



Olivier Leflaive

PULIGNY-MONTRACHET - FRANCE

## THE 2020 HARVEST

It is always important to remember that a new vintage does not begin on the first day of January, rather it starts immediately after the previous harvest, and the restocking of water reserves is fundamental. After the 2019 harvest, the water deficit was estimated at 25-30% depending on the appellation area. The fall of that year was very mild but saw a lot of rain, and was followed by the mildest winter seen for some 25 years, all of which serve to confirm the rise in temperatures across the board. There were only 10 days in winter when the temperature oscillated between zero and -5°C. But the rainfall, less intense in January, balanced out in February.

**In early MAY**, everything was in place for flowering to begin. Winegrowers were hoping for a little rain and were rewarded with 60mm between 11-20 May. **FLOWERING** began on 15 May in the earliest sectors and was completed everywhere by 25 May. A few rain showers caused a few problems for the flowers and led to a little *millerandage*. But we are convinced that 60mm that fell on the Côte de Beaune were essential for the ongoing growth cycle. At this point, the future harvest promised to be a fairly generous one for both white and red, but the bunches were on the small side.

**JUNE** saw the bright and hot weather continuing, thus maintaining the head-start seen across the region. The harvest start date promised to be fairly early in August if the weather spared us. This was further confirmed by another 50mm of rain that fell during this very sunny month. Once again, just a touch of sulfur was enough to protect the leaves, as long as it was applied very early in the morning or in the evening. The **CLOSED BUNCHES STAGE** was reached across the Côte with the arrival of summer on 21 June.

**JULY** was very hot, with almost heatwave conditions, as the vines continued to try to establish some kind of hydric equilibrium. The vines were visibly contracting but *véraison* began just before 14 July and was fully underway by 20 July. Evapotranspiration was high and work slowed in the vines. We feared the grapes might be a little sunburnt, but the vines continued their evolution with remarkable consistency across the region. We saw just 10% of the average rainfall for July, and there were a few signs of suffering, such as a slight and momentary bluing on the leaves of the Pinot Noir, but the grapes continued their development, nonetheless.

In early **AUGUST**, visits to the vines confirmed that the vintage was on track for exceptionally early ripening. Chardonnay volumes were down but the loss was much more significant for the Pinot. Any rainstorms would slow the ripening, but without water, it would be a race against hyper-concentration. We began our first grape analyses on 6 August and after everything had been taken into consideration, including social distancing measures, we summoned the pickers on 19 August. In the meantime, just 3-5mm of rain fell on the Côte de Beaune between 1 and 20 August compared to 60mm in Chablis and more than 100mm in Mâcon. The first Pinot Noir grapes to be purchased came into the winery on 19 August along with the pickers, giving us time to check our analysis, finalize our program, and carry out PCR tests on all the staff. **The 2020 harvest began on Friday 21 August** and the final snips of the secateurs rang out on **Monday 31 August**. Never before has harvesting been completed in August. This vintage will surely be an “august” one!

### THE 2020 CAMPAIGN IN A NUTSHELL

Mild temperatures in winter, no frost damage. Good start to the fruit in spring. The driest season since 1945, according to the Dijon weather station. Rainfall was around 50% down on norms from April to August. 20% more sunshine than in a normal year. Average temperature was up 1.5°C over the norm. Significant evapotranspiration in July and August. Constant and even phenolic ripeness led to an early harvest that we completed before August was out. Excellent weather conditions during the harvest. Yields clearly below forecasts, especially for the Pinot Noir.

### **CÔTE DE BEAUNE REDS:**

Like many winegrowers, in the spring, we thought we were in for a generous harvest. In the end, it was nothing of the sort and across all appellations, our provisional estimations were slashed in two. However, phenolic ripeness was much more advanced and much more homogenous than usual. The grapes were concentrated, and the skins and stalks absolutely perfect. Apart from a few traces of sunburn, the sorting tables were little used this year. It was a lovely vintage to vinify in whole bunches. Sugar levels were without excess, often at between 13-13.5°, tartaric acid levels were perfect, but the pH was fairly low. The wines are currently showing lovely color, with aromatic consistence underpinned by a very present acidity. The tannins are fine and elegant. The malolactic fermentation is about to end, and the ageing will continue as the wine mingles with the wood. This will no doubt be a great vintage, one that sits alongside 1990, 1999, 2005, 2010, and 2015.

### **CHABLIS WINES:**

This was a fairly calm season with no springtime frosts and no threat of disease. However, May and June were dryer than they were on the Côte d'Or, which meant that certain vines underwent some hydric stress in July. Fortunately, August brought two or three days of good rain that helped restart the ripening process. Yields remained good. The wines have a good balance of sugar and acidity, with that well defined Chablis character. Those that have finished their malolactic fermentation are fresh and dynamic with lovely limestone. There is no aromatic heaviness in these very pleasing wines.

### **CÔTE CHALONNAISE WHITES**

This region clearly suffered from a little frost, a chilly spell during flowering that led to *millerandage* and, as in many other places, a lack of rainfall at key moments in the growth cycle. As in Mâcon and Chablis, no significant rain fell in July or August to bring much-needed refreshment. As such, the vines had to draw deep into the soil, and they adapted. As a result, yields were fairly limited, at 35-50% below the norm for both colors. Whether they're from Montagny or Rully, the vines are characterful, with the closedness needed right now to promise character and vigor. The malolactic fermentations are slowly coming to an end and the wines are dry but full-bodied, bursting with energy.

### **CÔTE DE BEAUNE WHITES:**

For both vines in villages and on the Côte, the grapes were healthy and in great shape. Across the board, sugar was naturally high, without going beyond 13.5°. The skins remained firm tight through to the end, with acidity sometimes seeming vigorous with low pHs. Now the two fermentations have run their course, the wines are offering fruit and a lemony-limestone character with that little bit of vigor needed for the next few months of ageing in the cellar. The oak is not yet fully integrated which is normal. The aromatic profiles are firmly rooted in their *terroir* with the sugars fully transformed. The wines are precise, while sometimes a little austere. In the mouth, they are rich without excess, with glycerol and lovely bitterness on the finish. The malolactic fermentation plays a very important role in terms of the balance of taste.

Every year, we have a new vintage to shape, and this one is no exception apart from having to respect social distancing measures. But we are certain that whatever happens, these wines have an **AUGUST DESTINY!**

If we had to make a comparison today, we would say the 2020 vintage is a little like the 2014 and 2017 in terms of recent years, but much more like the 1985 and especially the 1988 for a later date.

**Puligny-Montrachet, 19 February 2021**  
**Franck Grux, Philippe Grillet, and the team at Olivier Leflaive**