

The 2020 Bourgogne harvest: Early and even

10 September 2020

2020 is a year that has been playing with the nerves of everyone on the planet. And winegrowers in Bourgogne are no exception. With an historically early harvest start date, good organization was key to ensuring the wineries were ready to receive the first grapes on 12 August for the most advanced plots. Our patchwork of plots lived up to this description with plots ripening at different times, which were the result of the flowering date of course, but also dependent on where rain – if any – had fallen throughout the season. Picking begins between 90 and 100 days from flowering, and the first juices are delicious, with great vigor. 2020 promises quality, but this vintage will definitely not be remembered as an easy one!



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Vines ahead of norms, right from budburst

A very mild winter with temperatures above seasonal averages led to early budburst. Fine weather conditions continued into April, with the mercury up an average of 3.6°C over the norm. The Ice Saints days in mid-May brought a few morning frosts but fortunately, their impact was negligible, thanks to low humidity.

From 14 May onwards, the temperatures began to climb, and the first flowers blossomed. The heat continued, well above seasonal norms, until 23 May, which encouraged fast flowering in certain sectors and for certain varieties.

There was a very brief cold snap, and then temperatures immediately shot up again, allowing the flowering phase to come to an end in some tardier areas.

On 3 June, the vines had reached mid-flowering phase, with 50% of flowers open, putting 2020 on the podium for the earliest vintages ever recorded. It was a little over two weeks ahead of the average over the last 25 years (1994-2019), and three weeks ahead of 2019. This head start continued right through until harvest, which explains why the first snips of the secateurs were heard so early this year.

In more advanced plots, the closed bunch stage was reached around 23 June. Later sectors had to wait until the first week in July. By this time, there were already significant differences in maturity from one plot to the next, with an epic harvest promised.

A entire growth cycle earlier than usual



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Summer barely slowed things down, with temperatures remaining high and rainfall minimal on average but with differences from plot to plot. Across the entire Bourgogne, in July, rainfall was rare and scattered. The rainfall deficit was between 77-87% compared to averages, whilst temperatures were a degree higher than the norm. The first week of August brought some rain, however, mainly in the Chablis and Grand Auxerrois vineyards.

These conditions lead to a slowing down or even complete halt of *véraison* and ripening in some places. Ripening was therefore rather disparate, once again underscoring how Bourgogne truly is made up of a patchwork of plots.

The vines were in excellent health with lovely grapes. However, for more exposed plots, some scorching and wilting occurred after the heatwave from 6-12 August.

The date when harvesting should begin is a critical choice for every winegrower, and this year, was particularly tricky.

The grapes for Crémant de Bourgogne and a few plots for still wines were the first to be harvested in the second week of August, the first plots beginning on 12 August. Picking then continued until the second week of September.

The grapes and juice promised great quality.

Although yields were somewhat varied due to the lack of hydration, winegrowers are unanimous about the quality. The grapes were drenched with sunshine, and balance – something highly prized in Bourgogne – was ensured thanks to perfectly ripened grapes.

In terms of still wines, the Pinot Noir opened the way, for once ripening before the Chardonnays.

The first juices sampled are expressing all the maturity and freshness of the fruit. The reds have delivered color and polyphenols with no excessive extraction, and the tannins are already silky. The whites, which enjoyed some rainfall at the end of August, have a beautiful richness in their sugars and are promising wonderful balance.

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