Joseph Drouhin

2017 – Burgundy finds its colours once more!

The winter of 2016/2017 was rather cool, dry and sunny with a deficit of rain. The month of December had been cold, without any real rainy or snowy episodes.

The rainy precipitation had been very variable from one sector to another of Burgundy in February and March.
From March 20th swelling of the buds became widespread. The bud break was fast and early, thanks to particularly mild temperatures. In April some temperatures even exceeded 25°C, which accelerated the growth rate of the vines. These temperatures continued until April 15th, at which point already 3 to 4 leaves had unfurled. The weather changed completely in the 2nd half of the month with negative temperatures that affected in particular the Chablis vineyards, with strong frosts on April 18th and 19th. The Côte d'Or was not affected due to a system of collective protection set up to protect against negative temperatures on the nights of April 27th and 29th.
At the beginning of May in the Côte d'Or, 5 to 6 leaves were unfurled. The growth of the vines was then very active and May 2Oth, one could already count up to 10 unfurled leaves. Flowering began during the last days of May and ended almost a week later. A very small hailstorm hit the vineyards in the Northern slopes on May 19th, with no real consequences on the harvest or the vines. The heat and moisture of the month continued to favour the growth of the vines and as of June 20th, the earliest vines reached the stage of closure of the bunches. At this point things were looking very similar to the 2009 vintage.
At the beginning of July rain brought some much needed water to unblock some vines which were presenting hydric stress. In mid-July we could already spot some semi-ripe berries. On July 10th, the Mâconnais was hit by an episode of hail. In mid-August the veraison was almost finished in the Côte d'Or, and the temperatures became more lenient. The harvest started in the Côte d'Or around August 30th, in Chablis on September 5th and on August 28th in Beaujolais and Mâconnais.

Harvest volumes: after a few challenging years, the volumes produced in Burgundy have returned to a normal level except in Chablis because of the frost.
The sanitary condition remained satisfactory throughout the growing year with an extremely low pressure of mildew and powdery mildew.

Vinifications:

Reds: as every year we sorted the grapes at once to select the most beautiful bunches that were to be kept in whole clusters and to remove berries that could present a lack of maturity. The sanitary state was very satisfactory with almost no rot.

Very quickly at the beginning of the fermentations the colours were released and gradually the varietal character of Pinot Noir was expressed. We favoured this aromatic expression to look for balanced wines without too much power. The tannins are nicely melted, the acidity levels from normal to low. The fermentations and macerations lasted about 3 weeks.
In the course of the winter, the malolactic fermentations were triggered and proceeded sometimes rather quickly.
The Côte de Beaune, in particular the Clos des Mouches, has very nice wines with a good concentration.

Whites: the wines from the Côte d'Or had excellent levels of maturity, good sugar/acid balance and a satisfactory health status. The potential degrees were normal to high. We took advantage of the excellent state of the grapes to use indigenous yeasts during alcoholic fermentations. They lasted about 3 weeks during which we practiced light "batonnage" (lees stirring). The oak ageing is very soft, the lees are of good quality and the ageing will continue in good conditions.

Chablis: very small harvest but very nice grapes with excellent maturity, higher degrees of alcohol and levels of acidity than normal; it promises excellent wines.

Mâconnais: quite different from Chablis with lower acidity levels and normal ripeness. The aromatic expressions are gradually revealed and promise rather full wines.

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