

Viré twinned with Montmartre

An historic moment: Montmartre returns to Viré:

To mark the 10th anniversary of the *appellation*, the Viré-Clessé wine producers in Mâcon region and the *Comité des Fêtes* (events committee) in Montmartre and the *Commune Libre* (free municipality), decided to revive the twinning of the two districts, which had created strong ties and friendship over 30 years. In Viré, the older generation often recalls the time when celebrities became patrons of their wines at great festive events.

Members of the *Comité des Fêtes* with the *Commune Libre* of Montmartre are now following in the footsteps of previous generations, returning to Burgundy and rekindling a friendship. This is a moving moment in the history of these two epicurean wine-making areas.

One morning in 1958...

According to René Boudier, the Vice-President of the Lugny County Council, it all started "One Saturday morning in 1958 when I received a telephone call from a certain Monsieur Tissier, a journalist and member of the *Comité des Fêtes* of Montmartre. At first I thought he was pulling my leg. He asked me if I could provide 100 bottles of wine and a folk group for a festival taking place the following weekend in Montmartre". Monsieur Tissier had in fact asked another producer, who had pulled-out at the last minute.

The following weekend, 100 bottles of wine, a folk group, the Mayor, Marcel Laurencin, and several members of the Council went up to Montmartre. There was a great atmosphere and the twinning of the two districts seemed obvious right from the start. This was the beginning of many a party held in Montmartre and Viré, with famous artists of the time in attendance.

Viré Baptisms

The twin town arrangement created another annual event: The baptism of the vintage of Viré. Over 20 years, more than 40 artists have been patrons of the annual Viré vintage. Among these artists, Viré owes a debt of gratitude to Annie Cordy and Luis Mariano, who were the first patrons, and Mireille Mathieu who came and performed many of her hits here in 1974. Political and sports personalities joined artists in Viré each year, for nearly 30 years.

Due to the fame of our patrons, the Viré name and its great Burgundy wine received a great deal of coverage in the national and regional press and on the radio and television.

Permanent Reminders

Both districts have emblems celebrating the twinning, which is now enjoying a revival. On the rue Montcenis, not far from Place du Tertre in Montmartre, there is a plaque that commemorates the twinning of "Viré-Montmartre".

There are also many references to Montmartre in Viré. A square bears the name "Place du Tertre", a statue of Bacchus stands in the main square of the village, a vine from Clos Montmartre has been planted, and a painted fresco adorns the wall of the cooperative. Finally, as a sort of tribute to the epicurean link between the two districts, a gastronomic restaurant boasts the name "Relais de Montmartre".