

Wine Cooperatives In South Of France

In France every region has their own wine cooperative, called *cave* (pronounced with a soft a, like 'ahhh'). In Provence, you can find caves in almost every village, large or small. As you explore the [villages of the South of France](#), we recommend stopping in for a browse and tasting wherever you can.

When you buy from the local wine cave, you are truly getting a taste of the *terrior* of the region. Buy local, taste local! And the adage – what grows together, goes together could not be more true. Wine from the village, cheese from the village, bread from the village bakery – could there be a more wonderfully local, Provencal experience than that?



Wine cooperatives started in the late 1800s, mostly out of

economic necessity, and continue to flourish today. A wine cooperative essentially consists of a building with winemaking facilities and a wine shop. During the harvest period, called *vendanges*, local farmers bring grapes from their land and either make their own wine, or pool their harvest with those of their neighbors to make a local wine. There are more wine grape growers than winemakers and not every grower has the desire, skill or finances to be a winemaker. Growers then hire or appoint a winemaker who utilizes the wine cave's equipment and resources. The winemaker selects the best grapes grown under the best conditions and makes a wine with the input of the collective, reflecting the best qualities of the region's grapes and land. The wine is then sold by the cooperative, with proceeds shared proportionately among the growers.



In addition to wines made from local grapes, you can often find wine made from small vintners in the area in the shop of a cooperative. The selection varies on the size of the cave, but often you will find an extensive collection of wines you may not be able to acquire elsewhere. Wineries are often spread out, and it's nice to have one central place to taste and purchase local wine to enjoy with an apéritif or evening meal. Like most French wineries, tasting at the cave is free.

The most fun thing about a wine cave is that you can bring in your own container and fill it inexpensively with any of the wines on tap. There's always a red, white and rosé, and

usually a few choices among them. You can also buy wines by the bottle or, now that you're in on the local's secret, bring your own wine jug to fill.

For those who are renting villas in the Luberon, one of the most popular regions in the South of France, the [Cave de Bonnieux](#), founded 1920, is especially lovely and as a bonus, eco-friendly. Situated just outside the village of Bonnieux, the cave has a wide selection of wines and a small range of food items for sale. From May to the end of September, the cave hosts a market on Wednesday mornings, featuring regional producers. You can also find a wonderful cave in the village of Saint-Rémy-de-[Provence](#).

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