

Acker
SINCE 1820

Chartreuse

COLLECTOR'S PRIMER



FROM MONASTERY TO MODERN DAY

The Elixir of Life



Chartreuse represents one of the world's most complex spirits, crafted from a precise blend of 130 herbs, plants, and flowers. This legendary liqueur, produced exclusively by Carthusian monks, embodies a tradition of excellence maintained since the 18th century. The complete recipe remains known to only two monks at any time*, preserving a legacy of craftsmanship passed down through generations.

**As recently as 2023, an interview with Boothby's Sam Bygrave and Chartreuse Global Sales Director, Philippe Rochez, debunked this commonly held belief, stating that three brothers, in fact, know the recipe today – two in the distillery, and one blending the herbs - a young brother apprentice distiller learning his future appointment.*

MONASTIC HERITAGE

The Carthusian Order, founded by Saint Bruno in 1084, established its mother house, La Grande Chartreuse, in the French Alps near Grenoble. Known for their contemplative tradition, the Carthusians maintain a life of solitude and prayer that has remained largely unchanged through the centuries.

Their connection to the liqueur that bears their name began in the early 17th century. Historical records indicate that in 1605, the monastery received a manuscript containing an herbal formula - "an elixir of long life". The monks spent decades studying and refining this recipe, eventually developing it into what would become known as Chartreuse liqueur, with the first documented commercial production beginning in 1737.

Throughout history the brotherhood's commercial success remains secondary to maintaining the integrity of their traditions and spiritual mission. Production volumes are determined by the monks' capacity to oversee production properly, rather than market demand. This adherence to principle has preserved the authenticity of Chartreuse through centuries of change, making historic bottles from each era uniquely valuable to collectors.



The Eras of Chartreuse

FOURVOIRIE ERA (1737-1903)

In 1737, the Carthusians began producing their herbal elixir for sale beyond monastery walls. The establishment of the **Fourvoirie** distillery in 1860 marked the beginning of standardized production. This facility, located several kilometers from the monastery, allowed the monks to separate their commercial activities from their contemplative life. The period saw the introduction of Yellow Chartreuse in 1838, expanding their repertoire and reaching new audiences.



Couvent de la Grande-Chartreuse
Expulsion des Pères Chartreux le 29 Avril 1903



THE TARRAGONA ERA (1903-1989)

Following the French government's expulsion of religious orders in 1903, the Carthusians faced their greatest challenge. Relocating to Tarragona, Spain, they re-established production using their carefully preserved knowledge. This exile period produced distinctive variations in Chartreuse, as Spanish-sourced botanicals and different water sources subtly altered the liqueur's character. Several unique expressions were created during this time, including specialized export bottlings for various international markets. **Tarragona bottles** represent a fascinating chapter in Chartreuse production. Collectors particularly prize bottles from different phases of this period, including the **early exile years (1903-1929)** and the distinctive **Brandy CAR era (1944-1965)**.



The Eras of Chartreuse

THE PARALLEL PRODUCTION PERIOD (1929-1935)

A complex period emerged when French investors began producing their own version of Chartreuse at the original Fourvoirie site, while the monks continued production in Tarragona. This created a unique situation where two distinct Chartreuses existed simultaneously, though only the monks possessed the authentic recipe.

THE FOURVOIRIE DISASTER & RETURN (1935-1940)

Nature intervened dramatically when a landslide destroyed the Fourvoirie distillery in 1935. This event, combined with the financial difficulties of the imposing French production company, set the stage for the monks' eventual return to France. They established new production facilities in Voiron, where operations would continue into the modern era.

POST-WAR PERIOD (1945-1989)

The post-war period saw significant evolution in Chartreuse production. The Brothers maintained operations in both Voiron and Tarragona, leading to some of the most sought-after expressions among collectors. The introduction of **V.E.P. (Vieillessement Exceptionnellement Prolongé)** in 1963 marked a new chapter in Chartreuse's premium offerings.



MODERN ERA (1989-PRESENT)

The consolidation of all production in Voiron in 1989 marked the beginning of the modern era. The Carthusians have balanced tradition with careful innovation, introducing special releases while maintaining their core expressions. The establishment of the new Aiguenoire distillery in 2018 represents the Order's commitment to preserving its legacy for future generations.



Traditional Expressions

The story of Chartreuse unfolds through several distinctive expressions, each representing the monks' dedication to their centuries-old craft. While many know Chartreuse through its contemporary green and yellow variations, the spirit's full spectrum encompasses a remarkable range of expressions that showcase its evolution through time.

Green Chartreuse (55% ABV)

Introduced in 1764, green chartreuse presents the most intense expression of the monks' closely kept secret blend of 130-botanicals. At 55% alcohol by volume, it offers a complex herbal profile that has remained remarkably consistent despite historical changes in production location. The green color, derived naturally from the botanical blend, has become synonymous with the intensity of this expression.



Yellow Chartreuse (43% ABV)

Yellow Chartreuse, first created in 1838 to satisfy the palate of Spaniards in the Tarragona era, presents a gentler interpretation at 43% alcohol by volume. This expression emerged from the monks' desire to create a more approachable variation while maintaining the complexity that defines Chartreuse. Its golden hue and milder botanical profile have made it particularly celebrated among collectors for its aging potential.

V.E.P. (Vieillessement Exceptionnellement Prolongé)

The V.E.P. bottling represents a significant evolution in Chartreuse production. Introduced in 1963 with the Cuvée Reine D'Angleterre, V.E.P. editions undergo extended aging in oak casks. Both **green (54% ABV)** and **yellow (42% ABV)** expressions exist within this category, with bottles being selected for their exceptional aging potential.



Traditional Expressions



Episcopal

A special blend combining both Green and Yellow Chartreuse, Episcopal editions represent unique interpretations of the monks' craft. These releases often mark significant occasions or commemorations.



Liqueur d'Elixir 1605

A blended liqueur created in 2005 by blending traditional green Chartreuse with the power of the Elixir Vegetal.

Elixir Vegetal (69% ABV)

Closest to the original medicinal formula, still sold in small bottles (69% ABV)



Regional Expressions



El Licor Cumbre (1951-1959)

Both Yellow and Green, known as "the summit of liqueur" represent the pinnacle of Spanish production expertise, used in Spanish marketing campaigns in 1951.

La Seisenta Tarragona (1960-1965)

Called "Sinfonia de plantas": the symphony of plants, this advertising slogan for the Tarragone Chartreuse from the early sixties designates by extension the type of bottles used during this period, which is also sometimes called the "seisenta".



Voiron 1941-1951

To celebrate the official return of the Carthusian order to France in June 1940, the monks decided to use the 1869 label again, which also made it possible to make profitable a large stock of watermarked paper kept since 1903.

Voiron 1951-1956

With this vintage, it is the first time that the liqueur of the Carthusian fathers officially takes the name "Chartreuse".

Anisette, Tarragona

Anise-flavored liqueur produced during the Tarragone era; yet another secret recipe of the Carthusian Order, made from the distillation of anise seeds and other herbs and spices.



Regional Expressions



SANTA TECLA SERIES (2000-PRESENT)

Produced annually since 2000, honors the historical connection between Chartreuse and Tarragona, Spain. Each release features distinctive artwork celebrating the festival of Santa Tecla, creating a collectible series that bridges historical tradition with contemporary production.

CUVEE TAU, EPISCOPAL (2017)

Released in 2017, the incredibly elusive Cuvee Tau Episcopal (a blend of yellow chartreuse with a touch of green) is a tribute to the friendship between the Carthusian brothers and the city of Tarragona. Only 5000 bottles are produced annually with a different blend, making it unique each year. Marketed solely in the Tarragona region.



CUVEE DES MEILLEURS OUVRIERS DE FRANCE SOMMELIERS (MOFS) - (2008)

In 2008, the Cuvee des Meilleurs Ouvriers de France Sommeliers was released, a collaboration between the Brothers and the best sommeliers in France.

Commemorative Releases

Throughout its history, Chartreuse has marked significant occasions with special releases. Notable examples include the 1963 Cuvée Reine D'Angleterre, created for Queen Elizabeth II's coronation, and the 1968 Cuvée Olympique Grenoble, produced for the Winter Olympics. These commemorative bottles often represent unique variations in the traditional recipe or special aging programs.



LA REINE D'ANGLETERRE JAUNE 1963

The introduction of **V.E.P. (Vieillessement Exceptionnellement Prolongé)** in 1963 marked a new chapter in Chartreuse's premium offerings. The first release was in honor of the coronation of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in 1963; the "Reine d'Angleterre" cuvee displays the coat of arms of the Royal Family. Only **1000 bottles of green** (numbered 0001-1000), and **1000 bottles of yellow** (numbered 1001-2000) were produced.



LIQUEUR DU 9E CENTENAIRE (1984)

Released in honor of the Carthusian Order's 900th anniversary of its founding by St. Bruno in 1084, it is a blend liqueur of different aging profiles chosen by the Brotherhood.



MARSEILLE (1921-2021)

This special edition pays tribute to the Marseille distillery established in 1921 by the Order at 15 rue de l'Obélisque upon their return to France, and before being able to return to the monastery from which they had been expelled in 1903. This is a **Chartreuse Verte bottled at 51.7% ABV**. A limited edition of **760 blown glass bottles** with a stopper and neck reminiscent of those of the old Chartreuses.

Commemorative Releases

CUVEE OLYMPIQUE GRENOBLE (1968)

Produced especially to honor the Winter Olympic Games held in Grenoble in 1968, custom wooden cases holding one bottle each of green and yellow V.E.P. Chartreuse we released. Only 4,870 were produced.



LA FABIOLA TARRAGONE (1966-1973)

Named "La Fabiola" in honor of Princess Fabiola of Aragon who married King Baudouin of Belgium in 1960. Legend has it that this liqueur was distilled in 1960 and bottled a few years later.



LA REINE DES LIQUERS, JAUME

Inspired by Tsar Nicolas II of Russia, the "Queen of Liquors" was considered Yellow Chartreuse, in his opinion, the best of all liquors. At **43% ABV**, La Reine des Liqueurs is a Chartreuse particularly suited to prolonged conservation and with great aging potential. Very limited production and is considered the to be the future "Tarragone" of Chartreuse.

Commemorative Releases



GREEN, VOIRON, LES FETES VERTES ET OR

The Cuvee Les Fetes Verte et Or, a limited edition created for the Voiron festivals in celebration of Chartreuse.

GREEN, VOIRON, 250 YEARS COMMEMORATIVE CUVÉE

1764 is written on the label instead of the historical date of 1605. This date refers to the creation of Chartreuse Verte as we know it today.



CHARTREUSE EPISCOPALE DE IIIE MILLÉNAIRE (2000)

The Episcopal Chartreuse produced in 2000 to mark the Carthusian Order's transition into the third millennium. Episcopal Chartreuses are blends of Green and Yellow chartreuse.

VELLIER (1947-2017)

Anniversary cuvée commemorating the 70th anniversary of Velier, a Genovese wine and spirits import company and distributor of Chartreuse in Italy. This is an exclusive cuvée of yellow in a limited edition and intended for the Italian market. The back label in Italian specifies that it is a "cuvée of old Chartreuse Jaune from the cellars of Voiron", "a unique bottle, bottled with a special abv of 42°. According to Dom Benoit, a portion of Chartreuse V.E.P. was included in the blend.



Commemorative Releases



GREEN, CARBON EDITION

Traditional green Chartreuse, bottled individually. Hand decorated using 3D immersion printing technique. Each piece is unique.



YELLOW, VOIRON, COPPER EDITION

Traditional yellow Chartreuse, bottled individually. 999 bottles produced since the day of the inauguration of the 7th Aiguenoire distillery (August 30, 2018)



CHARTREUSE EPISCOPALE, CUVÉE LES FOUS DE CHARTREUSE (2005)

This cuvée was the first episcopal created for the club "Les fous de Chartreuse" of Paris, on the occasion of its visit to the cellars of Chartreuse on June 13, 2005 and to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Chartreuse liqueur, it is commemorative 1605 – 2005 only. 1000 bottles produced. A blend of Green and Yellow Chartreuse.



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