



## THE 2014 HARVEST AT CHÂTEAU LAGRANGE, HOPING FOR A GREAT VINTAGE

*As the last Cabernet Sauvignons are picked at Lagrange, and the Merlots are finishing their fermentation, the 2014 vintage is already showing great promise*

### **A vintage saved from the water**

Following the mild winter that ended with an early budbreak, the rainy spring and its relatively cool temperatures did not augur well for the flowering. Despite this, the weather conditions of mid-June allowed a rapid and even blossoming for the Cabernets. The Merlots were less lucky and showed some flower shatter and berry shot, although less than in 2013. *"This had no incidence on the quality but we were already able to see that the yield would be negatively impacted"* explains the General Manager of Château Lagrange, Matthieu Bordes.

Unstable weather, with successive rainy and stormy periods, punctuated the summer, although the last two weeks of July were hot and dry.

The average monthly rainfall for July and August was, in reality, no more than 45 mm in Saint-Julien but the impression of fine weather was never really present.

### **An extraordinary Indian Summer**

The real Summer arrived at last at the end of August. Once again the Bordeaux miracle brought a smile back to the winegrowers' faces ! The 5 weeks of heat and intense sunlight that followed were going to make all the difference.

Hot dry weather settled in and Lagrange recorded only 7 mm of rain over 40 days !

A moderate hydric stress in the vineyard allowed the grapes to ripen more quickly. The skins were thick, the tannins present, and the richness in sugar was progressing more rapidly than the phenolic maturity. *"We recorded levels of phenolic compounds rarely achieved in our vines"*, states Matthieu Bordes, *"But these tannins were firm and patience was required to wait for them to soften. There was no need to rush. We just had to let things take their course !"*

## Patience and Serenity

The **Merlot** harvest began on 25th September, a usual date for the property. The grapes were rich, with alcohol levels between 13.5 and 14.5% vol. The colour and tannins were both easily extractable so care was needed during vinification to avoid harshening the wines. The acidity level is quite high as is that of the white grape varieties picked three weeks earlier (to produce the estate's dry white wine "Les Arums de Lagrange").

The Merlots were all picked by the 3rd October, with a yield of 41 hl/hectare. The **Cabernet Sauvignon** harvest began on 7th October and finished 10 days later. They were truly magnificent, even more concentrated than the Merlots, the weight of the berries was lower, indicating an incredible density and concentration, to the detriment of the volume. The **Petit Verdots** harvested between the Cabernet plots, were also looking promising. The yields were also quite low but the quality was there !

The patience and serenity shown by the technical team at Lagrange, along with the efficiency and rapidity of the ultra-modern sorting equipment, once again made it possible to pick the grapes at optimum ripeness.

The harvest stretched over 23 days, a record at Lagrange ! *"We ran a sprint in 2013, but 2014 proved to be a long-distance race ! We can already say that 2014 will be a very good vintage at Lagrange, possessing a certain classicism, a great freshness and remarkable power, but we shall need to be as patient to drink it as we have been to pick it !"* confides Matthieu Bordes.

### Some interesting technical facts about the harvest at Lagrange

#### *In the vines:*

- Hand picking into individual crates for the 115 hectares
- 120 pickers on average. The recruitment of the seasonal staff required is entrusted to a specialised agency, to ensure the presence of a given number of pickers on demand according to the daily harvest plan. This allows a considerable freedom of action that guarantees harvesting at optimum ripeness.

#### *In the vinification cellar:*

- First sorting by hand on whole bunches to eliminate those showing imperfections
- Latest state-of-the-art de-stemmer less damaging for the grapes
- Last sorting grape by grape with an optical camera
- Plot by plot vinification in 92 stainless steel vats of which 78 are small capacity (66 to 90hl)
- Co-inoculation allowing simultaneous alcoholic and malolactic fermentations in the aim of protecting the wine and manipulating it less throughout this delicate phase.

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