



Olivier Leflaive

PULIGNY-MONTRACHET - FRANCE

THE 2019 HARVEST

The growth cycle of the 2018 vintage ended in dry and sunny weather. These conditions lasted throughout the fall, which meant that the water table was never replenished. December was the only month to see sufficient rainfall between October and January. The temperature never really fell below freezing and the winter was a mild one, some 2.5°C above the norm for the past two decades.

FEBRUARY, which is usually a cold month, saw temperatures vary from 7-17°C.

In early **MARCH**, the buds quickly began to form, and although the weather was bad during the last ten days, budburst was well underway.

At the start of **APRIL**, while the early Chardonnays were already at one or two leaves, the temperature dropped suddenly in the space of two days, and fine rain began to fall from an overcast sky.

On the night of 5 April 2019, when the new moon appeared, the mercury dropped to -5°C at around 3am, under a clear sky with high humidity and no wind. Despite the fires that had been lit, in burners and using straw, and the hard work of winegrowers, between 30-40% of the future white wine harvest was destroyed by frost. It was a harsh reminder of what happened in 2016. A second, albeit less severe frost episode hit the Pinot Noirs on the southern Côte d'Or, the Chalonnaise, and the Auxerrois on the night of 13 April.

APRIL remained cool and wet, slowing the vines' ability to get their strength back. Growth was very slow.

Fortunately, **MAY** brought the fine weather back during the daytime, although the nights remained cool. Downy and powdery mildew, which are normally a threat during this period, remained at bay and the vines grew and recovered their pace.

JUNE brought hot weather for the season, allowing the vines to partially catch up. Photosynthesis was excellent and the plants were a vibrant green color. Flowering was approaching fast.

During the last 10 days of June, the temperatures cooled a little. Flowering began for the whites but dragged on a little. Shatter occurred, resulting in *millerandage*. The fine weather returned, and the Pinots flowered in turn, but saw some shatter, too.

JULY was very hot and dry. The Chardonnays soon reached the **CLOSED BUNCH** stage, and the Pinots followed a few days later. Depending on the vines' age and how they were managed, there were a few metabolic blockages due to latent drought stress.

AUGUST remained hot and dry. The grapes approached maturity but at varying rates. By 20 August, the sugar levels were almost perfect, but the phenolic ripeness was far from ideal. Ordinarily, we like to harvest fairly early, but this year, we delayed picking in order to achieve something we couldn't quite put our finger on. To use a culinary metaphor, we didn't feel the grapes were quite "cooked through".

We eventually started picking on 11 **SEPTEMBER** and finished 10 days later.

THE 2019 CAMPAIGN IN A NUTSHELL

A mild and dry winter, with a water deficit of about 20% throughout the season. Significant spring frosts on 5 April for the Chardonnays, and again on 14 April for the Pinots. Losses of between 30- 50% depending on the village. Flowering was capricious and caused shatter leading to *millerandage* which further reduces yields but concentrates the wines. June was hot but July and August even more so. There was drought stress in places, which can delay ripening. Like 2018, 2019 was a record year for sunshine. Limited threat of disease thanks to leaf thinning, sulfur, and close monitoring. The berries were scarce and small, with high sugars across the board, but the lack of water helped maintain the acidity in the fruit. Very good weather conditions during the harvest.

CHABLIS WINES:

Despite limited impact from spring frosts, the Chablis region was more sensitive during flowering. A touch more rain in the spring led to fairly even ripening so the grapes were harvested at virtually the same time as those on the Côte d'Or. We were careful stop the sugar levels going too high as the skins were very healthy. The wines are typical and balanced, indulgent yet very saline.

CÔTE CHALONNAISE WINES:

The two episodes of frost hit the vines of the Chalonnaise hard. From Rully to Montagny, most winegrowers lost between 40-60% of their harvest. However, our constant pursuit for balance and style meant we carefully monitored the maturity of the plots that were hit and adapted our winemaking style. The wines are naturally full-bodied, but they remain energetic after the malolactic fermentation, with a fruity and indulgent style and no heaviness.

CÔTE DE BEAUNE WHITES:

At best, the yield was 50% of a normal vintage like 2017 or 2018. Vinifying small volumes of white wines is a perilous exercise. And this was the case for this vintage, which had the advantage of being healthy, with firm skins, beautiful pips and good acidity. The alcohol levels were high, at 13.5° or even 14° across the board, but the wines' phenolic consistency can handle it. The wines are generous and full, with no residual sugar. There was not much malic acid, but we nonetheless thought it judicious to let it be transformed by malolactic fermentation, which we deliberately delayed in order to gain a little time on the ageing cycle. There was very little intervention except to help the sugars finish, and the wines enjoyed a cautiously light oakling. The first tastings suggest a vintage that has depth and vinosity. There are naturally some similarities with 2016 vintage and the best wines from 2003, but it would be better to wait a little longer to compare this vintage with its predecessors.

CÔTE DE BEAUNE REDS:

Small harvests of 20-30 hectoliters per hectare are often well suited to Pinot Noir, and 2019 was no different. The Pinots were early in some places like Santenay and Chassagne, and later in Pernand, which is often the case, and Pommard (more rarely). In all cases, it was a great pleasure to pick (with almost no sorting), vinify, and taste. Lots of color, fruit, beautiful tannins and pleasure. We worked the harvest gently, with limited extraction. The malolactic fermentation is still ongoing and is essential to reinforce acidity and volume in the mouth. We have great confidence in this vintage which is reminiscent of the styles of 2016, 2010, or 2005.

Puligny-Montrachet, 21 March 2020
Franck Grux, Philippe Grillet, and the team at Olivier Leflaive