

October 4th, 2022

## **2022 Harvest report**

What words would be appropriate to tell and share about all that we were lucky to experience with such an exceptional vintage as 2022? Some may say that we need a Virgil to write an ode to the vine. In reality, it is an ode to its own glory that the vine wrote this year. More than in any other year, this extraordinary plant that is so unique in the vegetal world showed its resistance and capacity to adapt.

Since the beginning of spring, drought and heat had been hard on men and animals, burning our gardens, and « crucifying » the trees of the forests. But even though the vines were exposed to the same extreme conditions, they remained green until the harvest. The weather conditions made us fear that the vine might abandon its grapes in order to survive, leaving them without juice or overripe, as was the case in 2003 for instance, another very hot and dry year. But on the contrary, it fed its grapes right to the end and delivered them bursting with juice and perfectly ripe.

Today, three weeks after the last strokes of secateurs, the wines are finished and have just reached the peaceful cellars and the vines, which are quiet and relieved, profit from the return of cool autumn temperatures. The leaves are changing colour. Every morning, there is a little more red, a little more copper, a little more gold mingling with the still present green. Miracle of the blazing vine that is resting after giving birth to its fruit. An incomparable glorious autumn is preparing itself marking the end of an exceptional year. Even the word « exceptional » does not seem to be enough: the resistance of the vine all along was such and the harvest so generous that this vintage cannot be compared to any in recent years.

Should comparisons however be needed, 2015 and 1999, two vintages that were equally successful, might be referred to. But as far as we are concerned, we think more of 1959, an unforgettable vintage, the only one whose quality and quantity can be compared to 2022, and also because it marked the revival of Burgundy after the miserable hundred years or so that followed the phylloxera in the 19th Century.

But let us come back to our subject and try to list the great lines of this adventure that might have taken us to the edge of the abyss, but finally ended triumphantly.

What are the factors that shaped this exceptional 2022 harvest and made it successful? Among the most important ones, one can stress:

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First, the catastrophic frost that hit Burgundy in 2021 and resulted in a very small crop. As a consequence, the vines were able to keep reserves of food and energy that were useful in 2022. At the time of budburst, we could observe a significant cluster setting, which is a quite classic phenomenon in the years following important weather vagaries.

The winter was neither really cold nor really humid, even if we had a few days of frost and abundant rain in December.

What is important is that from April, heat and dryness set in lastingly causing an early budburst and risks of frost that fortunately did not happen. From then onwards, with this very favourable weather, vegetation « ran wild ». Our vineyards team had great difficulty in keeping the pace: when normally all the works (pruning, de-budding, tying-up, tying-down) follow one another, this year they overlapped and forced us to accelerate work. Nicolas Jacob and Didier Dubois, our vineyards managers, took up the challenge, but at the cost of very long working days.

As a result of these favourable weather conditions, flowering was also very early and fast, since it began around May 20th and was over practically everywhere on the 30th. On May 24th, a little beneficial rain enabled us to accelerate the process. All the berries were fertilized and there was almost no coulure. The number of grapes and the complete flowering of the berries presaged an abundant crop.

Another result of this favourable weather: none of the usual diseases (mildew, oidium, botrytis) occurred and we could drastically reduce phytosanitary treatments.

June was hot with heavy rains at the end of the month (75mm between June 22nd and 26th). These rains that helped the vines to get through the successive heatwaves were another key-factor in the success of the vintage in Vosne-Romanée.

July was extremely hot, but not the slightest drop of rain. Same situation in August, until the 15th. Due to the excessive heat, we could observe maturity « blockages » in many vines. These were the signs that they ran the risk of withdrawing into themselves in order to survive, forgetting to ripen their grapes by photosynthesis. But it was at this right time that we were given the blessing of three days of stormy rains from the 15th to the 18th with a total of 20mm.

This is another key-factor that explains why the ripening by photosynthesis was not blocked. Not only did the grapes ripen thanks to the heat and dryness, but they were also bursting with juice and the harvest exceeded all expectations.

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Due to the heat and drought, we thought that there would be little juice besides full maturity. But actually, we got both of them. Thanks to the rain that fell on August 15th and to the beautiful days that came after, maturity progressed very fast until the harvest.

These good conditions made us confident and we waited as long as possible before deciding on the harvest date.

On August 30th, we began harvesting our red Corton (Clos du Roi, Bressandes and Renardes), then:

- Romanée-Conti: 1 September
- Grands-Echézeaux: 2, 3 & 4 September
- Montrachet: 2 September
- La Tâche: 4, 5 & 6 September
- Romanée-St-Vivant: 7, 8 & 10 September (the 9th was a day of rest)
- Vosne-Romanée (Petits Monts): 10 September
- Echézeaux: 11, 12, 13 September
- Corton-Charlemagne: 8 & 13 September

Given the quantity of grapes, the harvest lasted nearly two weeks, which is unusual. The white and red grapes that were brought into the winery were very healthy, without any trace of botrytis or any other disease. Harvesters removed the few berries that had been burnt by the sun and the sorting team completed the vineyard work on the sorting table.

We had not seen our winery so full, without any empty vat, for a very long time! We are happy and grateful to Gods and nature for having kindly compensated for the loss of last year.

The lessons that we can draw from this vintage are numerous. Among them, let us underline how the plant material is essential. At picking, we could observe differences between the vines (fortunately not many at the Domaine) bearing large, compact bunches of grapes that were bursting with juice and those of fine type bearing numerous, small and not too compact bunches of grapes with small and thick-skin berries. The latter are going to give richness, complexity and elegance to the wines.

Another lesson: the resistance of the vines. They remained green during all the growing season and even after the harvest. This proves that they begin to adapt to the exceptional climatic conditions that we know today and will encounter even more, as it seems, in the future.

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Without predicting what will happen in the coming years, the 2022 vintage reinforces our confidence with regards to the capacity of Pinot noir and Chardonnay to adapt, on the condition that they are of fine type and combined with good rootstocks.

This vintage has allowed us to better assess the adaptive capacity of this or that rootstock, which will help us in the future to choose the right rootstocks that can withstand extreme climatic conditions.

Another lesson: the importance of choosing the right date to begin harvesting. As we wrote in our previous reports, the success of a vintage depends of course on the joint work of nature and men all through the year, but also on the capacity to take risks and, we must admit, on luck. We were very lucky, compared to others, to have been spared by frost, hail or any other damages. We took a risk, when we decided to wait for the grapes to be ripened - but not too much - in order to keep balance between the maturity of sugar and tannins and freshness. In other words, it was necessary to avoid overripeness that produces thick wines that are not Burgundy wines.

Wines are now finished and most of them are in barrels. Vinifications unfolded very well and naturally. The superb grapes and the good development of macerations have allowed our cellar master, Alexandre Bernier, and his team to masterfully carry out the vinifications so that each cuvée of this superb harvest could express at its highest level.

The results can already be seen: colours are wonderful and aromas already rich with perfumes. On the palate we can detect supple tannins, but above all freshness, finesse and elegance that are surprising if we remember the weather conditions of the year. Another proof that the genome of Burgundy grape varieties can adapt to conditions that are different to what they were in the last century.

In the silent cellars, the white wines are still fermenting in barrels. There was no coulure in Montrachet or in Corton Charlemagne. These two vineyards produced a nice quantity of superb golden grapes that were perfectly ripe. They benefited from the few rains that occurred at different times. Their grapes were protected from all attacks thanks to their thick skin. Both vineyards were in perfect sanitary health and their juice that is finishing its fermentation is very pure.

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