

Oak

Our selection criteria

— GRAIN SIZE

The grain represents the growth of the oak tree over a year.

The speed of growth may vary, depending on factors such as rainfall, soil richness and competition from adjacent trees. Differing rates of growth result in variations in the structural tissue of the wood, and hence its chemical composition.

The variations produce grains of different sizes (from under 1mm to over 5mm).

In the initial stages at the stave-mill, the wood is separated into two categories, based mainly on grain size:

- Large grain (over 4 mm), which are dedicated to spirits (Cognac, Armagnac, etc.)
- Fine grain (under 4 mm), together with specific colors of wood, which are suitable for aging wines.

After seasoning, the staves are made. The staves are again sorted and separated into four groups:

- Medium Grain (3-4 mm)
- Fine grain (3 to 2 mm)
- Very fine grain (2 to 1.5 mm)
- Extra fine grain (< 1.5mm)

To ensure total traceability, records are kept throughout the sorting and drying process.

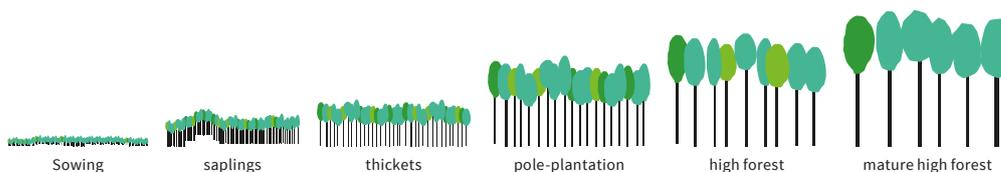
— FORESTRY MANAGEMENT

FUTAIE

The Futaie forests were first planted in the 17th century as a source of high quality wood for ship building. As the world began to industrialize, the subsequent reduced demand for wood enabled coopers to begin using these remarkable oak trees.

The trees are very densely planted, with up to 100,000 trees per hectare. They are progressively thinned out every twenty-five years, until - two centuries later - 150 top-quality mature trees remain.

In these forests the competition between the trees pushes them to grow in height as they seek light. Wood sourced from Futaie forests generally presents a homogeneous tight grain.



In several areas, a special forest management system has been introduced to produce even higher quality oak. By prolonging the time between harvesting, the level of competition between the trees is increased. This means that growth is transferred from width to height, making the grain even tighter. Due to the height of the trees, this system is called “**Haute Futaie**” management.

TAILLIS SUR FUTAIE (TSF)

Approximately 70% of French forests are TSF, or coppiced, woodland.

Unlike Futaie forests, they are renewed naturally and present a wilder appearance.

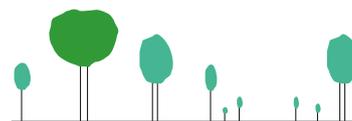
Approximately every 25 years, the mature trees are harvested, while small unpromising trees are used as firewood.

Wood sourced from TSF forests can present mixed grain sizes : therefore only a smaller percentage of the wood harvested is suitable for cooperage.

In recent years, forestry methods have evolved and the majority of the TSF forests are slowly being transformed into Futaie by the National Forestry Bureau and owners concerned about wood quality. This type of forest is called **Taillis sur Futaie en Conversion**.



Before and after
an intervention
every 25 years



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The Tonnellerie de Mercurey is renowned for its precision in blending oak, using wood from three different forests in every barrel.

Our oak blending philosophy enables us to deliver barrels of the consistency and homogeneity our customers seek, year in, year out.

The key to this consistency is our integrated stave-mill, NT Bois, which supplies all of our wood. From this relationship, we gain the unparalleled access, experience and knowledge of Nicolas Tarteret and his team of specialists.

— BLENDING, the guarantee of our consistency

Influenced by terroir, climate, exposure and adjacent trees, every tree is unique.

To compose homogenous blends that remain consistent over time, we use three criteria to objectively evaluate the quality of each stave - grain size, forest management and terroir.

— THE “TERROIR”

In the same way that the grape reflects the terroir in which it is grown, oak trees are influenced by their exact growing place.

Over a growing period of 150 to 200 years, the soil’s physical characteristics, minerals and water content shape the wood’s quality and chemical composition. The terroir also affects oak color and aroma.

We have singled out three specific “terroirs” in our region:

- SABLE: Sandy soil, the state forests of Fontainebleau, Russy and Retz
- CRAIE: Chalky soil, the forests of Othe and Champagne
- PIERRE: Stony ground, the forests of Chatillon and Northern Burgundy

Very precise blends of these different woods are found in our Evolution range.

