



Olivier Leflaive

PULIGNY-MONTRACHET - FRANCE

## HARVEST 2015

Autumn 2014 brought considerable rainfall that provided a welcome top-up to the water table, essential for the season to come. Nonetheless the key characteristic of 2015 was the relative drought conditions (35-50% below average rainfall during the growing period), with very mild temperatures from early spring, then hot conditions bordering on heatwave by the time the grapes were close to phenolic maturity. Winter 2014 was mild throughout, with just a few very light morning frosts. Not a single snowflake either, nor the period of cold that vignerons hope for every year, to give the vine proper rest and keep pests and diseases in check. Temperatures from the start of March were ideal for budding, with budburst starting around the 9th April. The next few weeks were calm, mild and dry, the vines showing good, steady growth, with none of the usual disease pressures. Between the end of May and the first few days of June, the Chardonnay vines had flowered, followed by the Pinot Noirs during the second week of June. At this point, harvest promised to take place very early, as in 2003, 2007 or 2011. This seemed even more likely by the end of June, when grape bunches in the most sun-exposed sites started to close up.

Vineyard work started in earnest now, the vines still free of disease, though in need of a little water to prevent further wilting. By the start of July, the majority of vines were clearly suffering from hydric stress. The leaves were getting pale, the 'veraison' phase hung in limbo, while the temperatures soared. Hoeing the soils did not do much to help matters, and in some places dust burned the leaves. Since 2012, this specific period is a time of anxiety for many, fearful of the hail that has hit hard in the past few years. The average July temperature was 25C, the highest for a century. The grapes gradually changed colour and constitution at the start of August, coinciding with a few episodes of light rain, Mother Nature clearly in clement mood. Immediately, the leaf canopy regained its intense, brilliant green colour, and the grapes sprung to life, the skins softening up, while sugar and phenolic ripeness raced ahead. Towards the 20th August, we were already starting to prepare for harvest. As is the case every year, a style choice has to be made, taking into consideration yields, the age of the vines... and then the decision must be taken either to wait a little longer or to start harvesting. We started picking on 28th August, and had all the grapes in by 11th September.

Before giving you our opinion on the different vineyard areas, I would dare to say today, that across the region all in all, the general condition of the grapes, their state of health, colour and constitution, make the 2015 harvest one of the finest in grape quality since Olivier Leflaive was founded in 1984. The sorters did not even need to sort the grapes this year, they merely took the grapes to the tank or the press, simply removing bits of leaf and other vegetal matter here and there.

## OPINION ON THE WINES OF CHABLIS.

Chablis, like the Côte de Beaune, benefited from favourable weather for production and the grapes were harvested in perfect condition. Light rains at the end of August were perfectly timed, leading to wines of considerable charm, with finely-wrought fruit and silky textures. The style is quite ripe without being heavy, while yields are normal with balancing acidity. After recent rackings the wines have gained in character and typicity of style. A little richer than 2014, but an appealing style in the making.

## OPINION ON THE WHITE WINES OF THE COTE CHALONNAISE:

The Côte Chalonnaise showcases the sexy, ‘gourmand’ nature of the 2015 vintage. Yields were correct, kept in check naturally by the summer heat! We took the decision to harvest quite early here, to limit alcohol levels to 12.5% maximum, and to mature the wines in barrel as usual, without too much new oak, while keeping a proportion in stainless steel. We didn’t run into the fermentation issues that can arise from over-ripe harvests. The malolactic fermentation is not 100% finished, but the malic acid has dropped away gradually. The wines are dynamic, appealing, and will continue to gain in structure in the weeks to come.

## OPINION ON THE WHITES OF THE COTE DE BEAUNE:

Once again – and this is completely normal – the disparate nature of this territory will give wines that vary according to their specific terroirs, the way in which the vineyard was managed, yield levels, and the date of harvest. 2015 was a year when anything was possible. One could choose to harvest with a little more acidity, before further evaporation of juice and concentration of sugars, or indeed go for the opposite, riper style, richer in alcohol and polyphenols. Once again, our choice was to start harvesting relatively early in the finest vineyards. And it goes without saying, there was no need to chaptalize in this vintage.

Yields were just about normal this year in most places, Chardonnay not being a particular fan of great heat. Exceptionally healthy grapes gave rise to perfect juices, rich in aroma. Yeasts consumed the grape sugars slowly, creating perfect conditions for lactic bacteria to carry out their malolactic ferments. All fermentations were completed by the end of February 2016.

For us, this vintage has nothing in common with 2003; that much is clear. It has more power than 2007 and 2011, less acidity than 2010, but the same aromatic intensity and a comparable sense of volume in the mouth. If the majority of the wines are playing hide and seek now with the taster, the coming weeks are promising for the future balance of the wines.

## OPINION ON THE REDS OF THE COTE DE BEAUNE

Pinot Noir is typically more at ease than Chardonnay, with hot, dry climatic conditions like 2015. The big issue with 2015 reds will be the lack of quantity. No significant difference then, to 2012, 2013 or 2014 (all gave approx. 15-30 hectolitres/hectare more or less everywhere). Should we be surprised or worried?

It was clear that flowering in the preceding year was poor (after 3 consecutive years of hail), however growers also noted a general fatigue in the vines' vegetation, a certain lack of vigour, as well as water stress more or less everywhere across the Côte.

I cannot remember grapes as magnificent - small in size, with thick skins and no trace of degradation. The wines are dark in colour, sometimes very dark, the fruit is rich and appealing, the tannins silky, promising a great future. In my view, without any doubt the wines will rival the 2010, 1999, or the very handsome 2003s.

In Puligny-Montrachet, early March 2016.  
Franck GRUX, Philippe GRILLET - Maison Olivier LEFLAIVE