

Eau de Vie

a wine, spirits, and travel newsletter

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THE BASIC ECONOMY

All legacy US airlines now offer: First Class, Business Class, and three classes of Economy Class. For instance, Delta airlines calls them Comfort +, Main Cabin and Basic Economy. Here's what you need to know about Basic Economy.

Basic Economy fares, across carriers, share some similar features. They are: nonrefundable tickets, your seat is assigned at the gate, there are baggage and carry on restrictions, and you board the plane last. Here are the "features" of Delta, United and American Basic Economy Fares.

DELTA :no seat assignment, no upgrades, no changes, no refunds, first checked bag costs \$30 domestic and \$60 international each way and last to board.

UNITED AIRLINES :no seat assignment until 48 hours before the flight then at a cost of \$10 to \$40, no upgrades, no changes, no refunds, checked bag costs \$30-\$60 each way, last to board and no carry on. If you need to use the overhead bin it will cost you \$25.

American Airlines :no seat assignment until 48 hours before the flight then at a cost of \$10 to \$40, no upgrades, no changes, no refunds, checked bag costs \$30 domestic and \$60 international each way and last to board.

Each of these airlines offer some sort of branded loyalty card which usually carries an annual fee of \$95 or more. With one of these cards you can get priority boarding and a fee free checked bag.

In summary, if you are traveling with someone and you choose basic economy class you won't be sitting with them and you can be guaranteed a cramped and uncomfortable middle seat. If the price break for basic economy is less than \$60 for domestic and \$120 for an international flight and you don't have a branded loyalty card it's not worth the price. If you have a branded loyalty card and you don't get more than \$100 value from your fee free baggage each year, it's not worth having that card.

Cognac & Ugni Blanc

Cognac is made from the Ugni (oo-nee) Blanc grape. In Italy they call Ugni Blanc Trebbiano and it is indigenous to Italy.

There is some debate amongst wine scholars as to where in Italy the grapes are from but it is mentioned in Pliny the Elder's encyclopedic book of the natural world *Naturalis historia* under the name *vinum trebulanum*. Pliny the Elder was working on a revision of his famous book when he was killed in the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79AD.

Trebbiano made its way to France in the early 1300s and was planted in Provence where in the local dialect *uni* meant early. The vigorously growing Trebbiano was thus names Ugni Blanc, or early growing white. It is now the most planted white grape variety in all of France.



The photo above is from Castello del Trebbio which is a mountain top castle, farm, and winery in rural Tuscany. Is this the birthplace of the Trebbiano grape? Maybe, maybe not. Either way it's stunning and you can stay at the castle for around \$120 a night.



Cognac

~ April 13 ~

[6 spots still available](#)

We will be sampling: Delamain XO, Hennessy VSOP, Courvoisier VS, Larressingle Armagnac, Grand Marnier and Mandarin Napoleon

Practical Information:

Class starts @ 7:30pm ~ *sharp*
@ 2620 E. Superior Street.

Cost is \$15/pp.

Class size is limited to 20.

Light *hor d'oeuvres* after tasting.

R.S.V.P. required.

May 25th ~ **Brandy**
Greece, Italy, Germany,
Denmark, France and Peru.
Travel the world with brandy.

SALTY DUTCH TRADERS

In the middle ages Dutch traders would often stop on the coast of France at the towns of La Rochelle and Rochefort to buy salt and wine. The wines were low alcohol, slightly sweet, acidic and cheap. From Rochefort, a boat can ride a tidal swell half way up the Charente river, almost all the way to the town of Cognac.

In the early 1600s the King of France hired Dutch engineers to drain the swamps around the river and this greatly increased wine production and trade with Dutch merchants. The merchants found ready markets for inexpensive wine in burgeoning populations of Amsterdam and London.

At the time, England taxed wine from France on volume rather than alcoholic strength, so crafty Dutch merchants would bring the wine to Amsterdam, distill it, ship it to England, pay the tax on the now greatly reduced in volume distilled wine. To sell their wine they would add water, diluting the distillate, and sell their product as white wine from France. The original fruit concentrate! It sounds terrible.

The Dutch called this distilled product brandewijn (“burnt wine”). The English called it brandy. Using copper smiths from Amsterdam, the Dutch merchants built stills close to their warehouses on the river in the town of Cognac. The finished brandy would be stored in oak barrels from the nearby Limousine forests while it waited for shipment to foreign markets. The amount of time it took the brandy to get to market could be a year or more. The time in oak had a favorable effect on the spirit and eventually consumers came to preferred it undiluted.

To the French, who name their wines after the places in which they are made, this burnt wine was Cognac. And business was good. By the early 1700’s Cognac was being exported all over the English Empire. George Washington and Benjamin Franklin were clients of Irishman, Richard Hennessy, who owned a distillery in Cognac. The English speaking market was always the largest segment and that is reflected in the grading of Cognac such as XO, for extra old.

Today, Cognac is considered a luxury product but it was Dutch salt merchants, using a tax loophole, that taught the French how to sell brandy to the English.



Midi and the Camargue

We’ve got 6 spots open for a fantastic week on a boat in the South of France.

Week of 9/21-9/28: 6 available

If you are interested in joining us or you’d just like to know more [follow this link to our Fall 2019 trip planner.](#)

It’s been 5 years since our last trip to the Languedoc but this sun kissed region of France is never very far from our minds. Below is one of my favorite spots along the canal.

