Joseph Drouhin

2016 – A happy ending!

The 2016 growing year had been particularly testing, but the last months before the harvest made the vintage.

he winter of 2015/2016 was rather mild and humid and budburst occurred in the first days of April; the first green tips were seen on the 11th of April in the majority of the vineyards. This precocity was quite similar to the 2015 vintage.
On the 13th of April, a large hailstorm hit the Mâconnais and Beaujolais areas, about 1,500 hectares in the sector of St-Véran, Pouilly-Fuissé, Moulin-à-Vent, St-Amour and Fleurie.
On the night of the 26th of April, freezing conditions enveloped Burgundy and the temperatures become negative in a few hours passing from + 2 ° C to - 6 ° C. The damage was considerable in Chablis, in the north of the Côte Chalonnaise and the Mâconnais. The vines then sprouted a second generation of grapes.
In the course of the month it also rained a great deal, twice more than normal and the vegetative development slowed down. At the end of the month there were 2 or 3 unfurled leaves. These cool, humid conditions favoured the development of downy mildew. The winemakers had to be very diligent with their plots.
The month of May looked a little like April; cold and rainy, 105 mm in Mâcon and 132 mm in Rully, with cool temperatures about 2 degrees below normal. The Ascension weekend, from the 5th to the 8th May, brought warm and beautiful weather. It unfortunately hailed on the 13th of May in Chablis and about 500 hectares were affected. Our estate, located in the heart of the appellation, was not impacted but it had already been damaged by the night frost.
At the end of the month the vegetative stage was similar to that of 2013. The first flowers were to be seen on the 14th of June in the earliest plots.
The beginning of the month of June was cool and the 2nd fortnight brought beautiful and warm weather. Full flowering took place around the 20th of June. Hail returned again to the Beaujolais on the night of 24th of June with significant damage to Romanèche-Thorins.
At the beginning of July the vineyard was not a very pretty sight. We estimated the harvest for early October and waited impatiently for the summer which finally installed itself with remarkable weather: bright, warm with this time a deficit rainfall. The closing of the clusters took place around the 20th of July and the veraison was visible in early August. The vines had caught up. The pressure from diseases diminished and we regained confidence.

September was beautiful, with little rain. The harvest began on September the 23rd in the Côte d'Or and on September the 28th in Chablis.
The situation is very different from one appellation, and even from one plot to another, but in general the yields are low because of the episodes of hail or frost. The harvest was, however, rather healthy.

Vinifications : it was necessary to juggle between the sizes of tanks available and the volume of the harvested crop. With sometimes very low yields, the vinification process resembled micro-vinification.
Sorting was necessary to separate the grapes harvested from the 1st generation and the 2nd, following the episode of frost.
Favouring a vintage on the fresh and fruity side, the grapes of almost all of the appellations have been de-stemmed.
The alcoholic fermentations took place for between 19 to 23 days. We preferred punch-downs to pump-overs. For the white wines the fermentations took place during around 3 weeks. A large part of the whites started their malolactic fermentations before the arrival of the cold weather. These winter temperatures favoured the beginning of the malolactic fermentations of the red wines in the spring.

The first tastings rejoiced us and reinforced the idea that we had a "classic" Burgundy vintage, with a fine tannic structure and a very pretty freshness.

The wines are precise and rather balanced, in white as in red.

Despite the climatic difficulties, 2016 has surprised us all.

Frédéric DROUHIN
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