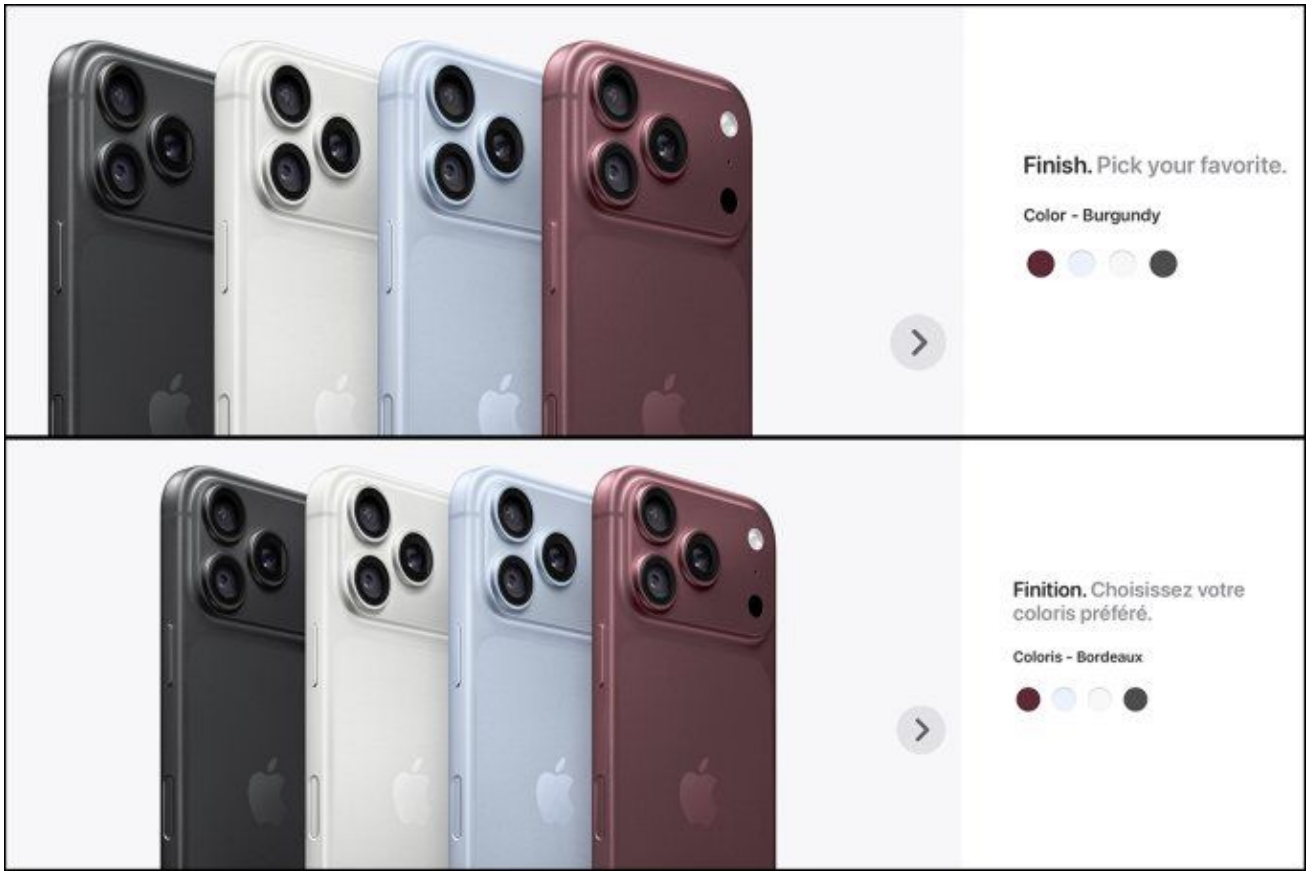
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Apple’s iPhone 18 Pro color name sparks a wine debate in France

The company calls the dark red finish Burgundy in English, but French materials use Bordeaux, reflecting local color usage.

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Apple’s latest iPhone color has opened an unexpected debate in France, where wine terms carry weight far beyond the cellar.

At its product presentation on Sept. 9, Apple introduced the iPhone 18 Pro in a dark red finish the company labeled “Burgundy” in its English-language materials. The new model was shown alongside black, silver and glacier blue options. But on Apple’s French website, the same shade appears under a different name: “Bordeaux.”

The change quickly drew notice among French wine enthusiasts, who saw more than a simple translation choice. Some treated it as a cultural slip, arguing that Burgundy and Bordeaux are not interchangeable references in a country where the two wine regions represent distinct histories, styles and identities. Others viewed it as a marketing decision shaped by the language of fashion and design rather than by geography.

The episode has remained mostly lighthearted, but it has also highlighted how wine vocabulary moves across industries and national markets. In English, “burgundy” is widely used as the name of a color, usually a deep red with a slight purple tone. In French, that same shade is commonly called “bordeaux.” From that perspective, Apple’s wording does not necessarily suggest confusion between the Burgundy and Bordeaux vineyards. It may instead reflect a standard adaptation for French consumers, using the color term most familiar in that market.

That distinction matters in France, where both Burgundy and Bordeaux are more than place names. They are powerful cultural markers tied to agriculture, luxury, regional pride and export identity. Burgundy, or Bourgogne in French, is associated above all with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from eastern France. Bordeaux refers to the southwestern region long known for its classified chateaux and blends based on Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. To wine professionals and many consumers, the names are not stylistic variations of the same idea.

That is why the French wording attracted attention so quickly. In a country where wine terminology is closely watched, naming a smartphone color after one famous vineyard region in one language and another region in the next was enough to prompt jokes, criticism and discussion online. For some observers, the issue was not the color itself but the symbolic overlap. Burgundy and Bordeaux may both suggest dark red, but in French public life they also point to different landscapes, reputations and traditions.

Branding specialists often make these kinds of adjustments when product names cross borders. A word that works as a color in one language may sound strange, overly literal or commercially weak in another. In English-speaking markets, “burgundy” has long belonged to the basic vocabulary of clothing, cars, cosmetics and interior design. In French, “bordeaux” fills much of that role. A company selling globally may therefore decide that consistency of visual meaning matters more than strict consistency of wording.

Apple has not publicly framed the naming choice as a wine reference. But the company has, in the past, drawn on places linked to wine culture. In 2023, Apple released an operating system called Sonoma, using the name of the California wine region north of San Francisco. The software’s visual presentation included landscape imagery from the area. Apple has also been involved in the television series “Drops of God,” adapted from a manga centered on the world of wine.

Those earlier references have made some French commentators more willing to read intention into the new iPhone color. For them, the “Burgundy” label was not just a technical color descriptor but part of a broader pattern in which Apple borrows from the prestige and imagery of wine regions. Others have argued that this interpretation goes too far, noting that “burgundy” has been a standard commercial color term in English for decades and does not require any direct link to the French region each time it is used.

The reaction also says something about how strongly place-based names travel in global consumer culture. Terms once tied mainly to local production can become international shorthand for mood, status or design. Champagne, cognac and port have all taken on meanings beyond their original products, even when legal protections still govern how those names can be used in many contexts. Burgundy and Bordeaux, though still first associated with wine, now also function as color references, lifestyle cues and luxury signals.

In this case, the dispute has unfolded at the intersection of translation and identity. A U.S. technology company presented a new premium phone in a dark red color. English materials called it “Burgundy.” French materials called it “Bordeaux.” For many

shoppers, the difference is minor. For readers attuned to France’s wine map, it is a reminder that words tied to place can carry more baggage than global marketing teams may expect.

The discussion has also underscored how difficult it can be to localize product language without losing some nuance. A direct French rendering of “Burgundy” as “Bourgogne” would likely sound unusual to many consumers as a color name. “Bordeaux,” by contrast, instantly reads in French as a familiar shade. That commercial logic may be straightforward, even if it jars people who take the regional distinction seriously.

Apple’s French online store continues to display the iPhone 18 Pro’s dark red finish as “Bordeaux,” while the company’s English-language presentation materials refer to the same color as “Burgundy.”