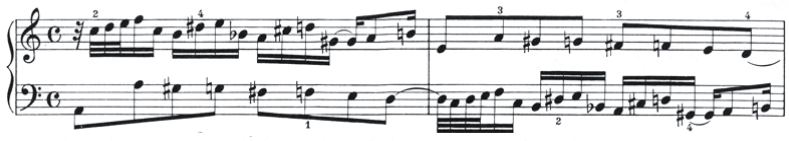
Vintage 2011

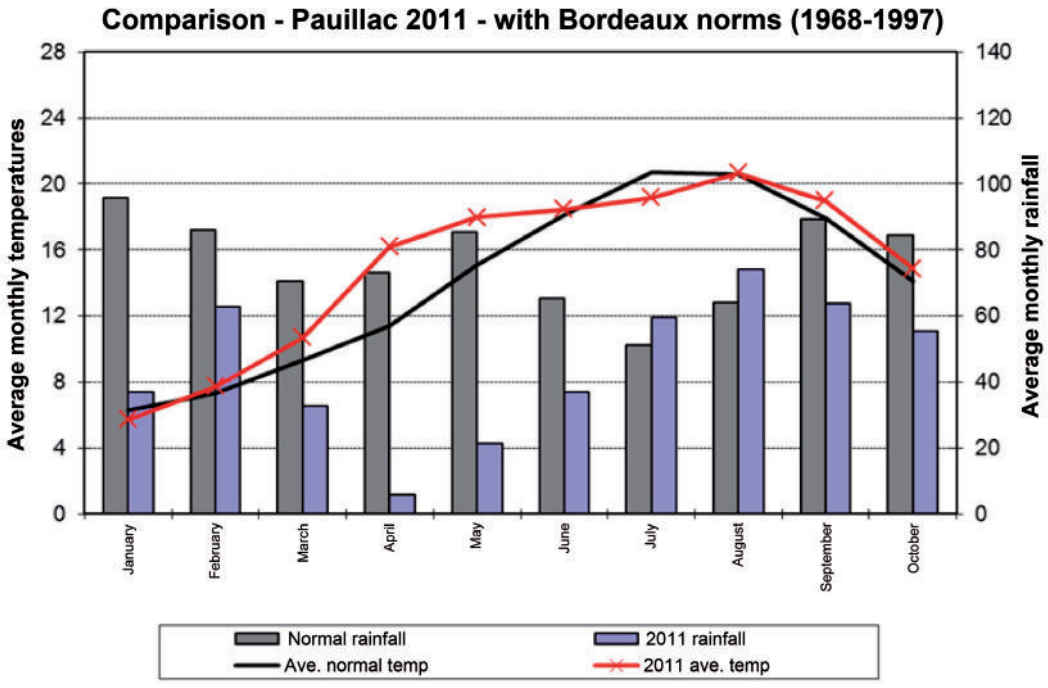
The Rite of Spring



Following a cool, dry winter, mild weather rapidly set in from the end of March onwards, with a rainfall deficit resulting in a relatively early budburst that started on March 28th for the Merlot and on April 4th for the Cabernet Sauvignon.

Temperatures continued to rise sharply throughout the spring, climbing well above seasonal norms, with weather that appeared almost summery (cf figure 1). These conditions enabled a fairly homogeneous vegetative development with very active growth. Flowering therefore occurred in a historically precocious time scale (almost 3 weeks early), around May 15th , with very few signs of coulure (failure of the fruit to set). Lastly, the rate of berry set confirmed the excellent start to flowering, often producing considerable loads of grapes per vine stock.

Figure 1



DOMAINES
JEAN-MICHEL CAZES

Figure 2

Phenological stages of the vine at Chateau Lynch-Bages

VINTAGES	varietals	begining of bud burst (March)	A mid-flowering (June)	difference A to B	B mid-veraison (August)	end of veraison	difference B to C	C beginning of harvest (LB)	difference A to C	1st veraison of berries	end of harvesting
LYNCH-BAGES	M	03-Apr	07-Jun	66	11-Aug	29-Aug	49	**30-Sept**	**115**		01-Oct
2008	CF	07-Apr	09-Jun	days	13-Aug		days	**06-Oct**	**days**	* 21 July	
	CS	11-Apr	11-Jun	69	17-Aug	03-Sept	51	**08-Oct**	**120**		16-Oct
LYNCH-BAGES	M	29-Mar	05-Jun	63	05-Aug	17-Aug	48	**23-Sept**	**111**		**29-Sept**
2009	CF	03-Apr	06-Jun	days	09-Aug		days	**05-Oct**	**days**	* 16 July	
	CS	07-Apr	09-Jun	66	12-Aug	24-Aug	55	**07-Oct**	**121**		**12-Oct**
LYNCH-BAGES	M	06-Apr	07-Jun	62	07-Aug	17-Aug	50	**27-Sept**	**112**		**30-Sept**
2010	CF	08-Apr	09-Jun	days	11-Aug		days	**06-Oct**	**days**	* 19 July	
	CS	15-Apr	11-Jun	65	14-Aug	24-Aug	55	**09-Oct**	**120**		**14-Oct**
LYNCH-BAGES	M	28-Mar	12-May	62	25-Jul	07-Aug	48	**13-Sept**	**110**		**14-Sept**
2011	CF	02-Apr	14-May	days	28-Jul		days	**20-Sept**	**days**	* 30 June	
	CS	06-Apr	18-May	65	01-Aug	13-Aug	51	**22-Sept**	**116**		**28-Sept**
Average over	M	23-Mar	01-Jun	**66**	**05-Aug**		**47**	**23-Sept**	**113**		26-Jul
the last 16 years	CF	28-Mar	03-Jun	**days**	**10-Aug**		**days**	**30-Sept**	**days**	* 17 July	
1995 à 2010	CS	04-Apr	06-Jun	**68**	**12-Aug**		**49**	**2-Oct**	**117**		10-Oct

Meanwhile, the heatwave conditions of June 27th and 28th triggered scorching or “sunburn” on the grapes, in some cases incurring significant crop losses for the Cabernet. This drought also prompted the formation of small berries, reinforcing the phenomenon of concentration.

Cultivation work was adapted to these events, with particularly judicious canopy management aimed at maintaining a certain amount of shade and eliminating scalded clusters. On the parasitic level, mildew was noticeable by its absence from this cycle whilst the more prevalent oidium was easily controlled.

Temperatures dropped from July onwards. Despite the return to seasonal averages, a light water deficit persisted throughout the entire summer, producing a positive effect on the metabolism of polyphenols before veraison. Thanks to the slight resumption of vegetative growth at the end of the summer, we then saw an optimal start to the veraison, despite the loss – compared to the predictions (mid-veraison occurring around July 30th) – of one of the weeks that we had in hand. In addition to these cool damp conditions, beneficial rainy spells in August were a very significant factor in preserving aromas and acidity (cf. figure 2).

Fairly steady temperatures and frequent damp spells at the end of August and beginning of September promoted a good maturation of the berries, contributing towards more rapid development of the skins, and endowing them with greater retractability.

Addendum

Figure 3

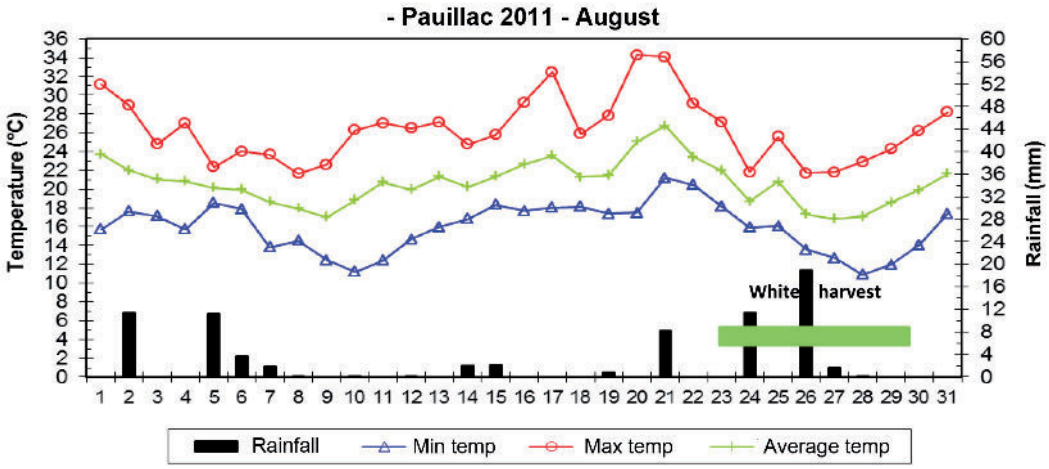
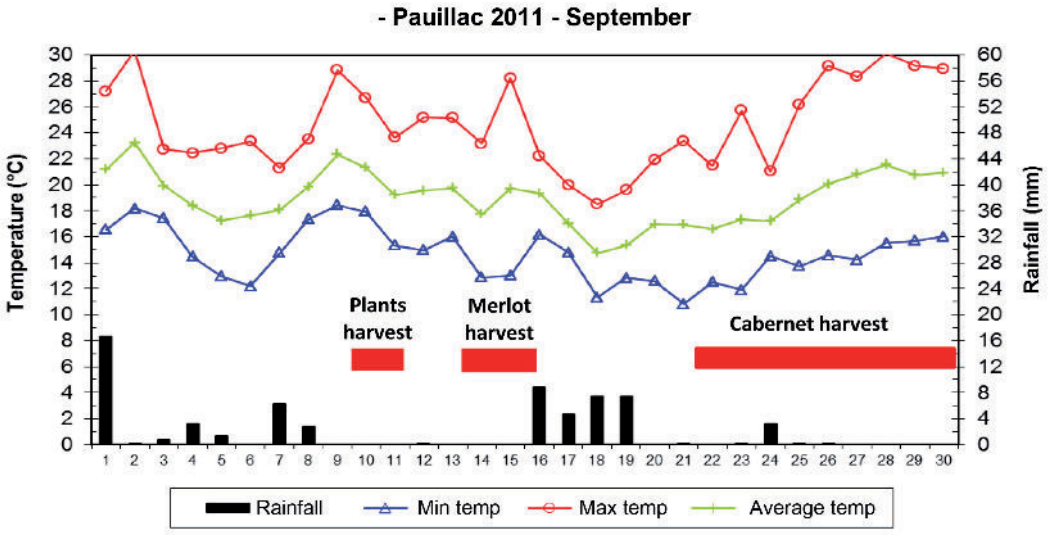


Figure 4



These conditions remained highly conducive to the development of the Botrytis Cinerea fungus. However, the leaf thinning and green harvesting carried over the summer produced better aeration and limited the propagation of grey rot.

Lastly, the arrival of an anticyclone in the second half of September provided the best conditions for the Cabernet to complete their ripening. These were picked early, during mild weather.

CHATEAU
LYNCH BAGES

2011

Harvesting began at Château Lynch-Bages (almost a fortnight earlier than in 2010) with the return of the fine weather from **September 12th** onwards. Aided by satellite imagery of the vegetative growth – updated for the 2011 vintage – it was possible to implement intra-plot zoning and harvest zoning for the third consecutive year.

The Merlots, whose harvesting lasted until **September 15th**, produced very good results and excellent homogeneity between plots. On **September 20th**, after a five-day break, the 200 pickers on the property set out again in four separate teams to tackle the Cabernet Sauvignons. These retain a quite remarkable potential from an analytical point of view, with a wealth of tannins and anthocyanins attaining the levels of the preceding 2010 and 2009 vintages. The Cabernet Franc, meanwhile, boast astonishing finesse and concentration.

Equipped with a new de-stemming system and an optical sorter, a complementary reception chain was tried out, receiving exclusively the harvest from plots deemed the most difficult or the most heterogeneous. The harvests then ended on **September 28th**.

The slightly low agronomic yield (45 hl/ha) is accounted for by the dry conditions at the start of the year incurring the formation of small berries, further accentuated by the few incidents of sunburn – or échaudage.

Once in the vat, alcoholic fermentation of the grapes was triggered off, taking place rapidly and smoothly in less than 10 days, producing a more usual alcohol content. Regular pumping over and delestage promoted a very good extraction with impressive colours and tannic structure. Running-off began on October 4th and the vats released their juice after a fermenting time of 20 days on average.

Around 1/3 of the lots were put directly into barrels, where malolactic fermentation rapidly set in, with the rest being done in vats. In order to finish vatting before the end of the year, pre-blendings were set up as soon as malolactic fermentations were completed.

After two powerful, sunny vintages, 2011 is outstanding for its display of well ripened fruit, fine, plump tannins, and a good freshness to ensure classic balance.

CHATEAU
LYNCH BAGES

2011

Château Lynch-Bages

66% of the harvest

Blending:
72 % Cabernet sauvignon
23 % Merlot
3 % Cabernet franc
2 % Petit Verdot

Ageing: 75% new wood.
Analysis: Alcohol: 13.2% by Vol.; Total acidity: 4.1 g/l; pH: 3.61; ITP: 8**9**

Tasting Note (April 2011):
The nose reveals a certain complexity combining notes of cassis, black fruit and spices. The mid palate is ample and full, and accentuated by the perfectly ripe tannins of the Cabernet Sauvignon. The fresh velvety finish is particularly harmonious.

Echo de Lynch-Bages

30 % of the harvest

Blending:
47 % Cabernet sauvignon
41 % Merlot
12 % Cabernet franc

Ageing: One-wine barrels.
Analysis: Alcohol: 13 % by Vol.; Total acidity: 3.9 g/l; pH: 3.58; ITP: 80

Tasting Note (April 2011):
The colour is crimson with purplish glints. This year's Echo de Lynch Bages stands out for the very high proportion of Merlot in its blending. On the nose, aromas of blackberry, cassis and red berries, along with a peppery note. The attack is fresh, revealing a still-firm tannic structure that will become more supple during the ageing process in one-year barrels. The finish is tasty and exhibits good length.

CHATEAU
LYNCH BAGES

2011

Blanc de Lynch-Bages

Picking of the white varieties began early, on **August 24th**, with the young Sauvignon plants, which were reaching their optimum maturity. Harvested soon afterwards, the Muscadelle boasts astounding aromatic finesse whilst the Semillons have a lovely composition. The last triages of Sauvignon, which rounded off the harvesting of the whites on **August 30th**, delivered a certain complexity with great freshness and a more reasonable alcoholic content.

The grapes were transported in 200-kilo covered tanks, by refrigerated lorry to best preserve the freshness of the fruit. After three successive triages, 18 lots were constituted using intra-plot selection carried out for the past four years and ratified again this year by new satellite imagery of the vegetation. The grapes were sorted upon reception of the harvest, whereupon some were de-stemmed and pressed immediately whilst others were given ten hours of cold maceration in wine presses to bring out all their aromatic potential.

The Semillons, having produced the smallest berries as a result of suffering considerably from the drought, influenced the final yield, which attained an average of 49 hl/hectare.

After settling in vats, 2/3 of the juices were put directly into barrels to continue their vinification. Each of the barrels had its own temperature regulation system, ensuring the preservation of aromas during fermentations. Regular stirring of the lees then promoted richness and density in the wines. The rest was fermented in stainless steel vats to maintain lots that would ensure better acidity at the blending stage.

Blending:
66 % Sauvignon
12 % Sémillon
22 % Muscadelle

Ageing: 70% in barrels (½ of which are new barrels), 30% in vats.
Analysis: Alcohol: 13.2% by Vol.; Total acidity: 4.6 g/l; pH: 3.10

Tasting Note (April 2011):
A pale yellow colour, Blanc de Lynch Bages reveals itself on the nose with citrus and floral notes. Its attack is lively with a nicely ample mid-palate. Vinification in barrels imbues it with body and complexity whilst still respecting the varietal characters of the Sauvignon Blanc, which come to the fore. The finish is refreshing, and striking for its aromatic persistence.