



Champagne  
**DEUTZ**  
AY- FRANCE

## The 2020 Harvest



From October until early March, the Champagne region experienced much higher rainfall than usual for this period with around 500 mm (compared to 600 mm in an average year in Champagne!).

On a positive note, this meant that the groundwater tables were well replenished, unlike the previous year. Temperatures remained mild and the morning frosts were few and far between. The winter of 2020 was the warmest recorded by 'Météo France' in over a century.

In light of these conditions, the manual work, in particular the pruning, were carried out promptly. The tractors, on the other hand, rarely left the outhouse over the winter and early spring which resulted in us falling behind schedule with our ploughing work.

Covid-19 unfortunately took centre stage in March and the warm weather returned from the start of the lockdown period. You cannot work the vineyards from home and we were therefore required to adapt our working methods (less time spent working as part of a team, fewer trips to the outhouse, no sharing of tools, strict respect of hygiene procedures, etc.) in order to continue our work in the vineyards with some degree of normality.

The soils gradually dried out and we ended up making up for lost time quite quickly on our mechanical work (grinding up the vine branches, spraying fertilisers and most importantly, ploughing). We have now permanently ceased the use of weedkillers on all our plots and mechanical weed removal has become one of our most time-consuming tasks.

The temperatures in March were high, as they were in the winter months, and it therefore came as no surprise to us when bud burst took place ten days earlier than the average for the last decade. The dates for bud burst in our vineyards were 7, 9 and 12 of April respectively for our Chardonnays, Pinot Noirs and Meuniers.

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April gave us pretty much summertime temperatures and the ideal conditions for planting work. As of this year, all of our plantings are carried out using a GPS system with to-the-centimetre accuracy. The square is generated on mapping software and the positions are then picketed in the land using GPS. Unlike previous years, all plantings were carried out by the Deutz personnel. There was an excellent symbiosis between our different departments and it was a pleasure to see the admin and sales staff lending a helping hand to their colleagues in the vineyards!

The vine continued to grow vigorously up until a frosty spell from 11 to 13 May, a period known as the Saints de Glace ('Ice Saints'). Despite a 20°C drop in temperature in a single day, we were fortunately spared from frosts (although the foliar markings on the vines owing to the low temperatures indicate that it was a close shave!). This drop in temperature was only temporary and actually had little impact on the vine as the soils were warm and the slowdown in growth was only minimal.

The process of tying up of the shoots began on 14 May in the earlier-ripening plots which is two to three weeks earlier than usual.

The vine began to flower with the return of the warm weather. Patrick Boivin, the vineyard director, and his righthand man Cédric Georget noted the 'full bloom' stage on 26 May for the Chardonnays and 28 May for the Pinot Noirs. Our Meuniers, which are also planted in later ripening plots, flowered on 30 May. If we take into account the 90-day average from the flowering to the harvest date (a timeframe that is tending to decrease owing to global warming), then this late May flowering indicated that we would probably be harvesting in late August.

All the plots were in perfect health throughout the whole season, both in our Deutz and our partner vineyards. There was virtually no risk of mildew owing to the dry, sunny weather. There was a higher risk of powdery mildew developing in these weather conditions but fortunately our Chardonnay plots (the most at risk) remained in good health.

The two heatwaves in late July and early August caused some scalding of the grapes, in particular on the black varieties. Around 30% of the crops were affected which led to a loss of around 10-15%.

The lack of rainfall in July and August triggered visible hydric stress visible in various parts of the vineyards. Individual vine stocks, sections of plots and even some whole plots displayed symptoms of hydric stress (yellowing leaves which gradually dry out from the bottom to the top of the vine). Such effects are very rare in chalky soils, a clear demonstration of just how dry the 2020 vintage was.

In terms of yield, the lack of rainfall prevented the grapes from plumping out as much as they should and yields are therefore lower than anticipated. The ripening dynamic was also quite unusual, as was the year as a whole! It got off to a quick start in the first two weeks of August (with more than a 2 degree increase in a single week!) before slowing down in the third week of August and picking up again afterwards. The ripening of the Chardonnays lagged significantly behind the Pinot Noirs and Meuniers, which is quite unusual. In these conditions, choosing the optimum date for harvesting is not an easy task.

The first grapes were harvested on our Aÿ and Pierry plots on 22 August which is the earliest ever date for the harvests at Deutz. With just 86 days between flowering and harvesting, 2020 was also one of the third earliest on record in this respect.

The health of the grapes turned out to be outstanding, as did their ripeness levels: two hallmarks of an exceptional vintage.

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After 10 days' harvesting, the average yields reached 8800 kg/ha (400 kgs more than that decided upon by the 'Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne'.

In the press, cellar master Michel Davesne and his assistant Olivier Bernard noted an excellent balance in the musts: on average 10.6% potential alcohol by volume. They were delighted with the excellent levels recorded in the best Aÿ plots such as La Côte Glacière (11.2% potential alcohol by volume – 5.6 g/L H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>) and Meurtet (10.8% potential alcohol by volume – 6.2 g/L H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>).

The Chardonnay Grand Crus such as Avize (10.6% potential alcohol by volume – 5.9 g/L H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>) and Oger (10.6% potential alcohol by volume – 7 g/L H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>) are also very promising.

The highest degree recorded was in a Mareuil with 12.1% ABV.

The winemakers have very high-quality juices with which to work and they will no doubt succeed in capturing their quintessence.

Everything is pointing towards an exceptional vintage with high hopes that we will be able to produce our vintage cuvées, maybe even our famous 'prestige trio' (William Deutz, Amour de Deutz and Amour de Deutz Rosé)... and who knows, possibly our Hommage à William Deutz single-vineyard cuvées as well!

Although, as Deutz CEO Fabrice Rosset likes to remind us, with a slight smile, the wines themselves will decide their own destiny when the still wines (approx. 150 of them) are tasted next spring.

*PS : The Grape Harvest Story by Champagne Deutz : <https://youtu.be/XTMIubXduGg>*