



Olivier Leflaive

PULIGNY-MONTRACHET - FRANCE

THE 2017 HARVEST

The 2016 vintage with the black frost it endured is long forgotten. The vines, which overall yielded relatively little the previous year, had had time to rest and recover.

The fall of 2016 saw little rainfall, with just 60% of what one might normally expect. Winter set in during December and continued through January and February with the thermometer frequently dipping below zero, touching between -5 and -10°C under bright sunny skies. Precipitation was back to normal in March, with significant differences depending on the vineyard.

At the start of **April**, things warmed up, allowing budburst to happen in the best conditions, with the three-leaf stage attained by 20 April. As in 2016, from 25 April to the end of the month, the forecast was for freezing temperatures, and we feared another black frost might strike. All across the region, winegrowers were burning straw, watering it lightly to produce a smoke screen between the tender buds and the cloud-free sky. Most villages lit fires on 27, 28, and 29 April between 5am and 7am to protect their tender plants. The results were very positive and only a few vines were damaged. The 2017 vintage was on its way.

By **early May**, the vines were growing well. There was plenty of sunshine and just enough rain to keep things going. There was no trace of disease on the leaves, nor on the future grapes. The number of bunches per plant was typical for Chardonnay, and a little more than what one might expect for the Pinot Noir.

Flowering happened quickly in early June in fine, calm weather that was ideal for the season. **June** was also hot and dry. The vines drew on their reserves and the vintage was promising to be an early one.

July is always hot and sunny but we had a few welcome rainstorms to help veraison get underway. It began at the end of July and went into early August.

In **August**, the temperatures softened, with the right amount of sunshine, but a little less rainfall in places than we'd have liked. Overall, the Chardonnays were somewhat stressed but continued to evolve in an acceptable manner. The Pinots, which were a touch thirstier, slowed down a touch overall. But we were happy to wait.

Around **20 August**, and after plenty of visits to the vines to take samples, we decided to start picking the whites on **30 August**. Our harvesting finished on **14 September**.

In **September**, we harvested at our own pace, beneath a sometimes-hazy sky. A little nighttime rain fell during that time, but this didn't harm the grapes. The equinox and the fall came fairly soon after.

KEY EVENTS DURING THE 2017 SEASON:

- A lack of rain overall (-15% on the 20-year average)
- No major damage from frost, hail, disease, or pests
- An early and even growth cycle, similar to 2015, 2011
- A very healthy harvest for both reds and whites, no downy or powdery mildew or botrytis

CÔTE CHALONNAISE WHITES:

The paradox of this vintage is that the vines of the Côte Chalonnaise produced more in 2016 than they did in 2017. Whether they were affected a little or not at all by the frost, it is during flowering that the vintage is defined. In Rully, yields were down, but as in Montagny, the wines were typical of the appellation. After malolactic fermentation, they revealed themselves to be very fresh and indulgent.

CHABLIS WHITES:

The vines of Chablis were hit hard by frost in certain places, coupled with a significant lack of water in July and August. Fortunately, the vines were able to draw from their reserves, and with a little rainfall around 20 August, were able to finish ripening. The 2017 wines are dynamic and well balanced, typical of wines from vines grown on Kimmeridgean soil.

CÔTE DE BEAUNE WHITES:

After a year of low yields, there was a real risk of having too many grapes. But nature did its job properly and across the board, we only had limited grapes with satisfactory structure and not much rain. A little hydric stress in July and a few light showers in August allowed for an ideal combination of well-ripened grapes and others that were a little less well-ripened, but all of them in great health. After malolactic fermentation, the wines were dry and generous, showing delicious acidity, and with precise and forthright fruit. Overall, the style is very elegant. This was an ideal vintage for the winemaker. 2017 is a serious vintage and in some respects, could be compared to 2014.

CÔTE DE BEAUNE REDS:

After a few tricky vintages and very low yields, the Pinot Noirs let themselves go and released all their energy. The weather conditions in 2017 were perfect from end to end, and yes, as we said above, they were thirsty. So we took the time to harvest later, to sort the grapes in the vines and again in the winery, selecting only the ripest and rejecting any that were under par. Vinification was gentle, with *pigeages* adapted to the must. Malolactic fermentation was deliberately held back and will not be completely finished until the summer of 2018. Lovely lees will bring the necessary foundation for good ageing – but we must be patient.

We should point out that the vertical pressing done by our elders and reintroduced for the 2016 vintage has brought great precision in the quality of the fruit and tannins in the mouth. Here, again, there are many similarities with the 2014.

**By Franck Grux, Philippe Grillet and the technical team at OLIVIER LAFLAIVE
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