

95/100 "It's undeniably delicious by Kara Newman."

8 Top-Rated Cognacs

There has never been a better time to explore Cognac.

BY KARA NEWMAN



95/100

Pierre Ferrand Ancestrale

(France; W.J. Deutch & Sons,

White Plains, NY). At the more

precious end of Ferrand's offerings, it

takes 90 bottles of wine and 70 years to

make just one bottle of Ancestrale. It's

undeniably delicious, with dark fruit

notes that suggest brandied cherries,

Port, ripe plums and cassis, finishing

with a wash of dusty cocoa. The

concentrated, rounded flavor may

remind some of Bourbon.

abv: 40% Price: \$800

For wine lovers who want to learn and explore the spirit world, Cognac is the quintessential bridge. Yes, it's derived from grapes, but more importantly this elixir's tradition is intertwined with wine's rich culture.

During a recent visit to the region I was awestruck by the sheer vastness of Cognac's vineyards. It was harvest time, and just like in wine country across the northern hemisphere, that euphoric buzz of grape picking and pressing was palpable

everywhere I went, from the dusty vine rows to the bustling cafés on cobblestone streets.

Another shared trait with wine's heritage: Practically everyone you meet in Cognac either works for one of the vineyards or distillers, or is related to someone who does. And with Cognac's old-vine grapes and its often decades-long aging time, it's not uncommon to sip something crafted by multiple generations of a single family.

There has never been a better time to explore Cognac, as now there is wide spectrum of styles to try—from the resoundingly bold and full-bodied (Jean Fillioux Cep D'Or) to the light and crisp (Leopold Gourmel Premieres Saveurs); from flavored offerings (Courvoisier Gold and Rose) to stiff, high-proof mixers (Louis Royer's 53 Cask Strength). What's more Cognacs received some of my highest scores all year, particularly the longest-aged brandies (XO, or "Extra Old"). Still, some younger pours did manage to rate extremely high. With so many options to choose from, you will find that right bottle. *Bon chance*, and enjoy your delicious journey into Cognac.