

# JOÿ to the World



**Jeremy Light, Wine & Spirits Director for the Sunset Marquis in West Hollywood, CA, offers a range of JOÿ-ful expressions at the bar, on the menu and paired with cigars.**

IN A SEA OF EAUX-DE-VIE, MARKETING AN ARMAGNAC IS A NOVEL IDEA. BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THIS "CONNOISSEUR'S BRANDY" IS BEING WELL RECOGNIZED

story and photos by Meredith May

"There's a profound flavor expression in Armagnac," notes Jeremy Light, the Wine & Spirits Director for the casually elegant Restaurant at the Sunset Marquis hotel. The property, hidden in tree-nestled seclusion just off L.A.'s busy Sunset Strip, is a combination of see-and-be-scene celebrity haunt and exclusive hideaway hotel with a reputation for its fine food and beverage program.

"I love the concentration and distinction of Armagnac," Light continues, sipping an expression of JOÿ Armagnac that was distilled in 1959. The 52-year-old spirit is years older than its quaffer, but Light knows his stuff and has recently been promoted to his new position because of that knowledge.



**JOÿ 1959 Bas Armagnac is limited to a 300-bottle availability.**

While he uses JOÿ XO in his signature Sidecar, he also understands sense of pairing this uniquely qualified French brandy with crafted, complex cigars in the hotel's new area designated for exquisite smokes-and-spirits pairings.

The JOÿ XO Bas Armagnac possesses a soft, wafting aroma of orange peel, apricot, tobacco leaf and chamomile, with walnut and mocha notes. What a deeply satisfying connection Light has made with the Corretto by HH, a smooth and creamy-leafed premium smoke which itself delivers a foray of

orange peel throughout its exceptionally even burn.

The hue of JOÿ 1959 lights up the glass, a sunset developing from straw to amber, treating the palate to a nectar of apple and pear and a dollop of generously ripe plum. Savoring these flavors with a hand-made Gurkha Centurion Figurado cigar, which is aged eight years, makes for a marvelous mating of mellow-meets-spice smoke with an exquisite, decades-old French spirit.

A trained waitstaff complements Light's energy in introducing his high-end guests to something beyond the Cognac norm. "It's actually an easy sell," says Light of the new experience that his clientele can always associate with the Sunset Marquis. "Once they smell and taste it, they are instantly in love."



**Carrying on the complex notes of pastry dough and apricot nectar, the JOÿ XO Bas Armagnac is a masterful ending with a housemade fruit tart at the Restaurant at the Sunset Marquis.**

## Did You Know?

- The best vintages for Armagnac will be the worst vintage for wine (specifically Bordeaux). When the alcohol is low for the wines, the result is an extraction of the best flavor character in the eaux-de-vie.
- The main grape variety in JOÿ Armagnac is Bacco. Ugni Blanc, Folle Blanche and Colombar grape varieties, also used in Cognac, are grown in the Côtes de Gascogne as well.
- Armagnac is produced in small, continuous alambic stills, a one-time process, whereas Cognac goes through two stages of distillation.
- The overall volume of production in Armagnac is far smaller than that of Cognac. Brandies produced in Armagnac have a lower profile than those from Cognac and are for the most part made and sold by small producers, whereas in Cognac production is dominated by big-name brands.



**Bruno Laclotte, President of Regency Wines, brings JOÿ Armagnacs to California and Nevada through his distribution company. Here, he poses with JOÿ Exception Grand Armagnac, in a bottle designed and signed by Paco Rabanne. Containing eaux-de-vie aged an average of 100 years, the Armagnac in the hand-blown crystal sells for a suggested retail price of \$11,000. The removable silver top acts as a snifter, while the bottom transforms into an ashtray. Only 397 bottles produced; only 20 for the U.S. market.**

## The Art of Grands Armagnac How to En-JOÿ the Spirit

Armagnac, unlike Cognac, concentrates on vintage brandies. There's a philosophy in the *département* of Gers, the district in Gascony where this spirit is produced, that Armagnac's one-time distillation (versus two times for Cognac) lends more body, grip and hearty flavor extraction to these earthy eaux-de-vie.

And, although Armagnac production preceded Cognac-making by two centuries, it is less widely marketed—and therefore less consumed—than its northern cousin.

Originally white wine growers in the Côtes de Gascogne area of Southwest France, the Gessler family is also one of the area's finest Armagnac producers. Heirs Olivier and Roland Gessler were inspired to bring JOÿ to the world.

Armagnac, south of Bordeaux, enjoys a warm, sunny climate. The grapes grown for JOÿ come from the Bas Armagnac district—the most acclaimed of this spirit's three small production areas, dominated by plantings of Bacco and Ugni Blanc grapes.

### The JOÿ COLLECTION

The inspiration to introduce a branded collection of vintage Armagnacs is the fruit of many years' work. This vintage showcase is a limited-edition group of aged eaux-de-vie, and its signature bottle is designed and signed by world-renowned couturier Paco Rabanne.

"I chose to embark on this adventure with JOÿ Armagnacs because I believe that Armagnac, like haute couture and perfume, is a product in a class by its own," Rabanne points out.

JOÿ has developed into the number-one Armagnac house putting money behind marketing and packaging. The collection includes vintages that date back over 100 years, but even one of the more recent vintages, distilled in 1991, is big and resinous, a well-endowed satin carpet of quince and black tea with a dot of black pepper. ■■