

# 2016

Vintage Report



Winter 2016 arrived late, with some of the coldest days occurring in February and March. It was slightly rainier than average. The beginning of April saw the first signs that the vines were awakening, putting this vintage ahead of schedule and a timescale similar to 2015. This early part of spring was mild and rain fell on a regular basis, while temperatures dipped in the later half of the month. In the last week of April cold winds from the North Pole swept through the vineyards. In some areas a late frost destroyed the first tender shoots in the early morning of 27 April. The prevailing humidity in some sectors was key to determining the extent of the damage – temperatures dropped to  $-4^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the Yonne, but temperatures of  $-0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  in the Côte d'Or sufficed to destroy a high proportion of the buds. Those buds that were saved were warmed by the way the frost created a magnifying glass effect for the sun's rays – ironically, the damage was done on a bright, sunny morning...

Beaujolais and the Mâconnais were largely spared from the frost (apart from a few vines located right on the northern edge of the Mâconnais), but damage was extensive in the Côte d'Or, from Marsannay in the north to Rully in the south, passing through Chambolle and Savigny, as well as in the Chablis region, particularly in the area around Chablis. The remainder of April, May and part of June saw many climatic disturbances and average temperatures well below the seasonal norm. Vegetative growth stagnated and the hailstruck vines were slow to recover. Hail fell on 13 April in the regions of Chablis to the north, in Saône et Loire (Pouilly, Fuissé, Saint-Vérand). The 13th of May and the 27th of May saw more hail fall on the Mâconnais (Vergisson, Prissé) and Beaujolais (Romanèche, Chapelle-de-Guinchay), as well as part of Chablis (Préhy, Courgis). Beaujolais was hit once again on 24 June, and mid-July saw isolated hail strikes in Chassagne and the Côte Chalonnaise in the south. This resulted in a very complicated start to the growing season, with unprecedented levels of downy mildew seen in vines that had been rendered vulnerable to disease by the impact of the trying climatic conditions.

July saw the return of milder weather. Indeed, temperatures rose above the average in July, August and September. The plants reacted by putting on a rapid growth spurt, sustained by the plentiful water reserves. Our growers found themselves racing through the rows in order to manage the vines' rapid response. Flowering mainly took place at the end of June, although the frost-affected vines mostly flowered in early July – 2016 had slipped from being a precocious vintage to one of the latest (very similar to 2013). Veraison happened in the second half of August, with some bunches only changing colour during the first few days of September. The upshot was that we had to be patient with these high-yielding vines.

In contrast to the start of the growing season, the latter half of September saw some hydric stress develop, particularly in the Côte d'Or, which saw little rainfall in summer (this was less the case in Beaujolais, the Mâconnais and Chablis). The long-awaited rain finally fell on 17 and 18 September, and we decided to wait for the vines to use this water to achieve greater degrees of ripeness before picking. The grapes seemed to be healthy and developing well. Picking began on 27 September and lasted 10 days (compared to 12 in 2015). Harvest conditions were excellent.

Our patience has been rewarded by a good level of ripeness in the grapes. Reds are revealing sweet fruit at this stage, along with ripe and supple tannins. Colours are rich and deep. Whites are showing great balance, and fermentations have been very lively. The cold temperatures of 2017's winter and spring have created a distinct chill in our cellars. Malolactic fermentations have run late for both Pinots and Chardonnays. The white wines are crisp and expressive, and maturation on lees will lend them weight and complexity. Following on from the completion of the malolactic fermentation, the reds have maintained their supple, mouthfilling tannins and are showing very appealing bright fruit aromas. Over the course of the next few months we expect these wines to fill out nicely on the palate.



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