Joseph Drouhin

2003 – A vintage out of the ordinary

In France, as well as in Burgundy, the climatic conditions in 2003 were far from normal. Intense heat and very dry weather were responsible for one of the earliest "ban des vendanges" on record: August 19th for Côte d'Or! Burgundy had not seen this in 150 years: they were actually drinking a "vin nouveau" (new wine) on August 4th 1822 in Savigny...
It is also one of the smallest harvests of the last few decades. The yield at our Domaine was 20 to 40% lower. We can only say: "what a vintage!" With whites worthy of the fabulous 1947 and 1959 and reds equal to 1865 and 1929, this 2003 vintage is now part of the Burgundy legend.

This was also a year when wine makers and oenologists could not take things for granted: it was essential to have a flexible approach guided by pragmatism and simple good sense. It was, for instance, imperative to walk through the vineyard parcels one by one in mid-August in order to decide which day to pick. The precise time of the day had also to be taken into account as some vines needed to be picked early in the morning when it was still not too hot.
Sorting the grapes proved to be essential as some berries suffered damage from too much exposure to the sun and had to be eliminated.

The vinification of this 2003 vintage was so complex that the lightest hand was an absolute necessity. The methods used for the 2002 vintage could in no way be used for the 2003.

It is certainly an exceptional vintage, even a vintage of extremes, which will leave its mark on our whole generation since there is no example in the past (unless we go back to 1822!)

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