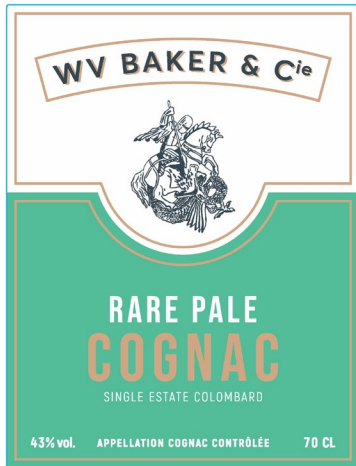


# WV Baker & Cie

## Cognac



Born of an English father and a French mother, Benjamin Baker grew up in Cognac. He became fascinated by flying and got his wings over America's deserts and canyon lands in the southwest (a common route for budding pilots, ever since WWII, when programs sprang up to train British pilots—and have since expanded, given the advantage of learning to fly over wide-open spaces rather than in Europe's crowded airspace).

He joined the French Air Force and was on track to be a career officer when he met a French girl. He had to make a choice, and the air force lost...but Cognac won a smart young man committed to artisanal spirits. In a land of big brands, this had more than a little air of Don Quixote about it.

That was in 2012, and the newly married couple settled in the village of Saintes, Benjamin's hometown in the heart of Cognac's Fins Bois region. He had grown up in the world of *eau de vie*, and upon leaving the air force he took a deep dive into it. He learned distillation under the tutelage of Gilles Merlet, at Distillerie Merlet et Fils. He worked at Cognac Groperrin, the leading producer in Saintes and one of the very few renowned for aging and bottling old Cognacs. He went on to work at the house of Bache-Gabrielsen, where he learned sales and marketing.

Ten years later, in 2022, he founded his own company with the goal to search out rare and unique Cognacs. He wanted to concentrate on younger Cognacs (his friend Guilhem Groperrin did an excellent job with older spirits, but no one was looking at younger spirits), focusing on single varietal, single estate, single barrel *eau de vies* that he could raise and bottle unadulterated, in pure form, without caramel or sugar or any other additions except possibly distilled water to lower the alcohol (and if added, then carefully administered in small dosages over a period of months).

His first release was the bottling of an old barrel of 6-year Cognac distilled from Colombard, a rare grape in a region utterly dominated by Ugni Blanc (a.k.a., Trebbiano, imported from Italy following phylloxera, and today accounting for 98% of Cognac's vineyards). It was one of two such barrels in Jean-Luc Bureau's cellar, distilled by Jean-Luc himself, the product of his vineyard of Colombard and Montils in the vintage of 2015. Benjamin's second release was from Bureau's second barrel, from the same provenance, thus the batch number 02-15 on the back label. He bottled the entire barrel, resulting in 485 700ml bottles.

His back labels list the spirit's distiller/producer, along with the bottling date, bottling number, barrel number, and batch number.