

TM OAK

SELECTION CRITERIA

SIZE OF THE GRAIN

The grain represents the annual growth of the oak tree.

Depending on rain, the richness of the soil and the competition with adjacent trees, the rate of growth can vary and thus produce various sizes of grain (from less than 1 mm to more than 5 mm). A slow or rapid growth will cause a different proportion of the wood tissues and thus a varied chemical composition.

During the transformation of "Raw Wood", we sort the staves into 2 categories, based primarily on the size of the grain:

- Coarse grains (more than 4 mm) dedicated to liqueurs (Cognac, Armagnac, etc.)
- Fine grains (less than 4 mm), associated with specific colors of the wood and adapted to the aging of wines.

Once the wood is dried, we move to the stage of fabrication of the staves. These are once more sorted and separated into 4 new groups:

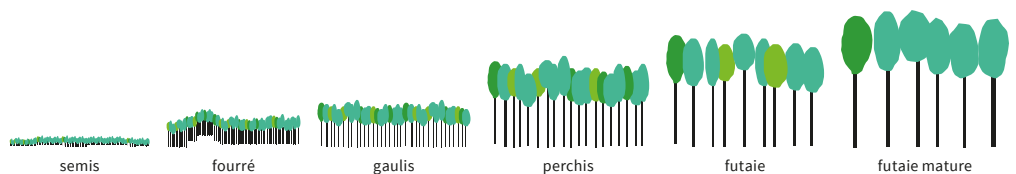
- Medium grain
- Fine grain
- Very fine grain
- Extra fine grain

All along this chain of sorting and drying, comprehensive tracking is maintained.

FORESTRY: PLANTED FOREST OR NATURAL FOREST

PLANTED FORESTS

These forests were conceived in the 17th century, in order to produce a high-quality wood for ship construction. The development of steam power and the use of steel beginning in the 19th century (replacing sail power and wood) allowed coopers to have access to exceptional oak trees. These trees are planted or regenerated in great density: more than 100,000 trees per hectare, then are thinned from year to year until they produce, two centuries later, 150 mature trees of high quality. The secret of this method is the competition between trees, which causes them to grow very tall in search of light. Wood coming from planted forests usually has fine or extra-fine homogenous grain



In addition, in certain areas, the level of competition between the oak trees was increased even more in order to cause the first branch to occur at a higher level. This is obtained by increasing the time between each human intervention. A transfer of growth from width to height is thus realized, which tightens the grain. From the fact of the height of the trunk, this specific management of the forest is called "High Forest".

NATURAL FORESTS [TAILLIS SOUS FUTAIE] (TSF)

These forests today represent 70% of French forests and are characterized by a mixture of softwoods or logs and firewood, called copses. Unlike planted forests, these renew themselves naturally and are not planted. About every 25 years, the mature trees (or logs) are cut down. Wood coming from these "Natural Forests" can show a heterogenous grain, and the weakest part of the cut wood can be used in cooperage. In the last few years, the modes of forestry have changed. A majority of "Natural Forests" have been progressively transformed into forests planted by ONF and by property owners desiring to produce a high-quality wood. We call these forests "Natural Forests in Conversion."





OUR SELECTION CRITERIA

The Mercurey Cooperage is famous for its precision in the joining of oak, combining in each barrel wood from 3 specific forests.

For 20 years, this philosophy of assembling has satisfied our clientele by the consistency and homogeneity of the barrels, obtained year after year.

The keys to this consistency are found in the relationship with our integrated stave mill, NT Bois, which is located in Champagne and from which 100% of our wood is produced.

Thanks to this relationship, we benefit from the experience and the workmanship in the area of French oak of Nicolas Tarteret and his team of wood artisans.

Historically, French oak forests have been planted on poor soils, the fertile soils being reserved for agriculture. From the geographic positioning of our stave mill, we have access, within a radius of 300 kms, to all of the available terroirs in France.

THE ASSEMBLING, THE GUARANTEE OF OUR CONSISTENCY

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

At **NT Bois**, our stave mill, we take three criteria into account (grain size, forest management and terroir) in order to objectively evaluate the quality of each stave, which is then sorted. The precision of this classification, coupled with the volume produced by **NT Bois**, allows us to obtain a significant catalog of staves, in order to make up homogenous and consistent assembling over time.

THE TERROIR

Just like vineyards, which grow in the terroir in which they are cultivated for decades, with the water and nutrients necessary for their growth, oaks are nourished by the composition of soils in which they grow for from 150 to 200 years. Thus, based on the mineral and water resources as well as its physical characteristics, the type of soil greatly affects the quality and the chemical composition of the wood. This is manifested particularly by the specific color and smell.

We have set aside 3 specific terroirs in our region:

- Sandy terroir:
State forests at Fontainebleau, Russy...
- Chalky terroir: Forests of Othe and of Champagne
- Chatillonnet forests of northern Burgundy.

These very precise assemblies are found in our Evolution range.

