

FRENCH TERROIR

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THE IMPORTANCE OF TERROIR IN FRENCH AGRICULTURAL.

Terroir is defined as the combination of factors including climate, soil, and farming techniques which make certain agricultural products unique. For example, the Burgundy and Champagne regions are terroirs. After spending a month in France I have learned terroirs hold more value to French culture than just a geographical area.

Through this experience in my Study Abroad, I had the opportunity to visit multiple farms across France where I saw firsthand the pride producers feel in their terroir and how their products are products. Similar to the pride we feel for our unique home states in the United States.



• Ferme du Champ Secret



• Langlois Chateau



• Domaine Arnaud Lambert

If two producers planted the same Merlot variety of grapes in different parts of France, the wine would taste completely different due to the unique soils, temperatures, and traditional strategies. Both wines would exemplify the distinct terroirs.

IMPACT OF LABELS

HOW PRODUCERS MEET LABEL GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS.

Labels in France have become an influential aspect of agriculture for not only consumers but, also producers. While producers strive to meet the criteria, it is an expression of their passion for agriculture as they attempt to describe the best product possible. Thus labels are more than just another marketing strategy.

An AOC, or Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée, is a label that is earned by companies that follow specific guidelines for their specific geographical area or terroir. Products throughout France represent their individual terroir as the producer's goal is to exemplify and honor their region through agriculture.



• Angers, France farmers market

As with many labels across the world, there are specific expectations and criteria to meet in order to earn the ability to label specific products. Rebecca Euzen's Sheep Farm, which is a part of the AOC label, earned this label by raising her sheep in a designated pasture for a specified length of time, along with many other requirements. By earning this label, Euzen can proudly state her livestock represent the local terroir which increases the integrity of her product.

THE CONSUMER

THE APPEAL OF LABELS TO CONSUMERS TODAY

Today consumers are becoming more aware of what they are putting in their bodies allowing labels to become an integral marketing strategy for products. A lecture presented to me on my travels provided data that proved people want to know where and how their food is grown and produced. While in the United States, some people have started to select organic food over other labels without the designation, organic products in France do not benefit a company in standing out among the competition. This forces companies to find other ways to entice consumers, namely the promotion of a specific terroir or different production techniques.

As producers find pride in where they grow food, French consumers find pride in the terroir they are from. Someone from Champagne, France is more likely to drink Champagne wine over sparkling wine from the Loire Valley. Just as people from Normandy would prefer to buy Camembert de Normandie cheese over other cheeses.



• Terre del Sel, a salt farm in Gerande, France

Domaine des 2 Moulins, a winery outside of Angers, France, started experimental vineyards by planting apple trees and allowing native grass to grow between vineyard rows. They have begun selling "Esquisse" wine from the experimental vineyard making their company more noticeable.

FRENCH VS. AMERICAN TERROIR

BUT DID TERROIR COME OVER TO THE UNITED STATES?

As stated earlier, every American state feels a sense of pride for its home, however, terroirs do not exist within the United States. Tho right my visits to the many agricultural companies in France, it was clear that terroir is unlike any ideologies or concepts held in the U.S.

I found it fascinating to hear producers talk about their love for agriculture and their passion for producing in a specific area. Unlike anything in the States, this idea plays a vital part in the labeling and marketing of products.

While in France I read an article written about the wine industry and was first introduced to the idea of terroir. After learning more about what terroir is from French farmers and professors, what stood out to me the most was how the American writer stated terroir as a geographical region. The definition of this word from two different cultures made it seem as though they discussing completely different concepts.



• Amboise, France



• Ecole supérieure d'agriculture d'Angers in Angers, France

To complete our Study Abroad, we were expected to prepare and give a presentation on one of the agricultural companies that we visited. My company was the Maison Langlois Chateau, a winery in the Loire Valley. By talking with the winery and researching their company, I began to truly understand the significance of terroir in agriculture.