



Olivier Leflaive

PULIGNY-MONTRACHET - FRANCE

VINTAGE 2010

Autumn 2009 weather was fairly normal until December, at which point temperatures gradually dropped, reaching -20°C across the region just before Christmas. Freezing conditions persisted through January and February 2010, with some periods of snow and heavy rainfall.

The combination of unremitting cold and humidity caused significant frost damage to some vines, mostly those in the vineyards at the foot of the escarpment.

March was an extremely gloomy month: the winter felt never-ending. However with April came glorious sunshine, which brought on budburst towards the 15th. Favourable conditions stimulated further growth up to early May, when cooler weather set in for the rest of the month. Temperatures in early June were milder than normal, paving the way to flowering. Then, just as the earliest vines started flowering towards the 10th June, the thermometer plunged, disrupting the entire process in later sectors. The resulting coulure (the phenomenon of poor fruit set) promised a reduction in potential volumes in the best cru vineyards.

While July was unsettled, bringing firstly warmth and sunshine then cool, cloudy periods, August was totally dull, making an early harvest out of the question. This also meant that September would determine the quality of the vintage, as in 2008.

From 23rd August, miraculously, the weather set fair in the region, lasting until 12th September, when local storms brought unwelcome rainfall. In mid-September, the north-easterly wind combined with fine, sunny conditions, prompted us to start picking, to maximise quality.

Start of harvest: 15th September

End of harvest: 2nd October

Overall impressions of quality:

Pinot Noir (Côte de Beaune):

During the ripening period it was crucial to keep monitoring maturity levels, which rose day by day. Storms increased significantly the pressure of rot. Every vine behaved differently. As a result, we had to sort the bunches and eliminate approximately 10% of the harvest, which was already lower than usual. The yields were sometimes as slight as 30-35 hl/ha.

We made the decision to reduce extraction during the vinification process, to maximise fruit and freshness. Tannins are very fine this year, balancing bright primary fruit. Stylistically the 2010s are more lively than the 2009s, with more charm than the 2008s. Varietal typicity is marked, with particularly pleasing results from Volnay and Pommard.

Chardonnay (Côte de Beaune):

Given the reduced yields resulting from millerandage (the phenomenon of poor fruit set, leading to bunches of grapes of uneven or small size), we decided to start harvesting early, taking the time to pick each terroir, as appropriate.

The high potential acidity at harvest, comprising largely malic acid, was no cause for concern. We knew we had to evaluate the wines properly once malolactic was complete. The crop was healthy, promising wines with lovely freshness and a sense of richness, without excessive sugar levels. In my view, the 2010 whites will be marked by their terroir, more accessible than 2008, yet with more tension and verve than 2009.

Our only major concern is the small harvest, with reductions of 20-50% compared to 2009 volumes.

Chardonnay (Chablis):

As in the Côte de Beaune and for similar reasons, we took the decision to start harvesting early in Chablis. Late rains brought enormous pressure from rot, as a result it seemed judicious to harvest the grapes in healthy condition, at the same time preserving the classic chablisien freshness and minerality.

All in all we believe this will be a very good vintage indeed.

The low yields will deliver full-flavoured wines, racy, with a sense of harmony and considerable length.

2010, after 2008 and 2009, concludes one of the finest trilogies I can remember.

Franck Grux
February 2011