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2020 – Early … but without haste

The winter of 2019/20 was rather wet with regular but often light rains.

Temperatures remained mild, on average 1.3° higher than normal. There was only a week of freezing temperatures day and night.
Spring started early, with dry and windy weather. The vineyard resumed activity at the end of February and in mid-March we noticed the swelling of the buds on both the Côte de Beaune and the Côte de Nuits.
Some plots had to be put into frost protection on the nights of March 25th to 27th in the Côte de Beaune but there was no damage.
Once again, between April 1st and 4th, temperatures below zero meant that we had to be very vigilant, but the context of dry air and soil limited the damage from frost.
The rainy episodes remained limited between mid-March and mid-April, but the vines didn't suffer because the winter reserves were sufficient. In Chablis, the months of March and April were mild and dry and there too the green tips appeared on March 24th, i.e., 15 days in advance.
After this short period of cool temperatures, they climbed beyond 25°C and very quickly the vines exploded into vegetation with 4 to 5 leaves unfurled. In mid-April there were 3 to 4 per plant in the Côte de Beaune. This is very early.
At the end of April there were 9 leaves unfurled, for the most advanced vines, and 5 for the later ripening areas.
In Chablis we observed the same scenario; in the middle of the month there were 2 to 3 leaves unfurled and then very quickly 8 to 9 in the last fortnight.
May turned out to be hot and humid. The provision of rain was beneficial. In mid-May flowering was visible. It unfolded very quickly since before the end of the month it was finished on the white wines of the Côte d´Or and a few days later on the Pinots Noirs and in Chablis.
At this stage it should be noted that disease pressures were extremely low, with no downy mildew and very little powdery mildew.
An episode of hail on the 3rd of June, with rain, affected the Puligny and Meursault vineyards as well as on the 8th of June in the Chambolle and Gevrey Chambertin sectors, but the damage remained limited overall. In Chablis, it hailed in the southern sector but without too much damage.
The first half of June brought rainy passages, sometimes strong, in the south of the Côte de Beaune. Temperatures were normal with 18°C on average.
By mid-June the berries were already 1 to 2 millimetres in size.
The sunshine for the month of July was much higher than normal, with more than 320 hours compared to a normal of 150 hours. Average temperatures were approaching 22°C, one degree higher than normal. There was even a temperature peak on July 19th.
The beginning of veraison was noticed on the first days of the month but there was a certain heterogeneity in the vineyard and the progress through the stages was not always the same. In Chablis, we noticed the change in colour of the Chardonnay berries from mid-July.
At the end of the month nearly ¾ of the berries had finished veraison in the early sectors of the Côte d´Or. The health status was still very satisfactory; however, the estimated harvest potential showed that the harvest yields would be low.
August turned out to be hot and dry with average temperatures still higher than the norm. 23°C for a standard of 19.9°. The vines suffered from these climatic conditions and the grapes hardly grew any bigger but gained in phenolic and sugar maturity.
During the first fortnight, our visits to the vineyard accelerated to taste the berries and determine the harvest dates.
They started in the Mâconnais on August 12th, August 20th in the Côte d´Or and August 31st in Chablis.

The vinification itineraries chosen for this vintage were:

- For Chablis: tanks after selection of the pressings / ageing on fine vinification lees.

- For the white wines of the Côte de Beaune: the grapes were pressed as whole harvest with an end-of-press selection, the wines were then aged on their lees. They stayed that way until the end of the year.

- For the red wines from Côte de Beaune / Côte de Nuits: punch downs were limited. The wines also continued their ageing on fine lees. It should be noted that the malolactic fermentations were rather long; a factor of quality.

- For the Mâconnais: vinification and ageing in tanks and 500-litre barrels depending on the origins of the grapes.

- For the Beaujolais: very gentle vinification because there was no point in looking for extraction.

Although this was a very early vintage, it is curiously also a vintage that takes its time for ageing. Bottling will most certainly be done later than average in order to allow the wines to gain in amplitude and complexity.
Precocious in growing, without haste in ageing.

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