



SANCERRE
POUILLY FUMÉ
MENETOU-SALON
QUINCY
REUILLY
COTEAUX DU GIENNOIS
CHÂTEAUMEILLANT
POUILLY SUR LOIRE
CÔTES DE LA CHARITÉ
COTEAUX DE TANNAY

2020 vintage: A year with just two seasons

While 2020 will forever remain engraved in memories as the year of COVID-19, it will also be known in the wine world for its early harvests.

Winegrowing year

Winter 2019-2020 was the warmest in France since the beginning of the 20th century. The balminess that dominated throughout the season only intensified in February, with temperatures around 3.5°C higher than normal. Because mild winters tend to be rainy, 2020's was marked by periods of intense rain, ensuring the soil's moisture levels were adequately replenished. The month of March began the way February ended, with the first two weeks experiencing nearly uninterrupted precipitation and mild temperatures. Although the middle 10 days of March were cool, they did not negate the overall mildness of the winter and led to an early start to plant growth.

A cold snap toward the beginning of April temporarily checked hopes for bud break, but the pronounced warm spell that followed managed to reactivate the grapevines. On the whole, bud break occurred around 5 April, eight days earlier than average over the last decade (2010-2019). Temperatures would then remain much higher than the seasonal normals. In late April, their levels were about two weeks ahead of usual. In May, thanks to continuously mild – even summery at times – temperatures, the vines' growth remained active. 2020 seemed destined to set the benchmark for early ripening!

The rainy periods in early May relaunched the reproduction of mildew, resulting in winegrowers applying protections against the fungal parasite. The weather conditions would remain generally unfavourable to mildew but still allowed powdery mildew to develop in more sensitive areas. On 20 May, the first flowers could be seen. However, flowering only really got started in the wine region around 28 May, still two weeks sooner than the 10-year average (2010-2019). It took place at a steady pace, over the course of 10 days under favourable meteorological conditions.

The weather in June would be gloomier than May, with overcast skies, a few rainy periods and below-normal temperatures. Under these conditions, the two-week phenological advance held steady but did not expand. Above all, June was marked by several hailstorms at the beginning and end of the month. The Châteaumeillant

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appellation was greatly affected once again, as were the Reuilly and Menetou-Salon AOCs.

Bunch closure began in the first days of July. At this stage, a sense of peace settled in at the vineyards... Veraison got underway in the last week of July, at the end of a dry month featuring two distinct temperature profiles: a sometimes cool first half followed by a hotter second half ending with the first heatwave of the summer.

Maturation

This part of the growing cycle unfolded over the course of an August dominated by high temperatures, with two swelteringly hot periods. Once again, the damage caused by scorching was unmistakable, in some cases affecting 30% to 50% of the most exposed blocks. Nonetheless, thanks to the few millimetres of water that sprinkled the plants in the middle of the cycle, the grapes grew bigger. Sugar accumulation took place normally despite a decline during the second part of maturation. The effect of the different heatwaves was a reduction in malic acid. At the same time, the berries' tartaric acid was preserved, in concentrations which were actually higher than the 10-year average. The temperature range at the end of the season continued to vary widely, boosting aromatic and phenolic maturity.

The characteristics of this vintage were beginning to take shape...

Leading up to harvest time, the grapevines remained healthy, although close monitoring became necessary after a new stormy period accompanied by hail in mid-August.

Harvesting

Harvesting began on 21 August, for Pinot Gris in Reuilly. Sauvignon was collected on the most premature blocks beginning on 28 August, followed by the red varieties.

The first week of grape picking was marked by temperatures below the seasonal normals. The temperature range remained highly favourable to aromatic and phenolic maturation. This year's harvests got off to a relaxed start. The winegrowers were even able to let a few days pass between harvesting their different blocks.

The second week was marked by another period of scorching heat. The fruit was suffering. The grape bunches lost weight as a result of evaporation, so the potential sugar content rose very quickly. This time would not be without its share of consequences on the size of the crop, particularly for red wines. Initially, it caused

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the harvests to be both accelerated and reorganized, with night-time and very early-morning grape picking becoming the norm.

Outside the Châteaumeillant AOC, the Centre region's vineyards had completed their harvests by the second 10 days of September.

First impressions of the 2020 vintage

The wines have displayed remarkable fullness and concentration.

The whites, though still a little timid, convey notes of white fruit. Pear and white peach are clearly identifiable, rounded out with hints of aniseed and liquorice. The mouthfeels are superbly expressive, with different balances depending on when the grapes were harvested, the earliest yielding more biting wines and then, as the fruit matured longer, viscosity was able to develop and grow.

The colour of the rosés is a bold pink. In these wines, the aromas of berries are fully expressed. The balance on the palate is marked by freshness.

The reds display deep ruby colours with more or less pronounced hints of purple. Their noses are complex, in a combination of fresh berries with more jammy aromas. The vatting and extraction, adapted to the characteristics of the vintage, have produced structured mouthfeels built on smooth tannins. While the acidity which is welcome at this stage reveals tannins that are in some cases a little on the firm side, malolactic fermentation and maturation should even out the wines in the end.

2020 is truly a vintage full of promise.

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