



2012 vintage

Characteristics of the vintage

The first buds appeared in the month of April, which was particularly cold and wet. The less-than-ideal weather conditions led to lower yields and more irregular formation of grape bunches than in a normal year. The unevenness of the crop was manifest during *véraison* (colour change) and called for taking appropriate measures in the vineyard.

Reducing the number of grapes per vine allows the plant to nourish the remaining fruit in such a way as to obtain a richer, more concentrated juice. In order to control yields, we examine each vine, count the number of bunches and estimate their weight and size. According to what we find, part-time vineyard workers, trained and supervised by our permanent employees, remove excess bunches. Nothing is left to chance during this operation. Workers take the time to observe how the grapes are distributed on the vine before cutting, and never lose sight of the fact that there must be no more than one cluster per shoot so that no two touch one another. This process is called bunch thinning and took less time than usual in 2012 in light of the intrinsically low yields.

Crop harmonisation is carried out during colour change. Any bunches that are clearly lagging at this stage are removed. For example, if a vine has six bunches and all except one are red, we eliminate the green one. We were particularly attentive and strict in 2012, retaining only those bunches that had at least 75% red grapes. We had never before spent as much time going through the vineyard to harmonise our crop. At Domaine Clarence Dillon, the uncompromising emphasis on quality is not just a marketing claim. It is an absolute duty (and everyday reality).

Summer is essential for ripening, and an old French proverb says *août fait le moût* – in other words, that August is decisive for the quality of the wine. Weather conditions in summer often define a vintage. Fortunately, the months of July and August 2012 were ideal: warm and dry. The harvest for both red and white wines began under sunny skies. However, rain beginning in mid-September disturbed the end of the harvest. 2012 is nevertheless a truly fine vintage for early-ripening terroirs and grape varieties such as ours.