

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference in flavour and structure of wine stored in an Immersion (water bent) barrel v's a traditional Fire bent barrel?

Immersion barrels were developed originally for oak maturation of Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon blends in Bordeaux, mostly up to 12 months maturation but in some cases longer and typically using 100% new oak. The Fire bent barrels were giving too much phenolic impact to these wine styles so the Immersion barrel was created. Saury Immersion barrels are immersed in +80°C hot water for 10 mins before the commencement of toasting, this process has two important effects as far as flavour/ aroma contribution is concerned.

- 1. It dramatically reduces the amount of aromatic compounds in the wood**, thus contributing less "oak aroma and flavour" to the wine, allowing the fruit to be the dominant force.
- 2. It reduces further the level of wood tannin** so the phenolic effect on the wine is much reduced compared to a Fire bent barrel, the tannins are more supple and act in a supporting role giving softness, textural support and length to the palate.

Is there a choice of forests?

Saury's focus is purely on the grain, and always has been, the grain is the most important parameter to the quality and consistency of a barrel and unlike forest designation, the grain can be assessed by both the cooper on receipt of the wood at the cooperage and by the winemaker on receipt of the barrel at the winery, and then compared to cooperage specifications.

Consistency is a major factor when considering barrel quality, it is impossible to achieve barrel consistency if the focus is on the forest as each year wood comes from different parts of the forest, the forests are very expansive (14 million hectares in France) and in one small forest alone you can get differing soil profiles (just like in a vineyard), giving multiple grain sizes (both between trees and within trees) and thus providing different aromatic/flavour compounds in the wood.

We make two styles of Chardonnay, one finer more mineral with lemony acidity, and the other fuller flavoured in the stone fruit spectrum. From the Saury range which barrels would you recommend for these differing styles?

...finer more mineral

Saury French Oak, Fine grain, 3 year seasoned, Immersion bent, Medium + toast

About 90% of the Saury barrels used for Chardonnay are Immersion bent as it is a very low impact barrel with an integration time of around 10-12 months and suits Chardonnay made in the more leaner/tighter style. The Immersion bent barrel acts purely as a textural/structural barrel, supporting the fruit rather than masking it with toasted oak characters. We find the Immersion process contributes added mid-palate sweetness and helps give the wine a silky/creamy texture while promoting any citrusy fruit flavours.

...fuller flavoured

Saury Bourgogne, French Oak, Mid-fine grain, 3 year seasoned, Fire bent, House toast

Saury Bourgogne has been a strong performer on Chardonnay since inception, typically more intense and Burgundian in style with a rich toast and earlier integration time of 6-9 months. It suits fuller flavoured Chardonnay fruit, or styles where a very low percentage of new oak is used (i.e. 10-20%).

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