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Vinsobres wins approval to make white wine under its appellation

Beaumes-de-Venise and 11 Rhône village appellations still await final publication under a regional drive to double white output

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White wines are gaining ground in France’s Rhône Valley, with Vinsobres now cleared to produce them under its appellation and Beaumes-de-Venise and 11 village-level Côtes-du-Rhône designations awaiting final publication of the rule changes that would let them do the same.

The move changes the production rules for some of the region’s best-known red wine areas and marks another step in a broader shift inside the Rhône, where the trade body has set a goal of doubling white wine volumes. For growers and producers, the change opens new planting and winemaking options and could widen the region’s supply of

white wines at a time when demand has been strong. That may matter beyond the vineyard, because it gives the French wine sector more room to adjust its product mix to consumer tastes.

Vinsobres, in the Drôme department, was formally authorized in June to add white wine to its appellation d’origine contrôlée, or AOC. The white wines will be produced inside the existing appellation boundaries, with no extension of the vineyard area. Of the 1,375 hectares included in the parcel map, about 50 hectares are already being farmed under the same vineyard standards, representing a potential output of roughly 350 to 500 hectoliters.

Some growers in Vinsobres do not yet have the grape varieties required for the new category and have ordered new plant material for future vintages. The main authorized grapes are classic Rhône white varieties: clairette blanche, grenache blanc, marsanne, roussanne, viognier and bourboulenc. Accessory varieties include clairette rose, grenache gris, piquepoul, vermentino and ugni. The yield has been set at 40 hectoliters per hectare, with a ceiling of 44.

Richard Jaume of Domaine Jaume, who has worked on the file, said the 2026 growing season should support the launch of the new style. He said the vintage delivered good acidity despite high temperatures and that the vines stayed green until August 15, leaving him convinced that white wine had been missing from the appellation.

Beaumes-de-Venise is following a slightly different timetable. The appellation, already known for Muscat vin doux naturel since 1945 and for still red wine since 2005, has also secured the right to produce white wine, but the publication of the measure in France’s Official Journal is still pending. Local officials said the idea had been under discussion for years and was formally launched in 2012, before moving through the long administrative process.

As in Vinsobres, the white wines in Beaumes-de-Venise will come from the same delimited parcel area as the reds, covering 600 hectares. Until now, white wines made there could be sold only under the broader IGP category, often using Muscat à petits grains. Under the new rules, Muscat will remain part of the blend but will not dominate it.

Éloïse Bouzid, communications head for the local growers' body, said Muscat could not be removed from the equation because it is part of the appellation's identity and has been present since ancient times. She said it accounts for 10% to 30% of plantings and 5% to 30% of the final blend. The main varieties for Beaumes-de-Venise white wines are bourboulenc, clairette, grenache, marsanne, roussanne and viognier. Muscat à petits grains, in red or white form, is listed as a complementary variety, while piquepoul, ugni blanc and grenache gris are accessory grapes.

The rule changes also affect 11 named Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages appellations that, until now, could not market white wines under their own village names. Industry officials have described that gap as a historical inconsistency that is now close to being resolved. Like Beaumes-de-Venise, those villages are still waiting for publication in the Official Journal before the measure becomes fully effective.

Vincent Dessalles, vice president of the Syndicat Général des Côtes du Rhône, said the National Opposition Procedure ended on September 19 and that once the decree is signed, the effect will apply retroactively for all of the villages concerned. He described the change as the result of a political push inside the regional organization led by its president, Damien Gilles.

The Rhône has already expanded white wine rights in other places, including Gigondas and Laudun, and the latest approvals continue that trend. In practical terms, the expansion may gradually reshape vineyard decisions in areas long associated mostly with red wine, especially where growers see a commercial case for shifting part of their land toward white varieties. It also allows appellations to capture value that had sometimes flowed into broader categories when local producers made white wines outside the AOC rules.

The first bottlings from the newly authorized white wine categories are expected in spring 2027. Volumes are still uncertain, in part because some vineyards need to be replanted or brought into compliance, but producers are betting the wines will find a market as Rhône growers broaden a regional offer that has traditionally leaned heavily toward reds.