

CHATEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE

FEDERATION DES SYNDICATS DE PRODUCTEURS. November 2014

2014, A VINTNER'S VINTAGE

The 2014 vintage in Châteauneuf-du-Pape is what is commonly called a “vintner’s vintage”, in the sense that the work done in the vines all along the seasons was a key factor to achieve a great result. The working year – which started early in the spring and finished late in the autumn - was an exhausting year, where experience and anticipation proved to be precious allies to produce beautiful grapes.

After a mild and rainy winter –which enabled water reserves to build up, came a dry and hot spring (54 mm rainfall over 3 months and minimal and maximal temperatures 1°C above average). Everything seemed set for an early harvest –late August for the whites and early September for the reds. With the perspective of a crop larger than usual, the wine-growers spent time in July doing a “green harvest” (pruning and thinning out bunches) to reduce the yield of the most generous vines. But in the field of wine-growing, nothing can be taken for granted until the grapes are in the VAT!

Because of a summer punctuated with weekly rainfalls (158 mm in July-August – vs. 89 mm in 2013 and 91 in 2012), cool nights, and hours of sunshine below average (1768 hours over 6 months, vs. 1811 h in 2012), in a matter of weeks the vintage lost its early potential to become one of the latest ones in the decade. The weeds kept growing back and until late in the season, the wine-growers were forced to plough their land, or even, on some plots, to regularly cut the weeds back as the summer was drawing to an end. When the land work was over, they spent time removing leaves and preparing the harvest.

A consequence of the contrasted weather in the summer was to hold up the beginning of the harvest until mid-September (16th). But the happy result of a coolish summer following a rather warm spring was the perfect matching of the phenolic and technological maturities of the various grape varieties which come into the AC. The few unripe grapes were put away during harvest; the mandatory hand-picked harvest in Châteauneuf-du-Pape has to be completed by the selective sorting of the grapes, either in the vines or upon arrival at the cellar. These two conditions are part of the AC specifications and are factors of quality strongly defended by the local wine-growers.

Late crop means late devatting. The press rooms were in action until the early days of November, releasing juices that were fruity, well balanced, with an alcohol content slightly under average (1%), rounded on the palate, with fine, melted tannins. The whites are showing excellent acidity, they are sharp and mineral and will give out their full potential as they age, for those who will be patient enough to keep them in their cellars!

The 2014 vintage has silky tannins, an elegant and opulent mouth, on par with 2011 and 2012 which are just starting to show their true colours.