



Champagne
DEUTZ
AY- FRANCE

2018 Harvest

The best in living memory?

and "*As if Nature had wanted to be forgiven for 2017...*" Fabrice Rosset

2018, a year of superlatives!

Extraordinary, mind-boggling, prodigious, fabulous... that's how you might describe the 2018 wine harvest. The triad of quality, quantity and maturity, not experienced for many a decade, came together in 2018, to our great delight. We had hardly dared to pray for it, but Saint Vincent blessed us all the same! Vintage of the Century? Only time will tell, but what is certain is that it will remain etched in all our memories...



A wet, wet winter

The rain that had already been with us at the end of the 2017 campaign was omnipresent over the autumn and winter. The months of November, December and January were generally mild but particularly wet.

Over three months, the Champagne region received the equivalent of nearly 6 months' rainfall. In spite of the difficult conditions, our wine growers remained stoic and the pruning work moved ahead at a steady pace throughout the season. However, the high humidity of the soil prevented us from getting the tractors out: the grinding of the vine branches and the spreading of fertilizer had to wait.

Just when we thought that winter was on its way out, it stepped up its offensive in February. A first snowy spell, bringing about 20 cm of snow, in the week of 12 February, forced us to down tools in the vineyards for several days. At the end of the month, winter played its final card, with a glacial wind which brought the already negative temperatures to well below -10°C with the windchill factor, despite the sunshine. This cold spell, tough on us humans, was nevertheless very welcome as it allowed us to move ahead with the mechanical work.



The snow, which we are no longer used to, made an appearance again at the start of March, only melting a few days later, and then fell again in the night of 17 to 18 March.

It is the temperatures in March that have the most influence on the dates of bud burst. As March was cold, we saw a breaking of buds a few days later than the 10-year average (13 April), on the 15th for the Chardonnay, 17th for the Pinot Noir and 18th for Meunier.

A fast vegetative cycle

From the end of April, the vine grew in fits and starts as the thermometer yoyo-ed up and down. Rampant at bud burst, it slowed in late April/early May, only to set off again at a fast pace.

The hot, dry weather continued into May. The delay in bud burst was quickly caught up and the vine's growth was now running ahead. Flowering was fast and furious, occurring around 12 days earlier than the average, suggesting that the harvest would be early. The average dates of full flowering were 30th May for the Chardonnay, 2nd June for the Pinot Noir and 3rd June for the Meunier.

Temperatures remained high for the season and allowed some stormy weather to set in in late May/early June. Luckily, we were spared the hail. The risk of mildew was high but kept under control. Powdery mildew was non-existent in our plots of vines.

July and August brought with them record levels of sunshine, the advanced growth did not slow down and we started to see the first signs of veraison from 20th July. The message was given to the teams to be ready for harvesting any time from 20th August. The control of maturity samples taken from mid-August onwards only confirmed that the harvest would be early.

A happy ending

Harvesting in the Deutz vineyards kicked off in Ay, on 25th August, in sunshine that was to stay with us for most of the harvesting.

The order of plot picking carefully devised by Patrick Boivin (Vineyard Director) and Cédric Georget, his right-hand man, enabled us to bring in grapes at optimum maturity, plot-by-plot. Botrytis, which had given us so much grief last year, didn't put in an appearance, allowing us to bring in fine quality grapes in absolutely perfect health.

After 19 days of harvesting, the Champagne Interprofession's limit for the appellation of 10,800 kg/ha had been reached. The generosity of the vine also enabled us to replenish the stock of quality reserve wines, thus magnifying the enhancement effect of the reserve wines which is so important for the consistency of style and quality of the Deutz Brut Classic.

On the press, the musts showed an average of 10.74% vol. and an acidity of 5.76 g/L H₂SO₄.

Like every year, the tastings of the vins clairs in a few months' time will give us the first indications of where this historic vintage is headed... Although it is still too early to talk about vintage, Michel Davesne (Cellar Master) and Olivier Bernard, his assistant, have some superb raw material to work with. And between you and I, despite his usual reserve, the smile on the face of our President, Fabrice Rosset, says it all...

