



## ALEXANDRE GABRIEL

President and Owner, Cognac Ferrand



Alexandre Gabriel was born in southern Burgundy, near the medieval town of Cluny in France. Weekends in his youth were spent working on the family farm and that is where Alexandre's great love of the land came from. His grandfather, a great influence in his life, made sure that Alexandre learned how to graft a tree, harvest grapes, milk a cow and harvest grapes. Alexandre remembers fondly, "For my grandfather, the only wealth is the one from the land."

Alexandre attended school in Lyon where he studied economics and then came to the U.S. as an exchange student at Macalester College in Minnesota. Here Alexandre perfected his English, studied international politics and worked as an intern for a state senator. He then returned to France and enrolled in business school in Paris. While at business school, Alexandre began working on a school project where he would travel through different regions in France, meeting small wine producers and offering his nascent business expertise to help them expand their business. It is on one of these trips through Cognac that Alexandre discovered the Maison Ferrand in the heart of the Grande Champagne district of Cognac and where he met Mr. Ferrand.

"Cognac Ferrand was one of the oldest Cognac houses and at the time was totally dormant. It was sitting on good stocks of Cognac and Mr. Ferrand had one of the best *savoir faire* of the region, but was not selling anything," says Alexandre. "There was more work to do here that I could have hoped for and when Mr. Ferrand proposed a partnership, I readily accepted."

Alexandre Gabriel consulted his professors and decided that the way to polish this jewel was to build a good distribution network right away.

Alexandre continues, "While 90% of the Cognac sold throughout the world comes from four large companies, we felt our mission was to bring Cognac back to its roots. So we put people in place and even brought the former manager of another cognac house out of retirement to help advise us. Remember, I was still in business school and when an assignment I had took me to New York and Tokyo it was a blessing for Cognac Ferrand. When I wasn't working on the assignment, I would trade my jeans and t-shirt for a suit and tie and I'd go and meet potential spirits distributors. The Cognac spoke eloquently, spoke for itself – it just needed someone with enthusiasm and drive."

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Alexandre graduated from business school and devoted 100% of his time to Cognac Ferrand, distilling and aging exceptional Pierre Ferrand Cognac and creating distribution channels around the world. Today he is the president and majority owner of this fine spirits house, which is headquartered in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Chateau de Bonbonnet he purchased from Cognac Martell. When Alexandre's beloved grandfather visited Bonbonnet, he said to Alexandre with great satisfaction, "This is going to be your farm now," and gave Alexandre his ancient wine press for good luck. Alexandre remarks, "He is not a man of many words, but I know I made him happy that day."

Having put so much time and effort into expanding the distribution of Pierre Ferrand, Alexandre has chosen to pursue his next goal: to revitalize the artisanal spirits which are a part of French heritage. His mission has taken him to remote corners of France where he has found producers in Calvados and Armagnac who are committed and passionate about the true character of their spirits.

"Growing up in Burgundy, I remember drinking wonderful Cassis Liqueur which my grandmother made. I still remember the taste and wanted to make one just like it," says Alexandre. "That is how Mathilde Liqueurs were born. I feel that too many of France's gastronomic treasures are in danger of disappearing and I don't want France's great spirits to be among them."

Alexandre has a great passion for gin as well and has studied gin making and gin history in depth. It was this interest that brought him to an 18<sup>th</sup> century genièvre distillery in the citadel (or old fort) of Dunkirk, France. He found an old gin recipe that he has refreshed for today's gin connoisseurs and created Citadelle Gin. It is one of the only artisanal gins distilled in very small copper pot stills and made with 19 botanicals from all over the world. It is made one cask at a time in the heart of the Cognac region in the same pot stills that make Pierre Ferrand Cognac (at the time of year when Cognac cannot be distilled per AOC regulations).

*"To produce a great Cognac you have to start with the very best grapes, then distil slowly, in a small copper still, and wait many years for it to age in old oak casks. There is no short cut. It takes great care and patience to make an exceptional spirit but it makes a world of difference and the result tastes so much better that it's worth it. This patience has always been our mission at Ferrand and in retrospect, when I think of my role model, I feel that my grandfather would be very proud of what we have done with our farm."*

- Alexandre Gabriel



The logo for Mathilde Liqueur features the word "Mathilde" in a large, bold, black serif font, with "Liqueur" in a smaller, bold, black sans-serif font below it.