

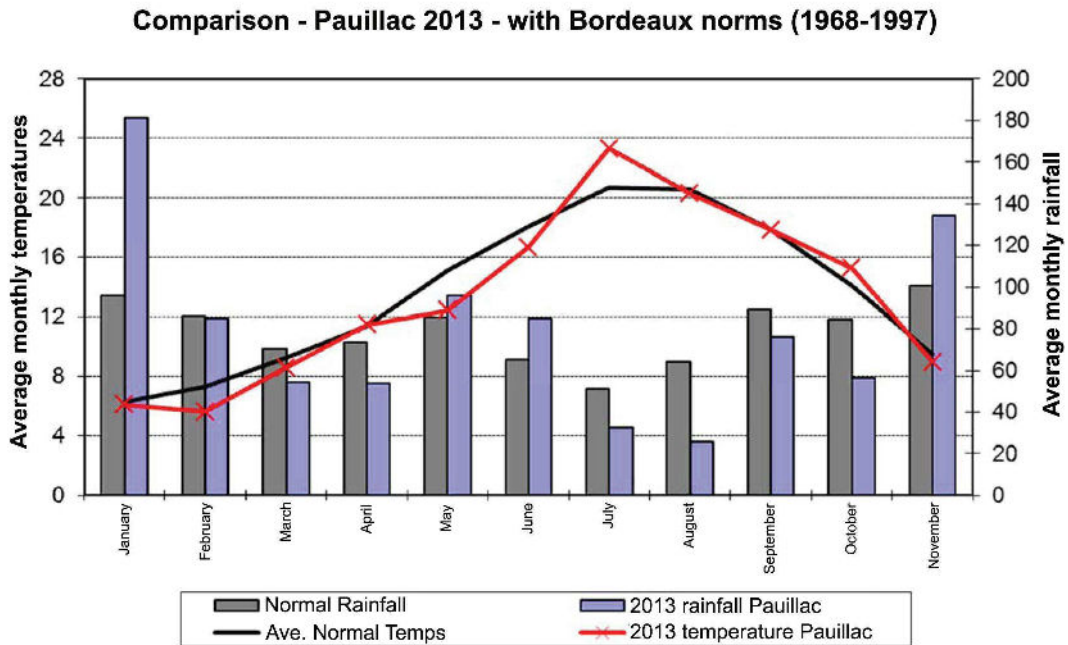
VINTAGE 2013

Earth, Wind & Fire...

Following a rainy winter, the ground was given yet another soaking during the equally wet spring. Although budburst was surprisingly homogeneous, this cool weather slowed down the growth of the vines. As far back as April (see figure 1), a late harvest was predicted. The drop in temperatures between 27 and 29 April triggered frosts over several sectors in the Gironde region, with the Medoc wine-producing area remaining unscathed due to its proximity to the estuary.

This delay is typified by the late start to flowering, which took place around 15 June during a cold, wet spell – roughly 15 days later than in the previous year. There was also a significant lack of sunshine (deficit of 25% in May and June). The ill effects of this spell were coulure and millerandage (or berry-shot), which reduced the yields. The old Merlots and the most precocious terroirs were the most badly affected by coulure.

Figure 1



2013 saw one of the coldest Junes in the last 15 years, yet it was still sufficiently mild and damp to allow mildew and botrytis to be a threat to the foliage. July saw the start of a radical reversal of this trend, with very hot, dry weather bringing back hope to the winegrowers. The monthly average of maximum temperatures was in fact above 30°C, with a good many peaks of 35-37°C, stimulating the hitherto slow growth of the vines. The vineyards saw a sprinkling of just 10mm at the end of the month. Rainstorms accompanied heavy hailstorms over the southern part of the Gironde: on 26 July, 20% of the Bordeaux winegrowing area was affected. The top part of the church tower in Pauillac fell onto a nearby house after being struck by lightning during a violent thunderstorm.

Leaf thinning and canopy management were then carried out sporadically. Indeed, the volume of the harvest finally promised to be low and July's brilliant sunshine dried out the surroundings of the clusters.

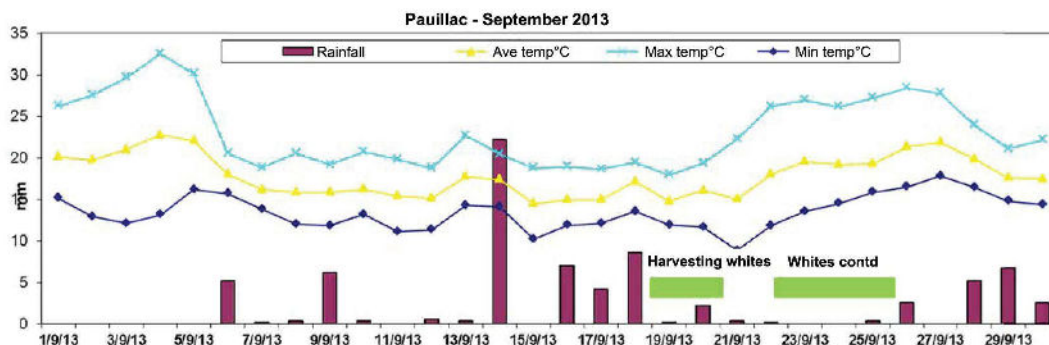
In August, despite the continuing summer heat, certain vines were still in the growth phase and the first signs of veraison only started to make their first tentative appearance at the end of the month. At this point, there was still a 2-week delay (see figure 2). Meanwhile, the hot weather stabilised the whole of the winegrowing area, enabling us to ease up on phytosanitary protection measures. Beginning on 15 August, the vines underwent moderate water stress, which was needed for the onset of ripening.

Figure 2

Dates of harvesting and vegetative cycles at Lynch-Bages											
VINTAGES	Varieties	Budburst began (Mar)	A mid-flowering (Jun)	difference A to B	B mid-veraison (Aug)	end of veraison	difference B to C	C start of harvest (LYNCH-BAGES)	difference A to C	start of veraison	end of harvest
LYNCH-BAGES 2009	M	29-March	05-June	63	05-Aug	17-Aug	49	23-September	111		29-September
	CF	03-Apr	06-June	← days →	09-Aug	←	days →	05-October	days	16-July	
	CS	07-Apr	09-June	66	12-Aug	24-Aug	55	07-October	121		12-October
LYNCH-BAGES 2010	M	06-Apr	07-June	62	07-Aug	19-Aug	50	27-September	112		30-September
	CF	08-Apr	09-June	← days →	11-Aug	←	days →	06-October	days	19-July	
	CS	15-Apr	11-June	65	14-Aug	25-Aug	55	09-October	120		14-October
LYNCH-BAGES 2011	M	28-March	12-May	62	25-July	07-Aug	48	13-September	110		14-September
	CF	02-Apr	14-May	← days →	28-July	←	days →	20-September	days	30-June	
	CS	06-Apr	18-May	65	01-Aug	13-Aug	51	22-September	116		28-September
LYNCH-BAGES 2012	M	30-March	01-June	73	14-Aug	24-Aug	50	04-October	123		06-October
	CF	01-Apr	02-June	← days →	16-Aug	←	days →	11-October	days	23-July	12-October
	CS	04-Apr	04-June	76	20-Aug	30-Aug	53	13-October	129		18-October
LYNCH-BAGES 2013	M	08-Apr	13-June	66	19-Aug	29-Aug	42	01-October	108		04-October
	CF	10-Apr	17-June	← days →	21-Aug	←	days →	07-October	days	03-Aug	08-October
	CS	18-Apr	19-June	68	27-Aug	05-September	38	05-October	106		13-October
Average over the last 18 years : 1995 à 2012	M	25-March	03-June	66	08-Aug		47	24-September	113		27-September
	CF	29-March	06-June	← days →	12-Aug	←	days →	30-September	days	19-July	
	CS	02-Apr	08-June	68	15-Aug		49	02-October	116		09-October

The respite was shortlived, as September was a rather cool month, with numerous rainy spells. Hopes of catching up with the delayed vegetation were diminishing. In order to bring the harvest to its optimal ripeness, we had to carry out extra leaf thinning, and renew the battle against parasites. Fortunately, ten fairly sunny days at the end of September enabled us to harvest the whites in good conditions (see figure 3).

Figure 3

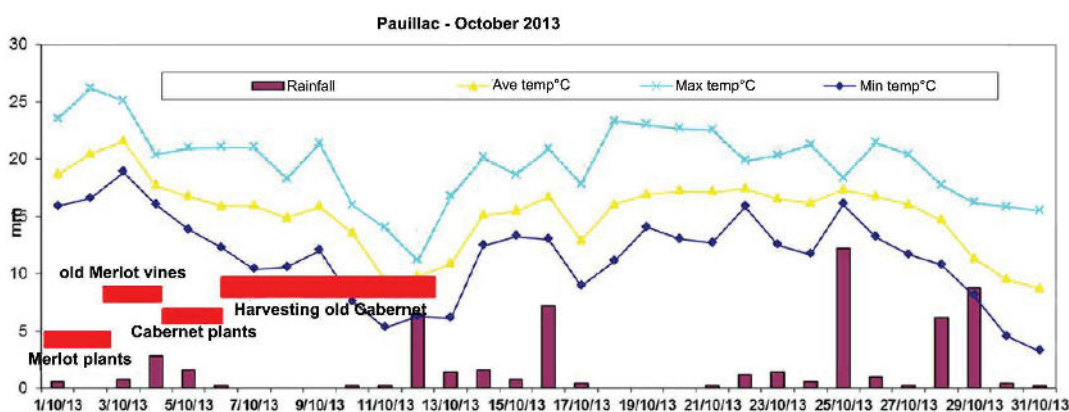


For the reds, veraison ended up being homogeneous, accompanied by a rapid ripening of the skins at the end of September. We considered a deferment of around ten days for the start of harvesting.

In the meantime, however, a sharp rise in temperatures brought about pressure from botrytis, forcing the picking of the Merlot to be brought forward. Initially planned for 7 October, harvesting ended up starting on 2 October with the young vines. The first plots harvested displayed fairly high sugar levels and marked acidity. Balanced maturity was finally achieved, with little vegetal character.

October saw a combination of gentle, regular rainfall and mild temperatures that swelled the berries, thereby increasing pressure on the sanitary state of the grapes (see figure 4). The period of optimal maturity for each plot was therefore extremely short, necessitating heightened vigilance along with continuous alternate pickings of the Merlot and the Cabernet.

Figure 4



The organisation of our teams and the availability of the grape pickers were a terrific boon, providing tremendous responsiveness during this difficult end to the season.

In the end, the search for the best compromise between sugar/acid maturity, phenolic maturity and preservation of the sanitary state of the crop was to be our constant preoccupation over the final months of the vegetative cycle.



2013

Although the combination of sunny days and high temperatures in July and August raised hopes for a slight compensation for the phenological delay in the vines, harvesting was nevertheless very late.

Initially envisaged for the 9th, picking finally began with the Merlot on 1 October, with two teams totalling 100 pickers. Surprised by the levels of alcoholic content attained, we carried on with the old Merlot between 2 and 4 October. Given the low yield of grapes and some contained sites of botrytis infection, these reached their optimal maturity before the rainy spell of 5 and 6 October.

The first grapes to be vatted displayed a deep colour and reasonable acidity levels, thereby dissipating any doubts of the preceding months. In warm, humid conditions, we decided to continue picking without interruption, ending the week with the less deep-rooted young Cabernet.

Over 200 pickers boosted our teams for the harvesting of the old Cabernet, starting on Monday, 7 October. The waiting time was over and it was now time to act fast, before another rainy spell could come and damage the integrity of the berries.

Priorities for the order of harvesting the plots were fixed: plots with the more fragile, predominantly sandy, light gravelly soils were to be picked first. The plots boasting deeper soils with clayey gravel allowed us to wait a few days, providing Cabernets that are rich in sugar and in a remarkably stable sanitary state. With an average of 10 hectares harvested daily, harvesting finished under grey skies at Lynch-Bages on Sunday, 13 October, after working for 13 days running.

The average yield per hectare at Lynch-Bages was historically very low (31.5 hl/ha), reduced mainly by problematic flowering conditions.

The installation for the first time this year of three harvest-reception lines in the vat house instead of two, with a sorting carried out after de-stemming, enabled us to complete the sorting in the vineyard and to remove any berries with millerandage or botrytis.

The results at the vatting stage were good: few of the berries were pink or vegetal. Picked on 9 and 10 October, the Petit Verdot displayed a deep colour and ripe tannins.

Alcoholic fermentations took place over ten days in a regular, straightforward fashion. The contrast in levels of maturity and sanitary state forced us to adapt the mode of vinification to each vat. To our great surprise, some of the Cabernet exceeded 13% by volume of natural alcohol and revealed great complexity. Comparatively low in relation to the weight of the berries, the quantity of juice confirmed for us the sharp drop in yields.