

VINTAGE FACT SHEET

2009

THE 2009 GROWTH CYCLE

A year just like they are supposed to be!

After a proper rainy, cold winter, the growth cycle followed a normal calendar. The seasons were properly separated from each other and brought the conditions we usually expect. It almost took us by surprise!

And as a well-behaved child also misbehaves from time to time, Nature had its silly moments; as the Merlots finished flowering, the 10-degree centigrade drop in temperature for a few days increased the rate of poor fruit set and reduced the potential harvest size. Then the much publicised destructive bout of hail on 13 May hit one third of the vineyard. This time, it was moderately strong, but had less of an effect on the quality of the fruit than it did on the overall condition of the vineyard, especially since this was the second year running that these plots had been struck by hail.

The wall-to-wall blue skies of August, which was a magnificent month, encouraged photosynthesis and helped build up plenty of sugar in the grapes. Rainfall, however, was low and the storms at the beginning of September were really welcome to aid the vines in ripening their fruit over the long sunny period that followed.

THE HARVEST

We harvested between 30 September and 16 October in five passes in order to pick the fruit of each plot, when it was perfectly ripe, because although the grapes were rich in sugar, the tannins only ripened gradually. The fine harvest weather, enabled us to wait for each plot. The surprise came on the last day, when an early frost of -4°C woke us up with a shiver at 7.0 a.m.!

It was time we finished, and that morning as the pickers started snipping there was hoar frost at the end of the rows and a temperature of -2°C.

The grapes were very clean and botrytis-free. Our sorting system did a marvellous job, totally eliminating from the first category the green pedicels that resulted from the poor fruit set, as well as ruling out the less ripe fruit.

One of the highlights of this harvest was the inauguration of and familiarisation with our new gravity-fed tank filling process. The grapes are gently dispatched in small recipients to each tank. Like this, the grapes remain intact, which results in a much gentler mouth feel in the way the tannins are perceived. We were very pleased to have been able to achieve this installation in the difficult conditions of an existing cellar with its many constraints.

The yield this year was low as a result of poor fruit set: 30 hectolitres per hectare for the main wine.

THE WINE

This is quite clearly a very great vintage; exceptionally rich and remarkably mellowed tannins. Its keeping potential will be very good, but it will delight drinkers who cannot wait. It is the result of a fine summer followed by an Indian summer that polished the tannins to a mellow finish.

2009 facts and figures

MID-FLOWERING DATES	Merlots: 29 May	Cabernets: 31 May	
MID-VERAISON* DATES	Merlots: 3 August	Cabernets: 10 August	
HARVESTING DATES	Merlots: 30 September to 7 October	Cabernets Francs: 14 to 16 October	Cabernets Sauvignons: 16 October
WINE YIELD	39 hectolitres per hectare		
LENGTH OF BARREL AGEING	On-going		
% AGE OF NEW BARRELS	77% new barrels	23% 1-year-old barrels	
BOTTLING	2011		
NUMBER OF BOTTLES expected	First wine: 95,000	Second wine: 15,000	
%AGE 1 st and 2 nd WINE expected	First wine: 86%	Second wine: 14%	
BLEND (approximate)	% Merlot	% Cab. Franc	% Cab. Sauv.

*The date at which 50% of the grapes in each bunch have changed colour, indicating that ripening has begun.



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