

## 2015 Harvest report

The vineyards celebrate their inscription to the Unesco World Heritage list.

This harvest does not resemble any other one: the berries are small and compact with no sign of millerandage and their skins are tight and full of anthocyanins and ripe tannins. There is average quantity and the early and ultra-fast flowering ensured an exceptionally homogeneous and complete maturity, without ever reaching over-maturity.

As always, we are delighted - but perhaps even more so this year as the vintage is most impressive - to give our thoughts on the harvest and to highlight the most important elements that created this exceptional vintage. If we send this report later than usual, it is because the vintage was so outstanding and amazing in every way that we preferred to wait until we had a clear idea of the wines after the fermentations in barrels: Nature has indeed taken to the extreme all the factors that are necessary to make great wines, but without ever going beyond the balance point.

Let us remember first that 2015 was marked by a great moment full of emotion for Burgundy: last July 4th in Bonn/Germany, the 21-member countries of the Unesco World Heritage Committee announced the inscription of the "Climats du Vignoble de Bourgogne" to the World Heritage list. The Committee recognized that it is in Burgundy that was born, that developed and prospered a viticulture rooted in a long history that represents a model for all the terroir-based viticultures all over the world and that created a Culture that one has to respect and preserve in order to pass it on to the next generations.

It was as if the vineyards had wanted to celebrate this prestigious distinction in being more beautiful than ever throughout the year and in being also more generous by giving us some of the most beautiful grapes ever produced. Still today, at the time of this writing, they show their most beautiful autumnal dress and their leaves that summer has left intact are glittering like never before with shades of fawn, purple and gold announcing their coming dormancy. These colors are also at the origin of this name of Côte d'Or that it bears now for eternity.

Winter was mild: the lowest recorded temperature was -6° C around February 12th and the heavy rains provided a reserve of water that was very useful as we experienced a dry season.

This trend of hot and dry weather first announced itself in the mild and dry spring, except for two episodes of violent rains on May 1st and June 15th that arrived at the right time to bring humidity to the vineyards.

This dry and hot weather accompanied by a persistent friendly North Wind had a determining impact on the harvest in creating the conditions for an early, very rapid and homogeneous flowering. We could also observe some "coulure", but almost no millerandage.

July was hot and dry, even scorching between July 2nd and 8th with night temperatures of 30° C. During the whole month only 14mm of rain were recorded. Heat was such some days that the evolution of the grapes was stopped. But we could see berries beginning to change color (veraison) in Romanee-Conti and in Corton as of July 27th.

The first two weeks of August were humid and mild, without any heat peaks. The vineyards breathed again and ripened quietly. Mid-veraison occurred around August 9th and we knew then that the harvest would take place in early September.

During the second fortnight of August, the North wind set in with beautiful dry weather and unseasonably high temperatures, especially at the end of the month when we went through a three-day heatwave.

All along, the vineyards remained perfectly green, healthy and connected to all the astral and telluric forces that give life to them. They liked the dry weather in 2015. The July heat-waves stopped their evolution at least twice, but each time these were counterbalanced by stormy episodes that brought the needed humidity. As a result, the evolution of the vineyards was nearly ideal and thanks to these exceptional weather conditions, 2015 was a rather easy vintage for the vigneron. We could always intervene in the right place at the right moment, whatever the work to be done: compost supply, manual work, work of the soil or phytosanitary treatments.

But nothing is perfect and the treatments, although exceptionally few, were essential at a time when there was a cloud on the horizon: oidium. This fungus that thrives during cold and damp nights took advantage of the rare rainy episodes of the spring to develop in the area of Nuits-St-Georges, Vosne-Romanée and Flagey-Echezeaux.

This attack forced us to be very vigilant, even if the dry weather and the North Wind were of great help in eradicating this fungus. Our vineyards manager, Nicolas Jacob, and his team triumphantly managed a situation that was complicated by the fact that the sulphur that we use against oidium loses its efficiency above the 30° temperature we often experienced in 2015.

At harvest time the grapes were in excellent sanitary condition, rather compact, but average in quantity. The skins of the berries were extraordinarily thick and full of anthocyanins. These had been forged by the sun whose intensity went so far as to burn some of them, and the slaps of the successive storms. No botrytis at all. But the most remarkable fact, which was also linked to the early and rapid flowering, was the level of maturity of the grapes. From this homogeneous flowering resulted a homogeneous and extreme maturity without ever reaching over maturity as in 2003. We noticed this balance in the analysis of the grape must at harvest time and today in the wines, the acidities being in perfect balance with the tannins and the rather high alcohol level.

We started the harvest in Montrachet on September 4th. The weather was dry and mild. The Chardonnay vineyards ripened very fast due to the very hot days of the second part of August and the very fast consecutive increase of sugar content led us to harvest this vineyard first. As a result, the grapes were ripe, of the highest quality and superbly golden predicting a very great white wine. This was also confirmed by the first tastings of the wine that is finishing its malolactic fermentations in barrels.

On September 5th we harvested the Corton and noticed that our pre-harvest impressions were right i.e. the Pinot Noir grapes that we picked were in perfect sanitary condition and very ripe. Thanks to the resistance of the grapes, there was no trace of botrytis, even on the second generation grapes (verjus) that we left on the vines and that waited until the end of October to ripen and make the dabbler vignerons happy!

After a day off, on Sunday 6th, we started the harvest in Vosne-Romanée on Monday 7th. Our instructions to the harvesters were as simple as ever since there was no botrytis and only the burnt berries were to be removed from the clusters that had been the most exposed to the sun. There were also some "figgy" berries, i.e ultra-ripe, but we had of course to keep them.

The beautiful, dry and mild weather lasted until September 12th, a day of heavy rains, but we were already in the Echezeaux, the last vineyard harvested that we finished on the 14th.

Here are the harvest dates and approximate yields:

|                                      |          |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Romanée-Conti: September 10          | 22 hl/ha |
| La Tâche: September 7-8              | 25 hl/ha |
| Richebourg: September 8-9            | 24 hl/ha |
| Romanée-St-Vivant: September 9-10-11 | 26 hl/ha |
| Grands-Echezeaux: September 11-12    | 30 hl/ha |
| Echezeaux: September 12-14           | 25 hl/ha |
| Corton: September 5                  | 22 hl/ha |
| Montrachet: September 4              | 30 hl/ha |

The phenolic maturity was fully completed and we chose to make the vinifications with the whole clusters, i.e. without destemming. Such vinifications are always a challenge. These were masterfully carried out by Bernard Noblet and his team.

Fermentations were rich, powerful and extremely long (21 to 23 days depending on the wine) due to the important polyphenol contents and the richness of sugar. Many small berries, whose skins were exceptionally resistant, released their juice only at the end of fermentations and even, for some of them, only under the force of the wine press.

The wines were put into vats with a little sugar which continued its fermentation in barrels bringing more suppleness and smoothness to the wines. Still today, in the silence of the cellar, we can hear the barrels whispering the song of the wine coming to life.

The wines have deep purple colors. On the nose, there is fruit and tannins are ample in the mouth. There is no trace of over-maturity as in 2003, but all the opulence and richness of extreme maturity.

The typical characteristics of the finished wines take shape: power and balance for the Richebourg, strength with a note of liquorice for La Tâche, elegance and length in the mouth for the Romanée-Conti that is already above all the others.