

UPDATES: COGNAC AND ARMAGNAC

Armagnac does all white

With domestic and export sales showing growth over the past year, Armagnac is in good spirits. A fine time indeed to launch the premium product Blanche – leading mixologist Paul Martin comes up with some creative ideas for the white distillate

BY ALL accounts it's been a good year for Armagnac both at home and overseas. At the end of November 2007, the French market had shown an increase of 16%, while export sales over the last two years have grown by 19%. Furthermore, in line with the global swing towards premium spirits it is the premium older Armagnacs – four years and upwards – which are the prime movers. These now represent 50% of the Armagnac trade.

No surprise then that last November in Moscow, No.1 from Domaine de Joy's Les Grands Armagnac d'Exception, sold for the record price of €16,000. Interestingly Russia is the country that is progressing most, in terms of value up 25% and in terms of volume up 41%, while the UK remains the first export market with 225,000 bottles exported at the end of November. Germany, USA and Italy follow this vigorous trend in terms of value and volume. Another first for Armagnac is the launch of Blanche, which makes its debut in France next month. Given the go-ahead by French authorities, producers expect to release some 10,000 bottles of this rare spirit this year, retailing at approximately £25 for 70cl. The premium, Blancches will be available in selected HoReCa outlets.

We asked mixologist guru, Paul Martin to put two Armagnac Blancches, Chateau Laubade and Tariquet through their mixing paces. An interesting challenge it proved – he found the spirit too much for a Blanche Martini – but a good mix with fruit juices and easy to make long and short cocktails. It's interesting to note that Chateau Laubade has in France signed up with Monin, the "gourmet" flavoured syrups producer.

ARMAGNAC BLANCHE COCKTAILS

SNOW FALL

40ml White Armagnac
25ml Lime Juice
10ml Blue Agave
Nectar

15ml Egg White
7 ml Apricot Brandy

→ Shake and strain into an ice filled old fashioned and garnish with a lime twist.

BLAZING SADDLES

50ml White Armagnac
60ml Raspberry Puree
20ml Lime Juice
75ml Cranberry Juice
5ml Grenadine

→ Shake and strain into an ice filled highball and garnish with lime.

GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

50ml White Armagnac
20ml Lime Juice
1cm cube Ginger
1cm slice Cucumber
10ml Gomme
Ginger Beer

→ Muddle the cucumber and ginger together with the gomme. Add the white Armagnac and lime and shake. Strain, top with ginger beer and garnish.