vinetur

A 170-wine tasting finds blended Alsace wines returning to prominence.

The review points to renewed interest in complantation, including a 13-variety grand cru that scored 96/100.

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Blended wines and field blends are gaining new attention in Alsace after years in the background, according to a large tasting published by the French wine magazine La Revue du vin de France. The assessment, based on 170 wines tasted in January and

February 2026, found renewed interest in bottles made either by blending grape varieties or by growing several varieties together in the same vineyard parcel, a practice known in Alsace as complantation.

The revival matters because Alsace has long been identified almost entirely through single-variety wines. It is the only French region built around a single Alsace appellation that can be paired with the name of one of nine authorized grape varieties. That system helped define the region’s modern image, especially through wines labeled Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris or Muscat. But it also pushed aside older traditions in which growers often planted and vinified several varieties together and sold the wine under the name of a place rather than a grape.

Two old labeling terms still exist for blended Alsace wines, but both have become less common. Edelzwicker, which has traditionally meant a blend of Alsace white grapes without naming them or stating proportions, has increasingly been associated with entry-level wines and is now used by relatively few producers. Gentil, a term in use since the 1920s, refers to a higher standard of blend and must contain at least 50% Riesling, Muscat, Pinot Gris or Gewurztraminer. Even so, that label has also become less visible as many growers shifted their attention to grand cru wines and named vineyard sites.

That change did not erase blending completely. Two Alsace grand crus still allow it: Altenberg de Bergheim and Kaefferkopf. Both permit blends of the so-called noble varieties accepted under grand cru rules. Kaefferkopf has a particular place in this history. It was the first lieu-dit formally recognized in Alsace in 1932, and it became a grand cru only in 2007. Growers in Ammerschwihr, the village linked to Kaefferkopf, were among the first in the region to make varietal blends on a large scale, helped by the presence of wine merchants there in the early 20th century.

Complantation goes further than blending finished wines or grapes from separate plots. In that system, different varieties are planted side by side in the same parcel, harvested together and vinified together. The method survives in a few old vineyards in Alsace, including Clos du Zahnacker, and was revived decades ago by a small group of growers. Marc Kreydenweiss adopted it in the 1970s at Clos du Val d’Eléon in Andlau.

Jean-Michel Deiss made it a central part of his work, arguing that mixed plantings can express a site more fully than a single grape variety can on its own. That approach is now being continued by his son, Mathieu Deiss.

The current return of these wines reflects several motives. Some growers are looking for flavors and textures different from those found in varietal wines. Others want to show the character of a site more strongly than a single grape may allow. Some also see mixed plantings as living systems in which varieties interact with one another and with the soil. The idea has found a growing audience among producers and consumers who are interested in terroir-driven wines and in farming methods that are less standardized.

Mathieu Deiss told the magazine that complantation works best when the different varieties in a parcel ripen at roughly the same pace. In his view, that is easier in sites with limited vigor, where differences between grapes are less extreme. He argued that the lower fertility of many older vineyard sites was not only a constraint but also one of the conditions that made mixed planting possible. He also pointed to interactions among roots, microorganisms and mycorrhizae, saying a mixed vineyard should be seen as a plant community rather than a simple collection of grape types.

The practice had practical roots before it became a philosophical one. In earlier rural viticulture, mixed plantings helped protect growers against uneven harvests. If one variety suffered from disease, poor flowering or bad weather in a given year, another might perform better. Over time, specific places developed their own balances among varieties, and the wines were known first by those places. The later dominance of single-variety wines is relatively recent. The shift accelerated after the phylloxera crisis, when replanting was more rationalized and technical choices became stricter. From the 1960s onward, synthetic fertilizers and herbicides increased vine vigor and widened differences in behavior among varieties sharing the same parcel, making complantation harder to manage.

The tasting results suggest that the style is now broadening again, both in prestige bottlings and in more accessible wines. The highest-rated bottle in the review was Domaine Marcel Deiss’s Alsace Grand Cru Altenberg de Bergheim 2019, a

complantation of 13 grape varieties that received 96/100. The same estate placed several other wines near the top, including Burg 2023 and Rotenberg 2023 at 95/100, as well as Langenberg 2023 and Schoffweg 2023 at 94/100. Domaine Maurice Schoech's Harmonie R 2023, a mixed planting of Pinot Gris and Riesling from the Rangen de Thann grand cru, also scored 95/100. Domaine Trapet's Ambre 2023, a blend of Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc made in a skin-contact style, received 95/100 as well.

The review showed strong results across a wide range of producers and styles. Marc Kreydenweiss's Clos du Val d'Eléon 2018, from one of Alsace's oldest surviving mixed plantings, scored 94/100. Vignoble du Rêveur's La Vie en Rose 2023, a dry blend of Gewurztraminer and Riesling, also reached 94/100. Other highly rated wines included blends built around Pinot Blanc and Sylvaner, blends of multiple pinot varieties, and several orange or skin-contact wines. Some estates continued to use traditional terms such as Edelzwicker, while others bottled similar wines simply as Alsace or, in some cases, as Vin de France.

One of the clearest findings in the tasting was that many of the best-performing wines were not the youngest. The magazine said most of the bottles with the highest scores were at least three to four years old, suggesting that these wines often need time to integrate their different components. That point may help explain why some growers who believe in the category have stayed with it despite the market pressure for earlier-drinking, clearly labeled varietal wines.

The range of bottles reviewed also showed that the movement is not confined to one house style. Some wines were fully dry and tightly structured. Others carried a little residual sugar, or were made in amber and orange styles through skin contact. Prices ranged from entry-level bottles around €10 to prestige cuvées at €80. That spread indicates the return of blending and complantation in Alsace is not limited to luxury wines or to a few famous names, but is appearing across different price levels, appellations and winemaking approaches.