

The 2003 Vintage

The heat wave vintage is doing nicely

The wines of the "heat-wave vintage" were highly concentrated from the start thanks to the exceptionally hot and sunny weather conditions and the extraordinarily early harvest that resulted, but élevage has matured them and they are beginning to exhibit the qualities of refinement and distinction that befit Burgundy wines made from the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Original and highly-bred in character, wines of the 2003 vintage are also in short supply, the harvest having been 25% down on the average of the last five years. Their rarity will add to their value, and 2003 will be counted among the great years in wine-growing Burgundy.

The reds are rich, meaty, seductive, and astonishingly diverse in their notes of very ripe red and black fruits (candied in some instances) with hints of spice. The shimmering colours are intense and profound. The tannins, rounded and silky, give the wines a solid and well-balanced structure which prefigures a fine future.

These qualities are to be found in most appellations which experienced the same natural conditions. The regional appellations offer an excellent opportunity for consumers seeking real value for money, and these can already be drunk with enjoyment. The village and premier cru appellations need a few years yet to realise their aromatic potential and bring their complex flavours into harmonious balance. As for the grand crus, their power and concentration destine them to long ageing and they will give pleasure to more than one generation of lovers of fine wines. Experience, in fact, shows that wines from very ripe grapes develop remarkably over time, as has been the case with the 1989 vintage.

In the Aligoté and Chardonnay, maturation was sometimes excessive. This led to fears that the white wines would be deficient in freshness from an early stage. This has indeed proved the case for some cuvées, and these will need to be drunk young. But the picture is less clear-cut for white wines vinified and/or matured in barrel. One leading producer of fine white wines stated, "I thought they would need to be bottled in a hurry, but I have had to change my mind. In fact their freshness has been revived by their time spent on the lees."

The white wines have a fine golden colour and expressive aromas of well-ripened fruits (citrus, white fruits and yellow fruits) and some of the richer cuvées have notes of exotic fruits, candied fruits and honey. In the mouth they are well-rounded and fleshy which makes them very smooth. Seductive and harmonious, most of the wines are already in a condition to delight the palate. Wines from the better terroirs will be better able to express the richness and complexity of this exceptional vintage after a few more years in bottle.