

2019

SUCCESSFUL MISSION

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CHÂTEAU
RAUZAN-SÉGLA
GRAND CRU CLASSÉ 1855 - MARGAUX

My 31st, 32nd, 33rd harvest? I couldn't say, what does it matter, when you love something, you are not counting! The grape harvest is a unified whole, a sum of work, passion, skills, men and women, incidents, and occasionally, anger. Routine? Certainly not, no two harvests are ever alike, that's the beauty of winemaking and you never tire of it. From the first harvest in 1987 to this latest one, there have been so many changes, adventures, projects, unforeseen events, sun and rain, blood, sweat and tears, breakdowns and accidents! So many memories too.

1987, the first and probably the most epic, with dreadful weather.

1989, 1990, sun and great vintages

1992, 1993, rain and the Sauvignons lagging behind

1995, 1996, the first real vintages of the CHANEL era

2000, the year of numbers

2003, the hottest

2005, magnificent, the easiest

2006, the most abundant

2010, best year for a long time

2013, the hardest

2016, the worst year for me, when Didier was my right-hand man and also my left leg after my injury!

2018, the finest

2019, my latest one, is upon us and we're pumped up ready to go!

Monday, 9 September

It's definitely kicking off this week, everything's ready, equipment in place, cleaned, greased, checked, the Merlot is ready too and we're all keen to get going. Porquerolles has already finished harvesting, Canon is impatiently waiting, we might start the same day!

Wednesday, 11 September

We start tomorrow, we're more than ready. We taste the grapes all morning, François, Didier, Chloé and I. They look good, they taste good, we're confident.

Thursday, 12 September

The night has been fairly quiet, no better or worse than the previous ones, anyway it's been at least a week since I started harvesting every night. Ah, experience... that little lantern that only lights up the path you've taken! It's both friend and foe. We use our experience to manage problems more calmly, to react more quickly and efficiently, to anticipate, to be more effective in difficult situations, but it's still stressful. I beware of those who think they've got all the experience they need, it means they don't understand what it's all about. They also tend to consider themselves indispensable. Big mistake!

We started this morning, we are tackling the young Merlot vines with only two teams of pickers, in the plots of Terre Noire 1 and 5, Caillou Rouge 4, Mathéou 4 and the filling of the first vat!

The sweet litany of plot names begins, vats to be filled, and the aromas, fresh grapes and stalks, start to come through. There's plenty of noise too, vibrating tables,

de-stemmer, stalk crusher, fork-lift trucks whizzing around transporting harvest containers, everything is working as it should. Lunch in the harvest room, all together, back to all the old habits of eating too much and too fast, after all, we have to stoke up for the afternoon's work.

Monday 16 September

6 vats are already full, fermentation is in full swing, it smells great in the vat room, yeast, co-inoculation, nitrogen, pumping over, everyone's hard at it. In the vineyards, the four teams of grape-pickers are also hard at work and the crates keep pouring in. Vats 46, 7, 8, 21, 19 ... they're all full! A great day of harvesting.

Didier and I coordinate everything for the handover: analyses, pumping over operations, tastings, general planning.

Wednesday, 25 September

We finish the Merlot today and attack the Cabernet Sauvignon straight after. 22 vats of Merlot are already full. We have also picked all the complanted grapes from the plots of Sauvignon which we will vinify separately. Over the years, our requirements have grown steadily, the selection has become more precise. The number of smaller vats has multiplied, as has the workload.

That's what harvesting is like, it starts off slowly, almost calmly, and then it builds crescendo each day. The pumping-over schedule is getting busier, we try to be as precise as possible tailoring our work to the grape varieties, the terroirs, the plots, and the tastings of the first vats. Checks on density and temperature twice a day,

the essential daily rite in the morning and evening, checking the pumping-over sheets, analyses of the must and the vats where the alcoholic fermentation has finished, maturity checks on the Cabernet and Petit Verdot plots yet to be harvested, cleanliness checks on the harvest reception equipment, rinsing tests, vat-filling sheets and work reports, harvest tickets, and so on... ! You mustn't forget anything, the going's getting tough but we can handle it.

The first vats of Merlot are finished, we will have to run off next week.

Friday, 4 October

We're in the middle of the Cabernet Sauvignon harvest, the four picking teams are hard at it. Since Tuesday, we have been running off and pressing one vat of Merlot per day, early in the morning so that the presses can run before the procession of harvest containers in the vat room commences. Not easy to organise.

This weekend, no harvesting, we will be able to press two more vats.

Wednesday, 9 October

We are finishing the harvest today, the Boston plots, in vats 25, 7 and GV3. Total: 25 vats of Merlot, one of Cabernet Franc, two of Petit Verdot and 34 vats of Cabernet Sauvignon. 8 vats have been run off and pressed already, some batches are already in barrel. We don't waste any time, it all has to come together, the work on the vats, the monitoring of fermentation and maceration, tastings to determine the run-off schedule, the run-off with all the press wines in barrel. It's amazing what you can achieve in just one day!

François is cheerful, for him and his team it's mission accomplished. For us it's a bit different, it's been a month since it all started and it's far from over, there are still so many things to be done.

Fermentation of the Cabernets, running off of the Merlot and then the Cabernets, transfer into barrels, tastings, tastings and more tastings!

This is probably my last harvest here. Again, what does it matter, we're all just passing through. It's Rauzan that remains and it's Rauzan that counts after we are all long gone. This new vintage has been brought home, it's in the vat with some already in barrel, and it looks very promising. I'm savouring the moment.

FROM THE SAME COLLECTION

2015

Between sky and land

2016

Sur mesure

2017

Nuit blanche

2018

Grand huit

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