

2013 Harvest Report

In my previous harvest reports, I often compared the changeable weather conditions that govern the birth of a vintage by referring to “ups and downs”, “a chaotic course”. I sometimes used the words “fight” or “adversity “. No year more than 2013 deserves to be described in this manner.

We will remember it as a year when we often navigated in stormy weather, without knowing until the last moment what the weather gods had in store for us. But we clung to whatever could save us from the wreck. We finally arrived safely and the same gods that seemed to be attached to our loss would have certainly been angry to be deprived of great wines which, in spite of or because of their blows, have just been locked up in our cellars!

The beginning of the Spring was gloomy. May was disastrous due to exceptionally low temperatures, a lot of rain (almost 350 mm in 3 months - there were 250 mm for the same period in 2012 ... and that was already a great deal!) and consequently extremely rare sunny days. This resulted in lots of “coulure” by “filage” (undeveloped grapes) or abortion at flowering time. Flowering was very late: mid-flowering was reached on June 25th only, while it was on June 10th in 2012 and on May 19th in 2011.

This was the most difficult period. We had to fight every day and be vigilant constantly in order to intervene at the right time to win the battle against diseases like mildew that were threatening the vineyards. Our team was totally devoted to this work under the supervision of Nicolas Jacob.

June, July and August were better with hot periods, even scorching days in July and August. We experienced heavy storms in July. The Côte de Beaune from Meursault to Aloxe-Corton was hit by severe hailstorms for the second consecutive year. Many vintners lost their whole crop. Fortunately, luck was on our side: the Côte de Nuits was spared.

The return of sunny days and the beautiful Summer that followed were of major importance. They compensated a little of the lack of heat and sun in Spring and permitted the vineyards to make up a little of the lost time and to ripen rapidly at the end of the season, as is often the case in Burgundy, where Pinot Noir and Chardonnay can gain up to 1° per week.

2013 is however to be ranked among late years. If we consider the dates of the harvest, it is to be compared to 1978 or 1979. The quality of these two wonderful vintages shows the advantages a long growing season can have when the grapes « simmer » in the soft sun and benefits from a slow ripening, which gives complexity to the wines.

Finally in late September, despite all those hazards, the 2013 crop looked very good both in Vosne-Romanée and Corton, reduced of course, but of good sanitary quality. There was a majority of small and not too compact grapes with a good proportion of millerand berries, in summary, all we need to make great wines. The Montrachet that was slightly hit by hail was more sensitive to botrytis.

By September 30th, our white and red grapes along the Côte de Beaune had reached maturity. The grapes of Côte de Nuits needed a few more days.

In the meantime abundant rains arrived ‘to confuse the issue’ on the white wines sector in Côte de Beaune and set off an explosion of botrytis in the Chardonnays. As a consequence we harvested our Montrachet more rapidly than usual on October 2nd. The crop is very small, but we should obtain rich, opulent wines, made in the tradition of the

Domaine's Montrachet.

Even if the Pinot Noir vineyards were not affected as much by botrytis, this mushroom progressed due to humidity and warmth which of course guided our harvest decisions. On the 3rd, we decided to harvest the Corton. Unfortunately on the 5th and 6th abundant rains, sometimes stormy, caused the appearance and development of botrytis. We started picking on the 6th, as scheduled, fearing that the botrytis might explode. Fortunately, in the following days, nature came to our rescue. The weather turned exceptionally cold, almost winter like some days: the development of botrytis was stopped and we could end the harvest calmly with better, although still humid conditions.

At last the famous and long-desired "Burgundian miracle" set in. Between the beginning and the end of our harvest in Vosne-Romanée, despite humidity and cold, sugar contents rose in a level that we no longer expected. This was the proof that, even though conditions during the growing season were difficult, the grapes had kept on ripening. The small yields due to "coulture" had certainly much to do with it.

The vineyards were harvested in the following order:

- On October 2nd: Montrachet

There was much botrytis. A very selective sorting was necessary to keep only the "noble rot".

- On October 3rd: Corton

The sanitary condition was excellent. Beautiful small crop, fully ripened.

- On October 6th (afternoon) and 7th (morning): Grands-Echezeaux.

A piercing cold stopped the progression of botrytis.

Then, the harvest went on in dry, almost winter conditions:

- On October 7th (afternoon) and 8th & 9th (mornings): La Tâche

- On October 8th (afternoon): Romanée-Conti

- On October 9th (afternoon) and 10th (morning): Richebourg

- On October 10th (afternoon) and 11th (all day): Romanée-St-Vivant

- On October 12th (all day) and 13th (morning): Echezeaux

All along the harvest, a severe sorting had to be done, which slowed down the pace of the pickers. But the harvest was all in all rather rapid, hardly a week in Vosne-Romanée, since the crop was very small, about the same as in 2012, i.e. a little more than half a normal crop.

Once again, the quality of the sorting will have been essential to the quality of the wine.

Our harvesters, as well as our staff who put the last touches to the sorting, are, as you know, perfectly experienced in this work. Only the finest grapes ended up in vats.

Bernard Noblet and his team could work in peace as vinifications were naturally easy.

The grapes were harvested cold and maceration lasted for 5-6 days. After a slow start, fermentations progressed actively producing beautiful pink foam during the "pigeage" (punching down of the cap).

We have the confirmation that the yields are very low, but the wines have beautiful dark colours, fine aromas, with good acidity in the mouth and supple tannins. They are among the most balanced of these last years, but we have to wait for the malolactic fermentations to have a more definite opinion.

You will understand, that if I am late in sending you this report compared to past years, it is because the harvest was unusually late. The vinifications finished on November 4th after putting into barrels the last harvested wine, the Echezeaux. This had not happened for a long time!

Here are the approximate yields:

Romanée Conti: 18 hl/ha

La Tâche: 19 hl/ha

Richebourg: 17 hl/ha

Romanée-Saint-Vivant: 18hl/ha
Grands-Echezeaux: 22 hl/ha
Echezeaux: 16 hl/ha
Corton: 20 hl/h
Montrachet: 27 hl/ha
