Joseph Drouhin

2014 – A surprising vintage

2014 started with a bang and very quickly the weather changed from winter to almost summery conditions.

The very clement temperatures at the beginning of March were favourable to the growth starting in all of the Burgundy wine areas.The buds started opening at the beginning of April and we could even begin to see some green tips. At this stage 2014 was amongst the most precocious vintages. Very quickly by mid-April we could see the first leaves unfolding and then at the beginning of May we could see a dozen leaves unfolded in the fastest ripening areas. At this stage we were around 2 weeks ahead compared to a normal year. The small quantity of rainfall that occurred actually boosted the vegetation but did not bring the development of disease. At the beginning of the growing season in 2014, the risk of mildew was particularly small.
At the beginning of June flowers were showing in many parcels and the unusually high temperatures accelerated this flowering, but also stressed the vines causing many young berries to be dropped because of overheating. By mid-June the flowering had finished in many areas. Flowering continued in Chablis, the Hautes-Côtes de Beaune and Hautes-Côtes de Nuits.
On the 28th of June, a hail-storm hit the Côte de Beaune area, in particular Beaune, Pommard, Volnay and Meursault, touching several hundred hectares of vines with several areas being severely damaged. The vines had been so beautiful....
The north of the Maconnais was also hit, but the damage was less. On the 4th of July, a new hailstorm in the Maconnais touched the area of Pouilly and Solutré.
The months of July and August were surprisingly cool and humid, which only slightly delayed the development of the vines. In mid-July we noticed the grape clusters had closed, ending the period of risk from mildew. Rainfall was almost double the normal seasonal average, with cool temperatures.
We had to thin out the leaves again. The overall sanitary condition was still satisfactory, in spite of the beginning of rot on some of the berries.

September brought marvelous weather; ideal conditions, which made the vintage. Light, warm, northerly winds, warm days, cool nights; all the most favorable conditions needed to bring the grapes to the desired level of maturity.
The yields vary greatly from one vineyard and one parcel to another. For the vines damaged by hail, they rebuilt enough foliage to allow ripening, but the yield is estimated at between 5 and 10% compared to a normal harvest. For the vines which had passed flowering at the moment of the peak of high temperature in June, the bunches were much affected by 'millerandage' (small berry clusters), and so producing yields 30% below a normal vintage. For the other vines, the quantity is correct. In particular this year the berries have a very thick skin, which is a good sign for quality, but which produce less juice.

Harvesting started on the 12th of September in Côte d'Or lasting 2 weeks. Indeed the excellent weather conditions allowed us to wait, and put back harvesting in certain parcels. Harvesting began in Chablis on the 15th of September and also lasted for more than a couple of weeks.
The first red wines from Côte d'Or have been drawn off, and we find wines that are quite balanced with a nice colour, without being too intense, and with a fine tannic structure.

The white wines are completing their fermentation. The have clean and fruity aromas, with a fairly low alcohol level and an approachable freshness.
2014 therefore announces itself as a very pretty vintage, with yields which are globally in the average of the last ten years, with production being far superior to the 3 preceding, very small vintages.

Frédéric DROUHIN

October 7th 2014