

THE 2012 VINTAGE

THE WINEGROWING YEAR

2012 will long be remembered by winegrowers as one of the most difficult years to manage. It started with a fairly late and particularly uneven bud burst, which led to variations in ripening that we were never really able to smooth out as the growth cycle progressed.

After a reasonably dry winter, the conditions in spring were radically different. Cool temperatures and especially heavy rainfall led to delayed growth in the vines and difficult flowering in most areas. Fortunately for us in Pomerol we enjoyed dry weather in the week when flowering was mostly concentrated, which ruled out the problems of poor fruit set and "hens and chickens", which we rarely see in our vineyards. However the regular showers significantly increased the threat of downy and powdery mildew attack.

From the 15th of July onwards, weather conditions became much more favourable. Summer began in earnest with seasonal temperatures, quite substantial drought, but no real heat waves. August even turned out to be the hottest since 2003. These conditions enabled the vines to recover from some of the delay in their growth cycle resulting from the setbacks at the beginning of the season and to even out the overall ripeness of the fruit, but it was still not unusual to find green bunches of fruit next to others that had completely changed colour on the same vine. What helped greatly as final ripening approached was the pronounced temperature variation between daytime and night, which contributed to the development of many aromas and anthocyanins in the fruit.

Overall, 2012's weather patterns were very like 2000 and 2009. Not everyone was convinced about the potential for quality wines, because the year was so difficult for growers, but the last few weeks were clearly going to be decisive in that regard.

So we had to be patient when attempting to estimate harvest dates, because the analytical tests carried out on the fruit announced a false readiness, while the actual taste of the grapes prior to harvesting made us want to wait longer before starting.

The other concern with this vintage came with the rain at the end of September as botrytis blight set in. While there was no sign of this on the bunches as picking commenced, the fungus developed like lightning as soon as the first rain showers began. Fortunately, it did not bother us on the Pomerol plateau and on our gravelly soil, where our grapes usually ripen early.

THE HARVEST

Harvesting had to be extremely staggered and timed to the degree of ripeness on each plot. Our new vatroom with its large number of small tanks thus proved to be very worthwhile the first time we used it.

The young Merlot vines, which suffered a little from the drought, because their root systems are not yet fully developed, were harvested on the 18th September.

The older vines managed the lack of water without difficulty, so we put off harvesting them as long as possible to reap the full benefit of the September sun. An initial section of the Merlot vines growing in clay were picked on the 24th at the same time as on the *Certan* gravel plateau. The rest of the gravel plots waited until the 29th of September.

Finally the Cabernet Franc grapes were picked in two goes on the 5th and the 9th October, which was the latest harvest ever at La Conseillante as far as we know!



LA CONSEILLANTE
33500 Pomerol

Tel : +33 5 57 51 15 32 - Fax : +33 5 57 51 42 39
Email : contact@la-conseillante.com