



2009 harvest report Exceptional!!!

The longer, the better...A long harvest where we could reach optimum maturity.

2009 harvest started on August 13 and ended on October 17. We started 2 weeks earlier than in 2008 and finished around the same date.

The sum of warm temperatures is much more important in 2009 than in 2008; it is also higher than in 2007.

They are 3 great wine vintages in terms of quality, but 2009 could prove to be the best of the three.

Yields are even lower, very low in some cases; an average of 52 hl/ha and 54 hl/ha were obtained for the white and the reds grapes, respectively.

2009 vintage will reveal true vintners as well as true winemakers: thanks to our team's experience, we could take our grapes to the optimum maturity. Those fully mature grapes gave us a wide array of styles and this is a true pleasure for the vintner and the blender.

Some may remember that the rainy spring was seriously threatening the health of our vines, and that prevision and prevention were crucial to maintain perfect sanitary conditions.

But this rainy spring was at the same time a blessing to rebuild the water supply in the subsoil. Our temperature balance was similar to 2003 but our vines did not suffer, or very little, from hydric stress.

Now, it's up to the winemaker to demonstrate more than ever his talents in the art of blending the wines.

This year, my team was made out of the following permanent winemakers: Michel Laye, Arnaud Bergeron, Guillaume Borrot, Sébastien Pérez, David Costa et David Ciry as well as 3 « flying winemakers ».

Climatic conditions

We harvest our grapes on the 5 main valleys of the Languedoc, which are, starting from the Pyrénées Mountains and going as far as the Rhône River:

The Aude valley

The Orb valley

The Hérault valley

The Peyne valley

The Uzès valley.

Each one of those valleys offer different conditions and a specific terroir; our philosophy is based on the search for the best balance between the plant and its environment: soil-climate and vineyard management.

We will use Pézenas/Montagnac and Limoux as references in terms of climatic conditions, as this is where we have our Estate and winery.

RAINFALL BALANCE (Nov to Sept)

PEZENAS & MONTAGNAC

In the Pézenas area, rainfall reached 518 mm, 22% less than an average year. In Montagnac, those conditions were normal (around 750 mm).

Winter: important rain deficit in Pézenas, normal in Montagnac.

Spring: a slight surplus.

Summer and September: no rain.

LIMOUX

In the Limoux area, rainfall reached 433 mm, which is an average data (average over the last 10 years: 453 mm).

Winter: fairly humid, 50% of the total rainfall took place in winter.

Spring: strong humidity.

Summer and September: strong rain deficit.

Other regions :

In the lower Orb Valley (from Béziers to St Chinian), rainfall reached 650 mm, a bit superior to normal rainfall due to a big storm that took place in the middle of the harvest (average over the past 10 years: 580 mm).

Winter: fairly wet, 70% of the total rainfall.

Spring: strong humidity.

Summer and September: hot and dry, with a strong rain deficit (except at the end of September).

Lower Aude valley (Carcassonne, Marseillette): deficit of 20%. A spring frost in the lower Aude valley at the beginning of April affected the yield of the Chardonnay. Warm Summer.

In the Narbonne area, rainfall were about 300 mm, which is an average data (over the last 10 years, the average was 324 mm).

Winter: quite humid (70% of the whole rainfall)

Spring: strong humidity

Summer and September: important rain deficit.

In the Uzès valley, winter was cold and rainy, followed by a humid spring (less humid than in 2008 anyway). As in the rest of the area, Summer was warm; a few plots suffered from hydric stress but in general, this is a superb vintage, with a good ageing potential.

TEMPERATURE REPORT

Winter

In the region, winter was fairly cold and spring normal, with 2 peaks of warm temperatures: in the first decade of March and at the end of April.

Spring

The month of May was globally warm.

Except the first decade of the month, with normal temperatures, the rest of June was warm, with temperatures exceeding by 1 to 5°C the normal temperatures.

Summer

The month of July was normal, but the month of August was very warm and the more surprising is that temperatures were still very high after August 15, when we usually face a strong drop in temperatures, and we face storms. As an example, at Nicole Estate we haven't seen any drop of rain between Aug. 1 and September 15.

This small heatwave in August was very often compared to the 2003 heatwave, but we are facing 2 different situations. In 2003, we had more than 40 days of heat with temperatures over 35°C between June and August; In 2009 we had only 16 days. IN 2003, the vine was stressed to an extreme point, but not this year. Night temperatures were cooler than in 2003, as a consequence maturity didn't block.

Thermal amplitude is one of the most important criteria in a qualitative vintage. Thermal amplitude is the difference between the average minimum and maximum temperatures. Its influence is very important on achieving good aromatic development, and colouration of the grapes. Thermal amplitude this year was more significant than in 2008, even in August.

As a summary:

- Normal rainfall in winter, rainy month of April, low rainfall from May to September
- Hot months of May and August
- Very healthy grapes

Outlook of the 2009 vintage, variety by variety

Typical grape varieties from Languedoc: Grenache Blanc et Noir, Terret, Picpoul, Vermentino, Carignan, Cinsault, Tempranillo. We enjoyed an exceptional climate for this 2009 vintage, typically Mediterranean, and those traditional varieties produced excellent fruit this year, with very clear and pronounced variety characteristics, a modern touch and very fruity character.

Sauvignon Blanc :

Sauvignon Blanc shows an extraordinary freshness this year; we find exotic fruit flavours (litchi and mango), with blackcurrant bud taste.

Alcohol: 12 à 13%

Acidity: 3, 8 à 5

pH: 3,1 à 3,4

Chardonnay :

The limited yield of Chardonnay was due in some area to an early spring frost in the lower Aude valley. This variety is also very sensitive to oidium. The maturity developed in a few days, and the quality also. We have strong and complex aromas, with pineapple notes. Once more, the ageing on lees brought fatness and aromas, this is a vintage with a great ageing potential.

Alcohol : 13 à 14%

Acidity : 3,6 à 4,5

pH : 3,3 à 3,6

Viognier: Viognier is a variety that needs a fairly warm climate, so this year it found the ideal conditions to produce great quality wine.

Alcohol : 13 à 14%

Acidity : 3,5 à 4

pH : 3,5 à 3,6

Vermentino: This grape variety is fairly resistant to oidium, and shows a good adaptation to climatic changes. The quality will be as good as in 2008, which was a great vintage for vermentino.

Alcohol: 13 à 13,5%

Acidity: 3,6 à 3,9

pH: 3,4 à 3,5

Marsanne: With a warmer climate, we harvested our Marsanne earlier, thanks to a fast maturity. Good harvest.

Alcohol: 13%

Acidity: 3,6

pH: 3,5

Picpoul: A very elegant wine, with citrus aromas.

Alcohol: 12,2

Acidity: 4

pH: 3,25

Grenache blanc:

Alcohol: 13,8%

Acidity: 3,6

pH: 3,6

Rosé:

Rosé wines were exceptional due to important thermal amplitudes.

Syrah, Mourvèdre, Cinsault and Grenache vines are specially grown in order to produce grapes for rosé wine; this year, they gave very good results in terms of fruit, fat and balance.

Pinot noir:

A good vintage. We managed the vineyards in order to face the odium threat (the pinot is a very sensible variety). We harvested earlier in order to preserve better the aromas of the plant.

Thermal amplitude is more important than last year and allowed us to obtain wines with cherry aromas and a soft tannic structure which brings softness and complexity.

Alcohol: 13,5

Acidity: 3,4

pH: 3,7

Merlot:

Budburst was late and the Merlot vines enjoyed a nice vegetative cycle. The merlot maturity was longer than last year and took place in two periods: a fast one, due to the mini heatwave, and a slower one with cooler temperatures and nights, which helped give more concentration in aromas and qualitative polyphenols.

The wines show nice fruit aromas (blackcurrant, plums) and ripe tannins.

Alcohol: 13,5 à 14,5%

Acidity: 3,1 à 3,3

pH: 3,65 à 3,8

Syrah:

This is the only grape variety that suffered from hydric stress. The risk in front of this premature maturity was to rush things, but we chose to wait. We harvested later, even if the laboratory analysis of the grapes showed a good maturity the polyphenolic maturity was not there. The berry tasting showed us that we had to wait in order to get an excellent Syrah, with a superb aromatic range: spices, blackcurrant, liquorice, mocha, violet...

Alcohol: 13,5 à 14%

Acidity: 3,1 à 3,4

pH: 3,65 à 3,85

Cabernet Sauvignon:

Late maturing variety, as well as malbec. Very good harvesting conditions and excellent fruits. Aromatic potential that we hardly ever had, and let us think that we will have a great 2009 cabernet, exceptional as in 2007: rich, soft, powerful, fruit-driven.

Alcohol: 13,5 à 14,5%

Acidity: 3,2 à 3,5

pH: 3,6 à 3,7