



2008

2008 *Vintage*

A remarkable turnaround for Burgundy wines

14 November 2008

The 2008 vintage was characterised by unstable weather conditions, requiring the wine growers to use their experience to the full. They showed great vigilance from the spring, and waited for the right time to harvest.

This year, the vines benefited from the return of the fine weather from mid-September. From the 14th of the month, the sun and the north wind allowed the grapes to reach full maturity before the harvest. The apprehension that could be felt throughout the vineyards gave way to relief. Some wine growers even spoke of a miracle.

After paying special attention to their vines, the wine growers were able to contain the development of diseases. Like last year, they gave up some of their harvest in the interests of quality, and carried out a meticulous selection process. This decision, along with the moderate yields, has led to lower-than-average volumes.

It is still too early to assess this new vintage, which has only just been put into barrels. However, the initial tastings suggest that the concerted efforts, along with the helping hand of Mother Nature, should result in a fine vintage.

White wines

The 2008 white wines, straightforward and pure, are characterized by distinct acidity, nicely balanced by a good level of maturity. The complexity of the aromas is matched by the liveliness and freshness exhibited on the palate.

These powerful wines follow the tradition of the great Burgundy classics.

Red wines

The red wines are the real revelation of this vintage! With deep colours, fruity aromas and round, silky tannins, these concentrated, complex wines are already seducing those who taste them.

They are well structured and have a great cellar potential.

Crémant de Bourgogne

The meteorological conditions were ideal for the production of Crémant de Bourgogne, which is harvested earlier than still wines. In fact, a relatively high level of acidity and a moderate concentration of sugars are necessary to obtain the best from these sparkling wines.

There is no doubt about it, 2008 will be a great vintage for Crémant de Bourgogne.



Climatology 2008

After the rain, fine weather brings smiles all around!

Some might have thought that the dates were late this year, but the professionals have found their bearings again with autumnal harvests, reminding everyone that it is the last few vintages which have been early. 2008 was subject to particularly variable weather conditions, with a poor summer and a glorious autumn. Once again, September was make-or-break time for the vintage in Burgundy, with sunshine, cool temperatures and a north wind - a perfect combination for Burgundy grapes which showed maturity and good potential on their arrival in the cellar. Now it is up to the Burgundy winegrowers to apply their expertise to make the very best of this quality harvest, which was unexpected only a few weeks before harvesting!

Whilst the last snowfall heralded the arrival of Easter at the end of March, the vines, still dormant, held onto the buds from the ongoing winter. It was thanks to the arrival of summer conditions in the last weekend of April that the budding could begin, occurring around 10 days later than the average of the last 13 years. The vines, eager for sun and heat, used this period of fine weather to make up for lost ground.

From mid-May until the summer solstice (21 June), cold, rainy weather set in. The blossom was disturbed by the weather, which was hardly spring-like! Although the first flowers could be seen at the very beginning of June, it was not until the official arrival of the summer that blossoming really took off. The considerable rainfall and the low temperatures caused coulure and millerandage [poor and uneven fruit set] of varying degrees depending on the area.

The first days of July encouraged hope for a good summer and good conditions for the grapes to mature. But muggy, stormy weather set in, with many storms, and even hail storms. This caused major damage locally. August was cool and rainy, giving rise to the first concerns in the region whilst the grapes were maturing only very slowly. These conditions continued until early September. So it was with relief and optimism that the wine growers witnessed the arrival of sunny, dry and cool weather around the 20th of the month. The vines were able to ripen thanks to the sun, and the north wind helped concentration in the berries.

Parasite pressure (oidium, mildew) present since the spring due to the significant rainfall was contained thanks to well-placed and carefully thought-out intervention. At the end of the summer, the damp conditions led to the appearance of some sources of rot. Luckily the north wind dried out the vine stocks and the cool temperatures maintained their health at a satisfactory level until harvest. These favourable climatic conditions lasted until the beginning of October. As the grapes had reached the right level of maturity, they were harvested under the sun.

A three-step maturation process

The maturation of the grapes is closely linked to the weather conditions (sun or rain, hot or cold), which play a part in its development. This year is a textbook case, showing the close correlation between weather and maturation.

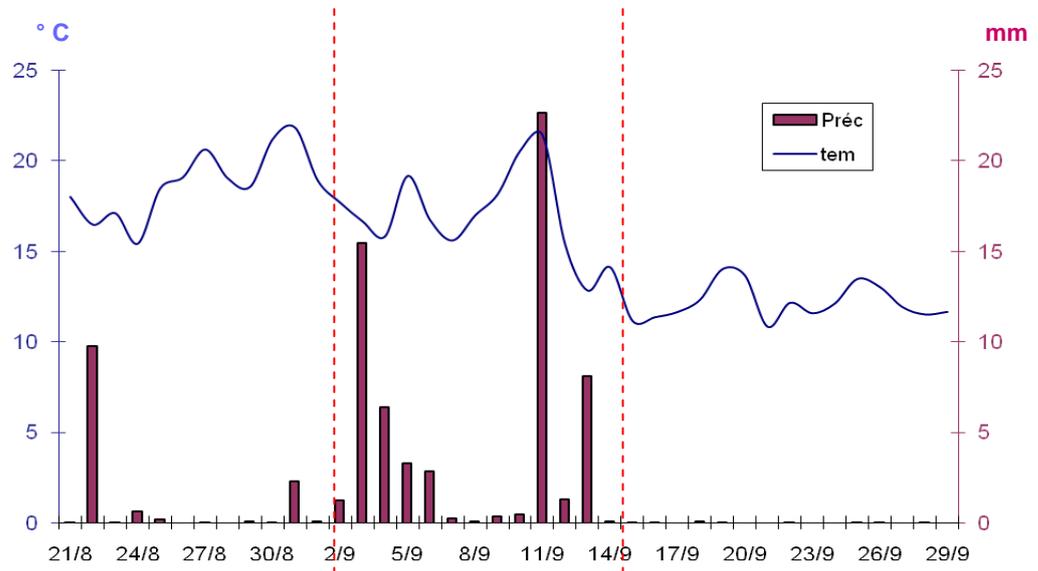
So when the first tastings were carried out to track the level of maturity at the end of August, it was sunny and quite hot, thereby causing an increase in sugars.

Then, during the first ten days of September, conditions were cold and rainy, with little sunshine. Repercussions on the maturation of the grapes were immediate, and the daily increase in sugars fell dramatically.

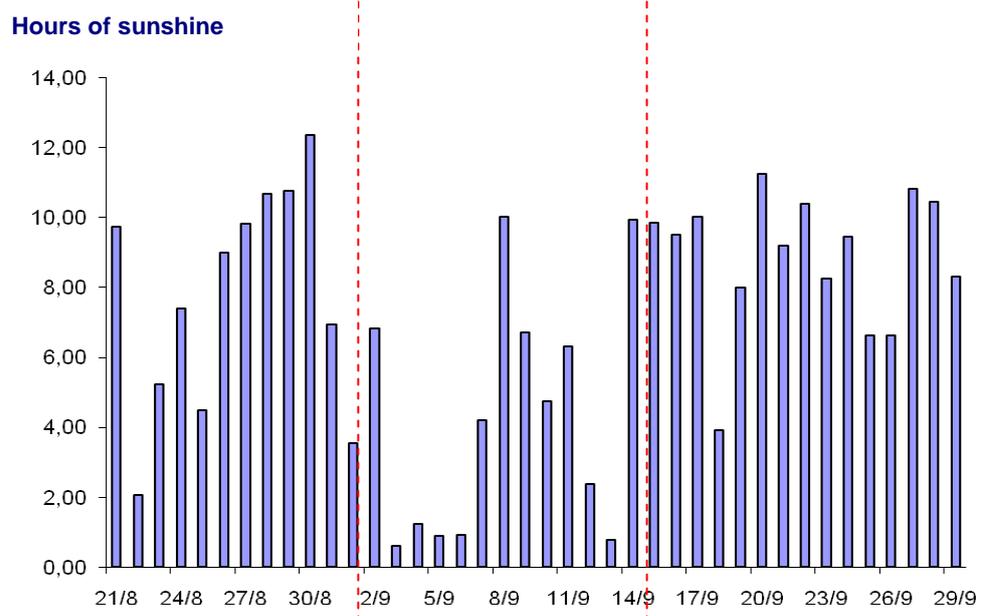
Finally, in mid-September, the sun made a comeback. Sugar concentration started up again. With the fall in temperatures this was slower than at the beginning of the maturation process. This slowdown can also be explained by the fact that the vines were reaching the end of the cycle. The cool temperatures, however, ensured a good state of health. Careful, almost widespread, selection was necessary to remove the berries affected by disease.

At the end of this surprising rollercoaster of a campaign, lovely ripe grapes entered the Burgundy vat rooms, with the promise of a wonderful vintage.

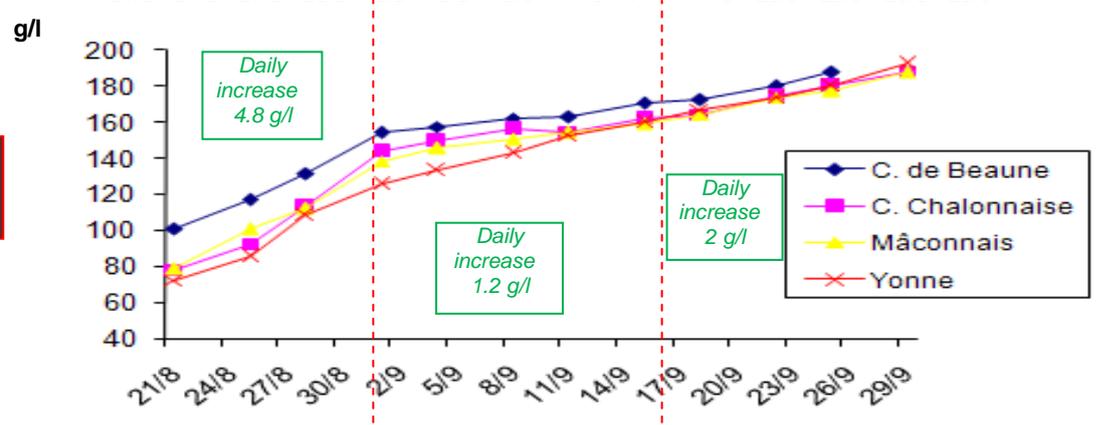
Daily temperatures and rainfall



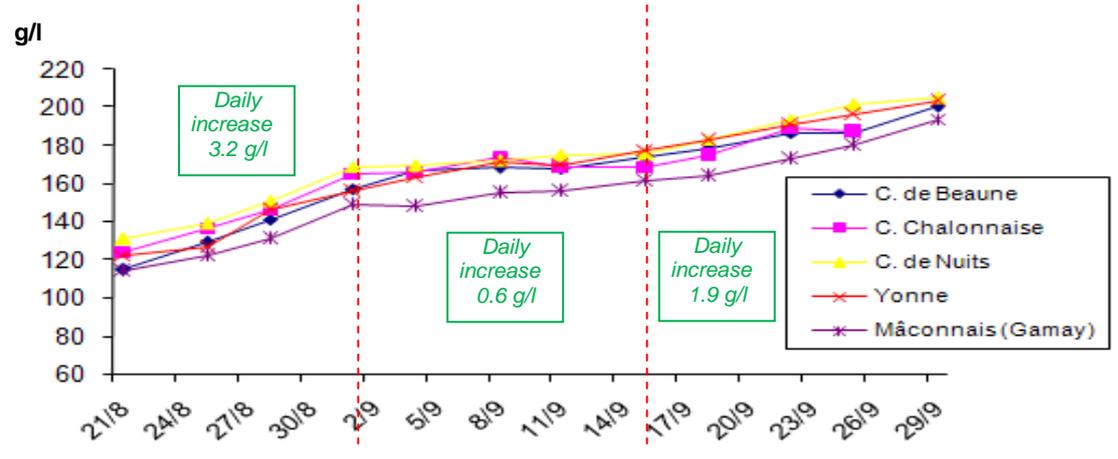
Daily insolation



Development of sugars in Chardonnay



Development of sugars in Pinot Noir and Gamay



Sources: Observatoire du millésime du BIVB