

Birth of terroir wines
Harvest notebook
2020

NICOLAS THIENPONT



Climatology of the 2020 vintage

1. A mild winter

The very mild temperatures at the beginning of winter heralded an early vintage. With the warming of the soil, the budburst took a head start. The first buds came out homogeneously in mid-February.

2. A rainy spring

Rainfall was extremely heavy from mid-April to mid-May, making this the wettest period in twenty years. In pre-flowering, these conditions, combined with mild temperatures, created strong pressure from mildew and complicated the soil work.

3. A dry and warm summer

Almost two months without rainfall followed one another from the end of June to mid-August, with high temperatures. Water stress in the vineyard remained moderate before the closure of bunches, thanks to the winter and spring recharging of the soil with water, especially on our clay soils. Our white grape varieties, Sauvignon and Semillon, were harvested at the end of August, almost a week in advance.

4. The return of the rain during the harvest

September is marked by dry weather conditions with very high temperatures for the first fifteen days. After the beginning of the Merlot harvest, rain settled down durably around the 22nd. The sanitary state of the vineyard being good, we were able without concern to harvest between the raindrops. The rain was beneficial to our very concentrated grapes which were able to gain in freshness. At the end of September, it was the turn of the Cabernets to be picked.

5. A promising vintage

2020 is marked by concentrated grapes with a high load of tannins and anthocyanins (color), which induces even sweeter extractions than usual in the cellar. The first tastings of the wines in vats are promising: finesse and freshness are there...



A day harvesting the whites



7:20 am - Briefing of the team

Which parcel to harvest? Which grapes to leave on the vine so that they gain in ripeness?
For the whites, the sorting is done in the vineyard!

7:30 am - Ready? Cut!

Equipped with pruning shears, the pickers begin to cut the grapes with enthusiasm. The first sémillons fall into the buckets.



8:30 am - From the row to the skip

Baskets fill up quickly. The porters make the round trips between the vineyard and the skip attached to the tractor, to deposit their valuable content.



10:00 am - Coffee time

A well-deserved break to eat, chat and enjoy a coffee.



11h : Pressing

All morning, the tractor will bring the grapes to the winery at regular intervals. As soon as they reach the vat room, timing is key. The bunches are pressed whole, without waiting.

12:30 pm - Mission accomplished

Morning harvest ends under the watchful eye of Nicolas Thienpont, who examines the grapes and organizes the next days of picking, according to the ripeness of each plot.



2:30 pm - Filling up the tanks

In the cellar, the day goes on. After the first press, the juice is sent to stainless steel tanks at 14°. Following a night's rest, the vat will be settled, the clear juice separated from its residual solid particles.

TASTING OF THE BERRIES

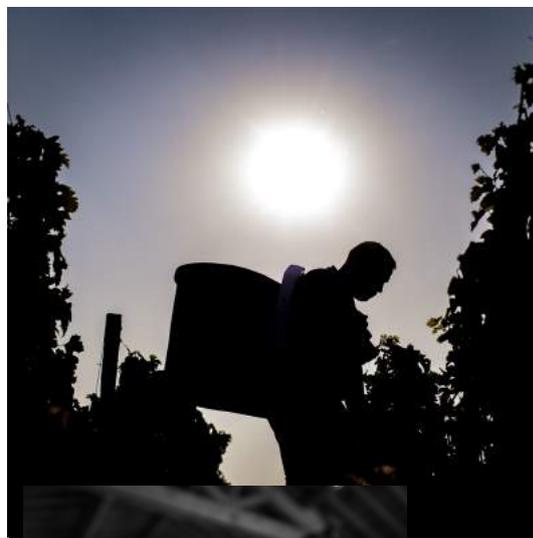


Each year, a grape picking plan is drawn up as the berries are tasted, according to the ripeness of each plot.

Managers, technical director, vineyard manager and oenologist meet to taste the grapes together to determine the harvest dates. We are looking for the perfect balance between freshness and aromatic brightness of the fruit. With time, the skins of the grapes become more refined, the aromas develop, the acidity drops, the pips ripen, until they are ready to be harvested.

The Larcis Ducasse gravity-cellar was built around 1898. The elders saw it as a way of exploiting the steepness of the hillside and minimizing the handling of the grapes.

To each vat will correspond a terroir. Working in parcel-based vinification allows us to develop the personality of each batch. When planning the harvest, the vatting plan and the picking plan are inextricably linked.



HARVEST



Team work

In the vineyard

Manuel

4th harvest at Pavie Macquin



Nicolas

2th harvest at Pavie Macquin



Christophe

20th harvest at Pavie Macquin



In the cellar

Agnès

7th harvest at Pavie Macquin



Philippe

19th harvest at Pavie Macquin



Dorian

6th harvest at Pavie Macquin

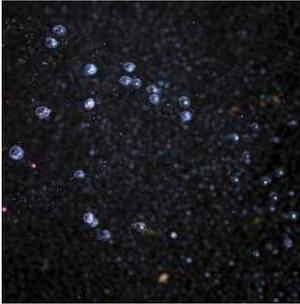




Focus on the cellar work



Sorting with care



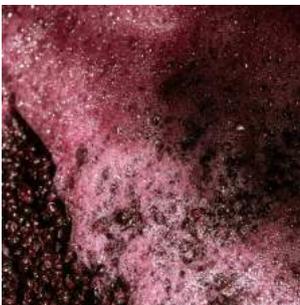
Vatting



Protecting



Gentle extracting
in the heart of fermentation



Leaving to infuse



De-vatting and pressing



Extracting?

Made of grape pips and skins, the marc cap formed at the beginning of fermentation contains molecules that carry flavor, color, structure. Several factors favour the extraction of these compounds: the temperature of the vat, the vatting time, the extraction methods, the presence of alcohol... but also the quality of the grapes: thickness of the skins, size of the berries.

Method number 1 : Pumping over (Remontage)

Pumping over consists in pumping the must or wine from the bottom of the tank to the top. Aerated pumping over can be used to oxygenate the yeasts (necessary for their multiplication and survival) and to extract phenolic compounds. There are also pumping over systems dedicated only to extraction. The pipe is then immersed in the juice. The extraction is done by the juice which crosses the marc.

Method number 2 : Punching down of the cap (Pigeage)

Pigeage consists in pushing the cap of marc on the surface into the liquid part of the must, while crumbling it to promote the diffusion of phenolic compounds and aromas. It is a gentle operation, carried out using a pneumatic pigneur at Château Puygueraud, but sometimes undertaken traditionally by hand, as is the case at Château Alcée and Château La Prade.

These two methods combine to obtain the desired wine. The program of pumping over and punching down varies according to the characteristics of the vintage.

