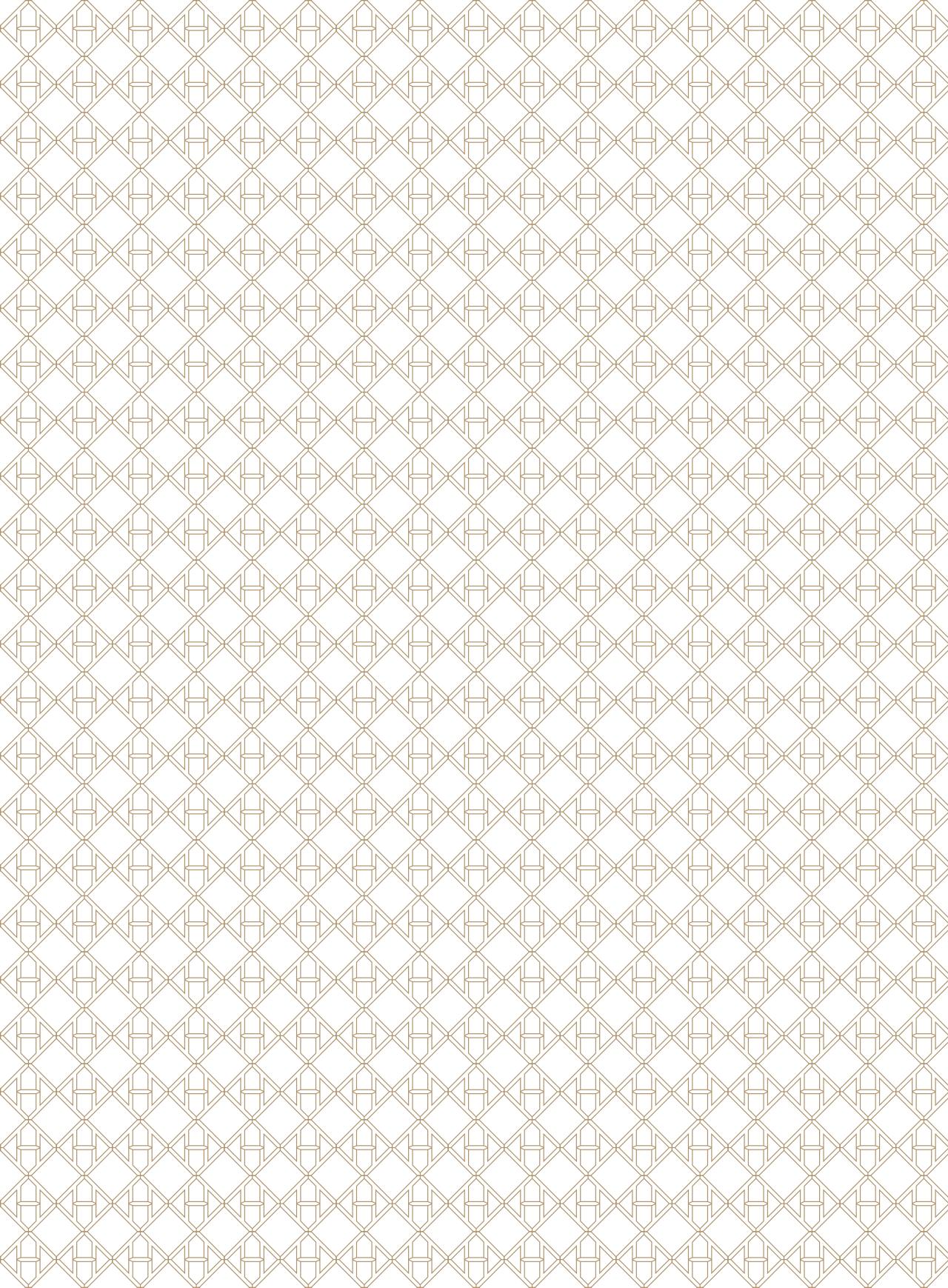




THE MASTER BLENDER



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INTRODUCTION

For more than two centuries, the Hennessy family history has been intertwined with that of the Fillioux, Master Blenders specialized in the excellence of eaux-de-vie. Unique in the history of cognac, this dual lineage embarked on a new adventure on July 1, 2017.

At the Maison Hennessy's historic seat in Cognac, France, Yann Fillioux, the 7th generation Master Blender in an unbroken family line, officially passed the torch of know-how and creativity to his nephew Renaud Fillioux de Gironde, the 8th generation Master Blender.

In his new role as the creator of blends and the guarantor of Hennessy eaux-de-vies' excellence, aging and quality, Renaud Fillioux de Gironde reflects several facets of an essential role, in keeping with his own contemporary vision.

Renaud Fillioux de Gironde embodies the new generation of Master Blenders who know firsthand the challenges facing wine growers and their vineyards, are attuned to technological progress and open to the whole world. Today, he is ready to embark on the creative process without ever sacrificing quality or long-term considerations.

Welcome to the world of the Maison Hennessy's new Master Blender.



ROLE

THE ROLE OF THE HENNESSY MASTER BLENDER

A passion for quality, vineyards and cultivating eaux-de-vie; an exceptional nose and palate, the art of selection, extreme precision, a vision that is daring and yet always guided by excellence and a desire to preserve an irreplaceable material and immaterial heritage so as to transmit it in turn: these are the characteristics that Hennessy has sought in its Master Blenders since the Maison was founded.

Like a symphony conductor, the Master Blender conceives and interprets a score played by many hands.

As leader of the Tasting Committee comprised of house experts, he selects the best eaux-de-vie by tasting them daily, with exacting standards and a firm stance. It is his duty to determine their fate by discerning their potential for aging and then, as a connoisseur of the oak barrels in which they are stored, determining the optimal conditions for their maturation.

In time, he will select certain of these that inspire the harmony of a new signature cognac.

Each Master Blender's personality imparts an extra dash of spirit to his talents of nose and palate, completing his consummate knowledge of an eau-de-vie's journey.

At Hennessy, the art of blending is transmitted from one generation of the family to the next. It is a tradition of continuity and expertise that is both atypical and fascinating.

HISTORY

SINCE 1806: EIGHT FILLIOUX MASTER BLENDERS AT HENNESSY

The history of this dual family lineage is unique and intimately bound to the success of Hennessy for more than two centuries. Since the beginning of the 19th century, the Hennessy family has relied on the expertise of the Fillioux family, whose roots run deep in the region, for overseeing the vineyards and barrel making. Generation after generation, pairs of Hennessy-Fillioux have penned a narrative of shared trust and complementarity.

Over the years, these duos—the leaders who developed the brand's international renown, and the Master Blenders who ensured its quality—succeeded one another, each marking their passage with their personality and the creation of emblematic cognacs. In keeping with this lineage, recent presidents of the Maison Hennessy designated the 8th Master Blender, orchestrated his apprenticeship for approximately 15 years, and determined the right moment to announce his appointment.

In this way, the secrets of the creation and production of cognac have been transmitted from father to son, and in this case from uncle to nephew, to this day.

As Master Blender, Renaud Fillioux de Gironde opens the 8th opus at the Maison Hennessy.





SAVOIR-FAIRE

THE TRANSMISSION OF SKILLS AND GESTURES

For 250 years, the Maison Hennessy has brought together artisans who pursue the quest to create excellent cognac at every step of the production process.

Convinced that quality comes first, without concession, the Hennessy community honors the transmission of its know-how every day, as well as its commitment to innovation that drives the pursuit of excellence.

From winegrowers, distillers (who work in the local Charentais tradition of double distillation in copper stills) and barrel makers to cellar agents, cask strappers, environmental inspectors, and the calligraphers who inscribe barrels with chalk—everyone is united by a shared desire to create an exceptional cognac.

Dozens of skilled professions work together and in complement to one another, the composite agents of a rare know-how that is often passed down through families of artisans through several generations.

At Hennessy, artisanal trades are more vibrant now than ever, and are passed down from generation to generation: experienced craftspeople mentor the apprentices, passing on knowledge, gestures and even tools, an oral tradition that is now accompanied by written materials in order to better preserve certain specific knowledge.





TALENTS

THE TASTING COMMITTEE

The multi-generational tasting committee exists only at Hennessy. Its members, each a specialist in one step of the cognac-making process, are specifically designated within the company. For each member, it takes approximately a dozen years to create a base of reference and to ensure that his opinions are pertinent.

The Committee comprises a small circle of tasting experts whose professions and ages are complementary, in order to ensure the continuity of the selection, ageing and blending of eaux-de-vie. This singular association of talents renders evaluations more objective and spreads the considerable responsibility of selecting the eaux-de-vie.

These experts—whose ages range from the thirties into the sixties—guarantee the stability of the Maison's cognacs and the transmission of the know-how of reference for generations to come.

Every morning at 11am, the Tasting Committee convenes in the Grand Bureau for an immutable ritual: the tasting of some 50 samples of eaux-de-vie, which the Master Blender and his team evaluate and annotate to decide on which should be purchased, assess their future potential and determine the best way to age them.





PORTRAIT

RENAUD FILLIOUX DE GIRONDE

At 39 years old, Renaud Fillion de Gironde became the Maison Hennessy's 8th Master Blender. The man behind the title. An introduction.

BACKGROUND WINEGROWING, IN COGNAC AND ELSEWHERE

A native of Cognac, Renaud Fillion de Gironde was born into a family of winegrowers and distillers. He studied economic sciences in Bordeaux and in Reims, followed by an internship in New York. He joined the Maison Hennessy's Eaux-de-Vie Department in 2002, and went on to pursue a master's degree in "Wine Business" in Australia. Upon his return, he joined the Tasting Committee and became a relationship manager for Hennessy's 1,600 winegrowing partners. His uncle, Master Blender Yann Fillion, trained him for some 15 years, patiently passing along the secrets and know-how to making cognac. Every year, Renaud travels to meet with winegrowers around the world and gather new experiences.

AN INSPIRATION NATURE

From his family, Renaud inherited quiet strength and a patient character. He showed an early affinity for nature, and would explore the forests of La Coubre and the Royannaise Landes with his uncle, who tutored him on the importance of forest conservation and the protection of logging-related industries. While still young, he explored his surroundings through the sense of smell, a powerful vector for emotion.

Later, he ventured into the world of vineyards and winegrowers, and later guided the Maison in its choice of vineyard and modes of production.

With a particular sensitivity to the protection of nature's resources, Renaud draws inspiration from the land, the *terroir*, and all it produces.

AN OBSESSION EXCELLENCE

In keeping with his respect for the heritage of eaux-de-vie so keenly developed by his predecessors, Renaud must in turn serve as the steward for the upholding and transmission of excellence for the Maison's eaux-de-vie.

He selects the eaux-de-vie and chooses the cellars and barrels in which they will age to ensure that Hennessy cognacs enjoy the same quality over time as they had when they were first created.

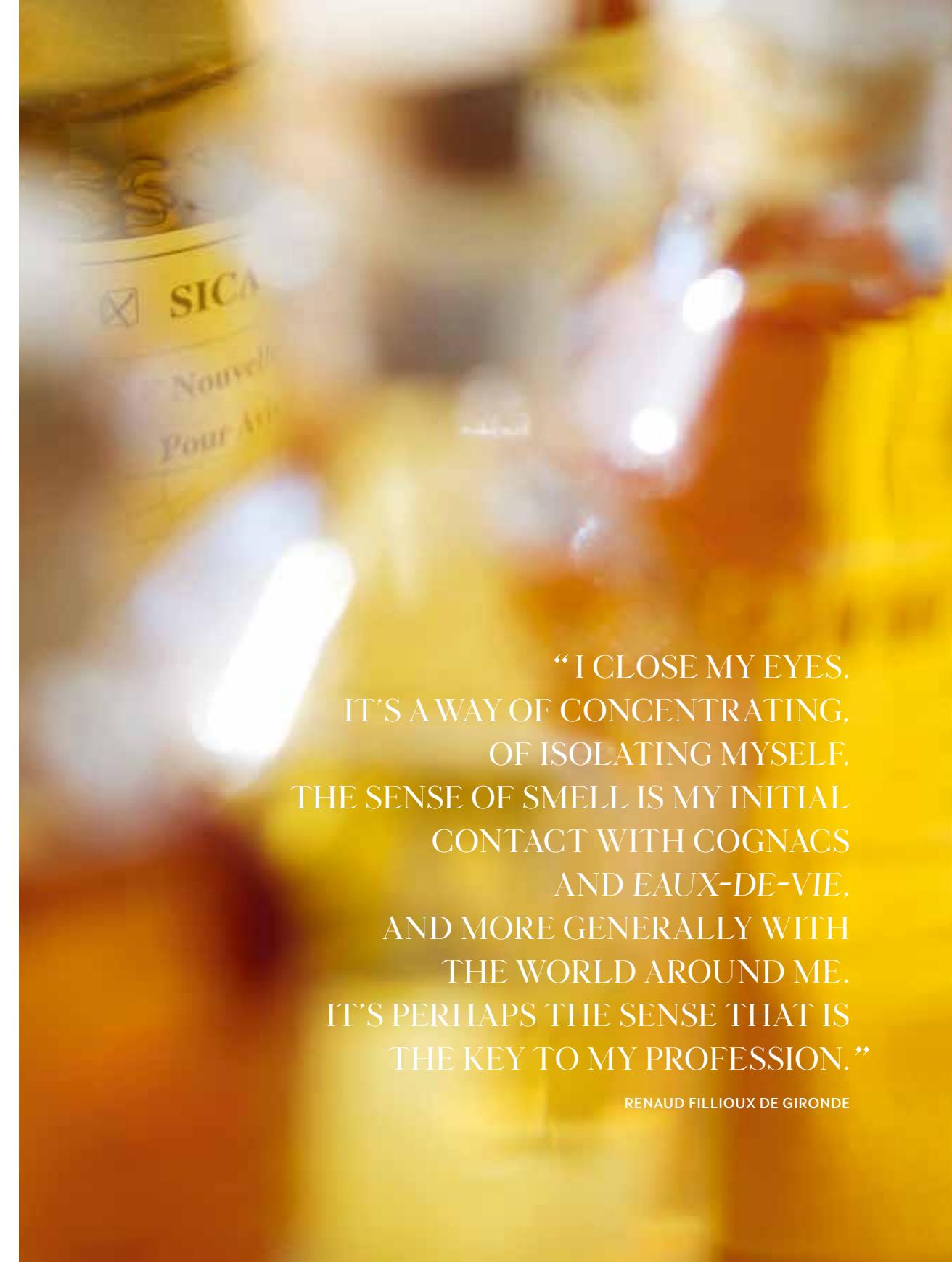
His nose and his palate constantly search to distinguish infinite nuances, adding to his expert knowledge of cognac and the men who perfect it.

STYLE OPEN TO THE FUTURE

Expertise and the profession's exacting standards are his foundation. The know-how he received and will transmit in turn determines his path. Beyond these fundamentals, Renaud opens the way for the exchange of ideas, the better to inform decisions to be made later, alone.

Given the information revolution currently underway, he is intrigued by the potential of "Big Data" to further perfect the excellence of eaux-de-vie.

Ever curious about others and the world around him, Renaud will also draw upon his own emotions when the time comes to create new blends for the Maison.



“ I CLOSE MY EYES.
IT'S A WAY OF CONCENTRATING,
OF ISOLATING MYSELF.
THE SENSE OF SMELL IS MY INITIAL
CONTACT WITH COGNACS
AND EAUX-DE-VIE,
AND MORE GENERALLY WITH
THE WORLD AROUND ME.
IT'S PERHAPS THE SENSE THAT IS
THE KEY TO MY PROFESSION.”

RENAUD FILLIOUX DE GIRONDE





PHOTO CAPTIONS

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Samples of eaux-de-vie.

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An 18th century sundial in the Cour d'Honneur at La Richonne in Cognac.

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Yann Fillioux and Renaud Fillioux de Gironde, the 7th and 8th generation Master Blenders.

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The Founders Cellar, Cognac.

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Chalk calligraphy on a barrel.

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11am, Tasting Committee, Grand Bureau, Cognac.

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Taking samples in the Founder's Cellar, Cognac.

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A vineyard in Cognac.

PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY

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