

RESTORATION OF THE MILL OF SAOÛ (2020)

Project owner: Municipality of Saoû

Project management: Foundation A la découverte de la forêt de Saoû

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WALNUT OIL MILL OF SAOÛ

Saoû is situated in the northern part of the Drôme where walnut oil was used daily in cooking, while olive oil was used in the south.

The village has a large number of canals (sometimes above ground, sometimes below ground), some of which date back to Roman times. The water was used for the operation of two mills, but also for two sawmills and several factories.

The walnut oil mill, which closed in 1967, is part of the craft and cultural heritage of the Drôme Valley. Most of the other mills no longer work or have completely disappeared.

*Document produced by the association "A la découverte de la forêt de Saoû".
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HISTORY

The walnut oil mill has existed since the 17th century. It worked on water power. The water was being brought from the river Vèbre through the "mill canal" which crossed the village, sometimes above ground, sometimes below ground (still visible). This mill (moulin banal*) was confiscated during the Revolution and then sold at an auction on 10 February 1791 to Henry Faure for 4,250 pounds. The same family kept the business going until it closed in 1967. In 1517, the water from the canal was also used by a flour mill located on the site of the current bakery. On 8 October 1983, the municipality bought the two mills.

*The right of 'ban' or 'banal' = right of use by the population in return for payment to the feudal lord who owned a mill, an oven or a press.



Le canal sous le moulin

MAKING WALNUT OIL

The nuts are harvested and broken one by one to remove the kernels. Three kilograms of walnuts yield about one litre of oil. The kernels are taken to the mill, weighed and then ground in a millstone, the 'moulandou', which has been 'bouchardée' (bush hammered). The pasta is then heated to 70° in a cast-iron vat, where it is stirred to prevent it from burning. Finally, the paste is pressed between two scourtins (traditional sieves) in hydraulic presses to extract the oil. The cake remaining after pressing goes through the whole process again to end with a second pressing called 'refondu'. The cake is kept for human or animal consumption and the leftovers at the end of the pressing, the "crapo", for cooking. The miller was often paid with part of the production; the walnut oil.

