harvested grapes is obligatory to ensure that the grapes used to make the wine are of optimum quality.

— The harvest is transported in crates with a maximum capacity of 50 kilograms of grapes.

2. Specific oenological practice

— The use of wood chips is forbidden.

— For making rosé wines, use of oenological charcoal is permitted for the musts and new press wines still in fermentation within a limit of 10 % of the volume of rosé wines made by a given winegrower for a specific harvest, at a maximum amount of 60 grams per hectolitre.

In addition to the above provisions, the oenological practices concerning these wines must meet the requirements laid down at EU level and in the Rural and Maritime Fishing Code.

5.2. *Maximum yields*

45 hectolitres per hectare

6. **Demarcated geographical area**

The grapes are harvested and the wines made, developed and aged in parts of the following municipalities in the department of Bouches-du-Rhône, on the basis of the 2023 Official Geographic Code: Aix-en-Provence, Meyreuil and Le Tholonet.

7. **Wine grape variety(ies)**

Bourboulenc B - Doucillon blanc

Brun Fourca N

Cabernet Sauvignon N

Carignan N

Castets N

Cinsaut N - Cinsault

Clairette B

Clairette rose Rs

Colombaud B - Bouteillan

Durif N

Furmint B

Grenache N

Grenache blanc B

Mourvèdre N - Monastrell

Muscat d'Alexandrie B - Muscat, Moscato

Muscat de Hambourg N - Muscat, Moscato

Muscat à petits grains blancs B – Muscat, Moscato

Muscat à petits grains roses Rg – Muscat, Moscato

Pascal B

Picardan B - Araignan

Piquepoul blanc B

Syrah N - Shiraz

Terret gris G

Tibouren N

Téoulier N

Ugni blanc B

8. **Description of the link(s)**

8.1. *Details of the geographical area*

a) Description of the natural factors relevant to the link

The geographical area, located just outside Aix-en-Provence, forms a circle surrounded by woods, drained by the River Arc and protected from the winds by the Barres de Langesse and Grand Cabri hills and the Cengle mountain, at the foot of the imposing rocky mass of the Saint-Victoire mountain.

The name of the 'Palette' protected designation of origin is taken from the hamlet of that name located in the municipality of Tholonet.

The parcels used to harvest the grapes are precisely located upon Lutetian Tertiary limestone formations, corresponding, in the sector, to Montaiguet and Langesse lacustrine limestone formations that underpin part of the municipalities of Meyreuil, Tholonet and Aix-en-Provence, within which the geographical area is located.

Geologists also refer to the horizon of 'Palette' to describe these formations.

The stony, well-drained clay-limestone soils have principally formed on the lacustrine limestones of Langesse and Montaiguet and on the colluvium around the edges.

The topography leads to a distinct Mediterranean climate, protected from the cold north winds, and creates areas on the slopes and foothills that benefit from an average of 3 000 hours of sunshine per year and an average annual rainfall of 650 millimetres. This already favourable climatic context is further enhanced by the cooling effect of the area's opening, via the Arc valley, onto the Etang de Berre lagoon, whose sea breezes serve to dissipate any overly high temperatures in summer and help maintain a slight humidity at night, thus creating the optimal conditions for the grapes to ripen.

The vineyards are ensconced in the midst of the most magnificent countryside whose black spindles of cypress trees, vines, olive groves and pine trees, rising up out of the red earth, inspired the French painter Cézanne.

b) Description of the human factors relevant to the link

Vines, which had used to be grown in the pays d'Aix in the distant past, were planted more systematically during the reign of King René [known as Le bon roi René – Good King René], the winemaker king, Duke of Anjou and Count of Provence. King René introduced the 'Panse' varieties and muscat grapes to Provence, which still grow in the geographical area where 'Palette' is produced. During this period, the wines produced on the slopes of the Arc valley boasted an outstanding reputation and were even sought after by the King.

In 1455, he became the owner of the castle and estate of Gardanne situated on the southern edge of the territory of Meyreuil.

Outside the royal estate and in the surrounding countryside, King René promoted the planting of vineyards. He would authorise land transfers between private individuals in Gardanne only if the plots were planted with vines (Archives of the Bouches-du-Rhône – 1472).

From the ancient records of the Grand Carmelites of Aix (Departmental archives), we learn that in 1551 these monks, who had come from Provence, became the owners of the 'Bastide de Meyreuil'. They farmed this estate by focusing on producing olive oil and especially grapes and wine, while striving to improve the quality of the wine and spirits produced. The wines, recognised as remarkable, were already aged in underground cellars, which still existed in 2009, and that the monks themselves had dug out of the hill.

Since the estate changed hands multiple times, these traditions have been maintained on the estate by the Pascalis family, and subsequently by the Rougier family. The 'Domaine de la Simone', or Simone Estate, is the result of the various land purchases made by Mr Jean Rougier's father, grandfather and great-grandfathers. The first of these purchases dated from 1838 and the last was made in 1896. These purchases have made it possible to piece back together and then develop what had formerly been the 'Bastide' of the Grand Carmelites and one of King René's royal residences. The choice of varieties made by this family, the meticulous winemaking process and the natural ageing in the estate's underground cellars are the reasons for the increasing popularity of 'Château Simone' wines' in France and abroad. In 1946, the Rougier family applied for the estate to be recognised as a controlled designation of origin. As the controlled designation of origin is considered as a collective right, we propose recognising the former name of 'Palette', while considering that this covers the surrounding hamlets (Les Trois Sautets, Languesse, etc.) where these famous wines are also produced (under the 'Domaine du Montaiguet', 'La Dominante', etc.).

The 'Palette' vineyard, which was planted 500 years ago, thus stands out on account of the range of varieties it contains, made up of classic Mediterranean varieties: Bourboulenc B, Clairette B, Cinsaut N, Grenache N, Mourvèdre N, but also older varieties such as: Brun Fourca N, Colombaud B, Panse Muscade B and Panse du Roy René, which contributed to the fame of 'Palette' wines, which have been recognised under a controlled designation of origin since 28 April 1948.

In 2009, the area under vine covered 43 hectares for an annual production of 1 600 hectolitres divided between five producers.

8.2. *Information on the quality and characteristics of the product*

The red and rosé wines are blended.

The red wines are made mainly from the Grenache N and Mourvèdre N grape varieties, combined with some older varieties that have today disappeared from the rest of the South of France.

These wines are dark in colour, with a fine and elegant bouquet of red fruit, often with notes of leather and cocoa and generous and rounded tannins. These are wines that keep well and need to be aged for a long period in wooden barrels to mature.

The rosé wines are produced mainly from the Grenache N and Cinsaut N varieties, blended with some very ancient varieties.

These wines are balanced and refined, with a bouquet reminiscent of flowers and fruit and have a good structure in the mouth, a guarantee that they are suitable for ageing.

The white wines are produced mainly from the Clairette B and Clairette rose Rs varieties, blended with a palette of varieties that have been planted locally for centuries.

They are complex and harmonious, and generally have a floral bouquet with notes of balsamic vinegar and pine kernels, an elegant vivacity, a good long-lasting finish and a remarkable capacity for ageing.

8.3. *Causal interactions*

The conjunction of a dry mesoclimate of limited temperature variations with the area's topography in the form of a circle protected from the north winds, shallow soils over clay-limestone formations and the climatic conditions on the slopes, means that all the 'Palette' vineyards have optimal conditions for grapes of all varieties to ripen.

The producers have preferred to maintain a wide vine biodiversity and have resisted any temptation to simplify the base of grape varieties. In the context of 'Palette', this vine diversity is the guarantee of the best expression of the local terroir. The old varieties, carefully preserved, associated with traditional Mediterranean varieties, contribute to the originality of 'Palette' wines and to their particular suitability for ageing that justifies the reputation of these wines.

By combining optimal vine management, harnessing growth and fruiting potential to achieve low yields through spur pruning, with the optimal conditions for the grapes to ripen, the wines produced have a structure that allows them to be aged, sometimes for long periods and in wooden barrels, as in the case of the red wines.

So as to respect the cultivation methods and the quality and characteristics of the raw material, the grapes are always picked by hand so they can be transported to the winery in whole bunches.

As far back as 1772, Mr Reboul, a lawyer at the French Parliament, points out in his 'Observations on the agriculture of Provence', that there are certain primary reasons: 'the influence of the climate, the soil quality, the difference in the prevailing winds, the protection from the rain and the fog, the good air circulation, the south-facing aspects of the terrain, the excellent location of the vineyards …', which contribute to the quality of the wine.

Antoine David (in folio Aix – David 1772) states that 'Monsieur Arnaud, the manager of the Hotel Saint-Jacques at Aix, owner of a bastide [the Provençal word for a country house or farm] located close to Aix, in the Montaiguet quarter, that he has planted partly with Mourvèdre, partly with Brun Fourca vines, produces there the wine that all the guests who stay at the hotel prefer to all the other wines from Provence'.

The wines of Tholonet and Meyreuil enjoyed such an excellent reputation at that time that 'from the 18th century onwards, the inhabitants of Meyreuil had the right to bring their wine into the town of Aix duty-free' (Encyclopédie des Bouches-du-Rhône - XV 168 - Encyclopedia of the Bouches-du-Rhône – Volume XV p. 168).

In 1906, Edward VII, the King of England, who was passing through the region, made a specific detour 'to taste the great local wines'.

This reputation has been confirmed over the centuries. Thus, in 1948, the expert report recognising 'Palette' wines as a controlled designation of origin underlined that 'it is with pride that Palette wines, based on a very old tradition, can be granted official recognition of their universally acknowledged credentials for excellence'.

The fame of 'Palette' wines has stood the test of time and confirmed the expertise of the producers.

With high-end restaurants, some of them outside France, accounting for a large part of its market share, plus the export market, this protected designation of origin confirms the value of this production.

9. **Essential further conditions (packaging, labelling, other requirements)**

Legal framework:

National legislation

Type of further condition:

Derogation concerning production in the demarcated geographical area

Description of the condition:

The area in the immediate vicinity, defined by derogation for winemaking and ageing the wines, comprises that part of the territory of the municipalities of Meyreuil and Le Tholonet in the Bouches-du-Rhône department not included within the demarcated geographical area.

Legal framework:

National legislation

Type of further condition:

Additional provisions relating to labelling

Description of the condition:

Wines bearing the protected designation of origin 'Palette' may indicate the broader geographical unit 'Vin de Provence' on their labels. The size of the letters for this geographical unit must not be larger, in either height or width, than the size of the letters forming the name of the protected designation of origin. The broader geographical unit 'Vin de Provence' must appear in the same field of vision as the protected designation of origin.

Link to the product specification

https://info.agriculture.gouv.fr/gedei/site/bo-agri/document_administratif-9dfd1458-f6c1-4175-aa88-4175ff0255d6