



The 2021 harvest: Returning to a typical Bourgogne vintage

Bourgogne, 5 October 2021

After a 2020 vintage where the industry threw itself into harvesting from mid-August onwards, the 2021 vintage took its time, and kept us in suspense until the bitter end. The harvest, which began on 18 September for still wines, was divided into sections which were picked rapidly, one after the next, finishing in very early October. As we wait to find out the volume of this year's crop, predicted to be historically low, the technical skills of each winegrower will be key to bringing out the potential of each cuvée.

Fast flowering

After a frost in April that will go down in history, the vines took a little while to get back into their growth cycle, especially as May was colder and wetter than normal. Fortunately, temperatures returned to seasonal norms in early June. They then took off in the second week of June, rising above average for the period.

This triggered flowering which happened fast, the hot and dry weather offering ideal conditions for pollination and the formation of the future fruit. The mid-flowering stage, when 50% of flowers are open, was around the same period as in 2019, that is to say between 13 June for Chardonnay in the Mâconnais, and 18 June for the Pinot Noir on the Côte de Nuits. The rhythm was fast-paced, and fructification was mixed across the region, depending on how hard the frost had hit.

Temperatures stayed high, triggering rapid vegetation growth, and allowing the 2021 vintage to catch up some of the delay it had suffered in April and May.

In the end, the first half of the year saw normal temperatures and rainfall for the season, apart from in the Yonne where precipitation was up 18%, although this had no visible consequences.

Optimal fructification but losses from the frost

From the end of June to early August, winegrowers saw a shift in the weather as the rain set in. The vines grew rapidly requiring swift and delicate action to manage the vegetation and the threat of disease. Dry weather would not return for any sustainable period until mid-August.

The mid-*véraison* stage, when the berries change color, was reached in mid-August on average. The dry weather and wind from the north helped the grapes ripen gradually, whilst staving off any dampness that might cause disease.

Harvesting the Crémant de Bourgogne began on 8 September in the southern part of the region, with grapes for still wines being picked from 18 September. For once, the red varietals of Pinot Noir, Gamay, and César, ripened faster than the whites, the Pinot Noir in particular. Many producers opened their harvests with red wines to capture the aromatic maturity of the grapes. The Chardonnay grapes were lagging behind due to the stress caused by the frost and/or hail, depending on the sector, and were harvested last.



Towards a classical Bourgogne vintage

Yields were very mixed across the region. Winemakers are having to deal with low volumes of fruit, and very low volumes on those vineyards most badly hit by frost or hail. Those areas that were spared produced slightly more generous harvests.

The first phase of the vinification process is still ongoing in many places meaning it is too early now to talk about the qualities of this vintage. But there are some indicators, nonetheless, suggesting that the aromatic potential of the juice is clear, that the fermentation is going very well, and the balance of sugar/acidity is offering classic characteristics appreciated by fans of Bourgogne wines.

The 2021 vintage is looking like a classic one for the region, as ripening took place in cooler conditions than in recent years.



Contact:

Cécile Mathiaud – Head of Media Relations at the BIVB

Tel. + 33 (0)3 80 25 95 76 – Cell +33 (0)6 08 56 85 56 - cecile.mathiaud@bivb.com

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