

Château Climens

2016

"I never curse the rain,
the poor little sister of the sun"

Christian Bobin



Contrasts in the early season

From November 2015 to February 2016 the winter was very mild. Morning frosts were rare but fortunately their late arrival in March finally precluded the risk of precocious bud-burst. We could, however, have done without the frosts in April...

The cold weather at the end of April led to a slowing down of the vegetative growth and frost in the morning of April 29th caused localised but significant damage to both young and old vines over an area of approximately 10 hectares. A treatment with valerian was carried out in order to promote the development of laterals.

We wish to mention the notoriously diluvian spring of 2016 merely to point out that we came through this trial honourably, having been able to limit the ravages of mildew despite the difficulties involved in treating the vines in the rain. Fortunately for us, the excessive use of horsetail and willow produces no significant side-effects...

Ideal conditions at last

Following such a succession of contrasted conditions, the rainy spring and a late summer that was particularly hot and dry (83mm of rain in June, only 12mm in July and August together!), the alternation of morning humidity and afternoon sunshine worked much more harmoniously in autumn, providing the ideal conditions for the development of noble rot. Rain on September 14th and 15th (47mm) and the subsequent mists finally liberated the Botrytis.

Aware of the possibility of rapid concentration, we kept a close watch on the vines and mobilised our troops to start the harvest on Wednesday September 28th. The situation was the idealised image of a harvest; the morning mists were present and, around 11 am, gave way to wonderful hot sunshine.

We began by picking only the "*confit*", the most concentrated grapes. However, seeing the result of the first pressings, and wishing to avoid excessive concentration, we "widened" the picking to include a proportion of grapes that were gold-coloured though not yet overripe.

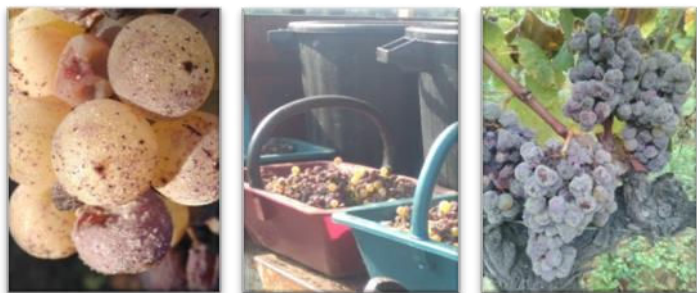
Depending on the plot, the pickings were either easy, especially on the older vines, or made more complicated by the presence of well-concealed undesirable moulds. However, our rigorous checks, the training and accompaniment of our team of pickers, and the verification of each basket meant that not a single unwanted grape got as far as our press.

The magical spread of the Botrytis was enhanced by the 39mm of rain during the last night of September and by the radiant sunshine throughout the first week of October. The weather was agreeably warm and even hot in the afternoons with temperatures reaching 27° in the shade!

The diversity of our plots obliged us to permanently adapt our picking programme; we had to be exceptionally versatile and reactive, picking very selectively in order to obtain musts that did not exceed 22° of potential, which is the guarantee of a well-balanced and elegant wine. The harvest went so well that we even allowed ourselves the luxury of a day off on Sunday 2nd and a whole weekend on October 8th and 9th. The mornings were chilly but hands were quickly warmed by the sun, which never failed to accompany our team of pickers.

We alternated picking in the older vines, which offered magnificent "*confit*", with some passages that were more arduous, especially in one sandy plot where the grapes reacted in a much more hit-and-miss manner. The concentration (of the pickers!) had to be flawless and our verifications very thorough in order to detect the slightest trace of *penicilium* (the mould of blue cheeses, and that is where we would prefer them to stay!), of *bouïroc*, the name the locals give to bad rot, or of a newcomer called *aspergillus niger* which discolours the grapes and leaves a black powder that looks like coffee-grounds.

Our pickers were therefore under close supervision by their supervisors Daniele (whose return to Climens this year delighted us), by the inflexible Vitor, and by "*La Patronne*" who always keeps a very close eye on their work. Frederic rules in the cellar in the absence of Christophe, the young master of the domaine who is recovering from illness. Obviously, each basket is checked by the experienced eagle-eyes of Flora and Gaele, the two young experts in charge of the sorting table. The registration numbers of flawed basketloads are communicated to the hierarchy, who do not fail to proffer advice or even air grievances to those concerned if their basket numbers are too frequently earmarked, which certainly added spice to what would otherwise have been an ideal harvest.



Sunshine to the end

If our first round of picking ended on October 11th, we were able to start again a week later on our second, and final, round of picking in perfect conditions. The Botrytis had developed homogeneously throughout the week, which was cloudy but without rainfall. At such times there is always a lot of suspense but fortune always seems to smile at Climens; from Tuesday 18th to Saturday October 22nd we could follow the development of the concentration plot by plot, harvesting all the remaining grapes while sticking to our target of 22° of potential.

Only on the last day did the potential go above 23° but the global result was perfectly balanced. Due to the omnipresence of the sun, the harvest was not only disconcertingly simple most of the time, but the musts also fermented admirably.

The last few days were wonderfully autumnal, with slight frosts early in the morning that made the mid-morning coffee all the more appreciated, frosts that were rapidly evaporated by the brilliant sun which kept us company until the last bunch was harvested on Saturday October 22nd. The next day it started to rain.

Despite one or two complicated episodes we were delighted to harvest perfectly bortytised grapes. The cellars filled easily and the fermentation was flawless; if this 2016 vintage started out under unfavourable auspices the gods of Biodynamica, *Météa* and *Botrytisnabila*, and the weather all woke up in time to offer us exceptional harvesting conditions. Due to our experience and hard work we were able to convert the try and we now take pleasure in announcing the birth of a great Climens!

Bérénice Lurton Frédéric Nivelle

2016 harvest at Château Climens

Harvest from 28th September to 22nd October

From 28th September to 11th October

1^{ère} trie : 67% de la récolte

From 18th to 22nd October

2^{ème} tri : 33% de la récolte

Yield : 20hl/ha (15 lots)