

## 2020 A fundamental vintage



### An early start to spring

After record winter rainfall: 848mm fell from October 2019 to end March 2020 (compared with an average of 540mm over 26 years), we saw a very mild end to the winter. *In mid-February, we could see a procession of cranes migrating northwards.*

*At the beginning of March, between storms, we used willow reeds to tie off our old Cabernet Sauvignon in l'Enclos, and our Chef cooked us the first asparagus of the season.*

### #lavignecontinue

Spring 2020 saw the entire country go into lockdown.

A very stressful period for the whole team, but everyone's commitment and loyalty allowed activity to continue in the vineyard and the cellar.

While most of the team was at work, some employees were in self-isolation. We had to reorganise the company accordingly. The vineyard team continued to take care of the vines, as mild weather alternated with storms (sucker removal, sprays, etc.). In the cellar, we hurried to return the 2018 vintage to tank, with fears that there might be problems obtaining supplies for bottling.

*Our Chef and Housekeeper got to work in the vineyard and in the cellar to give support to their colleagues.*

An unreal time also marked by dreamlike weather: we were living through a real summer during this lockdown. The weather in spring was very mild, with above-average temperatures of 2.7°C for the first half of April and 3.1°C for the second half of May.

On the day lockdown ended, as if by magic, we saw the first flowers on the Cabernet Sauvignon from the top of Font-Petite. The vines were more than two weeks early, a lead that was to continue until the harvest.

This spring was also marked by a race against time to protect our vines from downy mildew and keep the weeds under control. Not using herbicides, we could not get into the waterlogged vineyard to protect our soils: we were overtaken, and this for several weeks.

### After the rain, drought

After record levels of rainfall between October 2019 and June 2020: 1120mm (compared with 735mm on average over the past 26 years), we saw barely a drop of rain between 20 June and 10 August (5mm).

We worried about the possible blockage of grape ripening due to water stress. The foliage began to turn yellow, and berries suffered from sunburn in some plots (berries that would later be removed thanks to optical sorting). We therefore had to modulate our work (leaf removal, tillage, trimming height) depending on the plot, the terroir and the age of the vines, to limit the effects of this water stress.



Luckily, 106mm of rain fell on our vineyard between 11 and 20 August. Within just a few days, the vines and nature were refreshed. *At the end of August, our vines were strikingly beautiful. The marathon runners, who normally cross our park in early September with its lawns brown and brittle, would have benefited from a lush green carpet this year, had the Médoc Marathon not been cancelled.*

### Harvest time

Nights are fresh, winds drying and the days are hot and sunny. Early September saw ideal conditions for the polyphenolic ripening of our grapes. The vineyard was working well, with the grapes in a good state of health. Our Merlot are very fine and tasty, with great substance. The Cabernet Sauvignon, usually late-comers, promised to be of very similar quality, especially on our Houissant terroir.

### Kick-off on 16 September, for a 16-day harvest!



Under a magnificent blue and warm sky, we launched the start of picking, in a very stressful atmosphere. Organisation is almost military with three small teams of pickers. Everyone complied graciously with the procedures in place.

These first days of harvest (16 and 17 September) were marked by very hot weather: even the longest-serving members of the team were surprised. We stopped picking early on Thursday 17 September when the thermometer reached 35°C. The heat calmed down over the following days, giving way to dreamlike weather.

Harvest ended on October 1<sup>st</sup>, without interruption between Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc were picked in between.

*(Note: 2019 harvest: 24/09 - 10/10 and 2018 harvest: 24/09 - 11/10)*

We noted reduced yields: 10% below the average over the past 5 years. The reasons: the drought, sunburn and the flowering conditions. *We've come out of it well.*



And at that moment, the magic took place. The vat room and the cellar insulated us from the world and its misfortunes. It was almost unreal, as if it were only the wine that mattered; it made us forget everything. We devoted ourselves to the vinification. We started with our Merlot that were superb right from day one, then, our deep and structured Cabernet Sauvignon, our Cabernet Franc of great elegance, and our first Petit Verdot with their enchanting aromas. The skins were thick, but the fermentations went well. We were vigilant and went easy on the extraction, which was quick this year. It was only when the batches went into barrel that a welcome calm ensued.

### **The most fundamental of Phélan Ségur vintages**

It was with delight that in February we immersed ourselves in the fine-tuning exercise that is blending, and this with a close-knit team who know each other very well: Luc Peyronnet for the vineyard, Fabrice Bacquey in the cellar, Michel Rolland, Julien Viaud and myself.



And there you have it, this 2020 was born, as if nothing had happened. **it is the most fundamental vintage from Château Phélan Ségur. No contrivance, no excess, a fascinating balance.** A real pleasure to see the result of years of work transcending a great terroir. And although this quest is never-ending, I have the feeling that we have reached a high point in our search for precision, complexity, depth, purity. Philippe Van de Vyvere talks about of the search for excellence.

2020 is the first vintage of Château Phélan Ségur to be made up of four grape varieties, with the arrival of our Petit Verdot planted in 2013.

Its expressive nose of remarkable freshness is an invitation to plunge into a multicoloured and “polyphonic” world of fruit and flowers. It is perfectly balanced, with a precise and finely sculpted structure. Subtly fleshy, it is dense and its tannins finely woven. Its power, its length give it a radiant energy and arouse astonishing emotions.

*Véronique Dausse*



**In a few words...**

Owner: Philippe Van de Vyvere

General Director: Véronique Dausse

Vineyard Manager: Luc Peyronnet

Wine Cellar Master: Fabrice Bacquey

Consultants: Michel Rolland, Julien Viaud

Vineyard: 70 ha

Average age of the vineyard: 35 years old

Density of plantation: 10.000 vines/ha

Grape varieties: 59% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% Merlot, 1.5% Petit Verdot, 1.5% Cabernet Franc

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