

# 2015

# Côte d'Or vintage report



A cold, damp end to winter hardly hastened budbreak, which took place towards the end of March/beginning of April.

The first fortnight in April saw lots of bright sunshine, but the cool weather retarded growth somewhat. At this stage, we were looking at an annual cycle that appeared to be more or less average, possibly with a bit of delay.

The second half of April and all of May were warm and dry, and growth accelerated as a result. The first flowers put in an appearance around the end of May and start of June. The soil held plenty of water reserves thanks to the rainy winter.

In certain areas, particularly those that had suffered hail damage in recent years, it was already apparent that yields were going to be low.

June was very hot and the growth cycle accelerated further. Flowering only took a week, and it only took three weeks to go from the end of flowering to bunch closure (half the time that this process usually takes in an average vintage).

At this stage we began to talk about the possibility of an early harvest because some of the vineyards with reduced yields were ripening so fast that it looked as if they would be ready to pick before September.

At the end of June rain fell copiously on the Côte d'Or, and this helped swell the grapes. The start of July saw temperatures that were 4°C higher than usual, bright sunshine and rainfall that was down 60mm on the July average.

Growth slowed as the plants protected themselves from the hot, dry climate, and some bunches got a little hot. In Beaujolais and the south of the Mâconnais, vines suffered some hydric stress as they hadn't had any water since winter. Some vines lost a few leaves and veraison was delayed due to the lack of rainfall. Come the end of July, come the rainclouds, and the vineyards got between 5 and 30mm of rain (the level varied area by area).

It was hot in August but there was also some rainfall (notably on 8 August), which was more than welcome. The grapes began to ripen and the ideal climatic conditions persisted right up to the end of the growing season: the speed of ripening varied hugely depending on yield and the availability of water in each parcel. We started picking some of the whites in August, as well as some of the riper Gamay parcels (some of which achieved potential alcohol levels of 15%!).

At Louis Jadot, we began picking our white grapes on 1 September, then the red harvest started on the 7th.

Yields are about average for whites but rather low for the reds.

The hail that hit Chablis on the eve of picking had little impact on overall yields in the region, and the fact that harvest was early and fast helped to ensure that quality was maintained.

We have been pleasantly surprised by the balance of the grapes, particularly in terms of the extraordinary levels of acidity seen in the whites. The warm wind that swept through the vineyards towards the end of August may well have concentrated the levels of acidity in the grapes.

2015 is set to be a great vintage for both reds and whites.

We blocked the malolactic fermentation in our whites in order to preserve the balance between richness and tension in the wines. The period of maturation will, of course, be highly influential in determining the finished quality of the wines.

The reds are a work in progress, but so far the colour is deep and rich, as are the flavours. The raw material looks very promising, and we are looking forward to following the progress of these wines over the coming months.

Frédéric Barnier



## Pouilly-Fuissé

### 2015 vintage

In contrast to 2014, the start of 2015 was unremarkable in its mildness, and gave no hint of the warm weather that was to provide the dominant theme for the year. Spring was mild and dry, with both temperatures and rainfall levels coming close to the decade's average for the period of March-May. Flowering, which took place at the end of spring in ideal conditions, was remarkable for its evenness. The bunches were well formed, with perfect fruit set.

Towards the end of May, it became clear that the hot, dry conditions had set in. June and July were marked by high temperatures and an unusually large deficit of water. While the vines on the schist promontory suffered from rather too much hydric stress, the best terroirs resisted the drought well. Nevertheless, veraison was delayed as a result.

As in 2014, balance was recovered during the first fortnight in August due to two separate episodes of rainfall.







The unusual climatic conditions kept downy mildew at bay in the vineyards. However, we feared an attack of powdery mildew due to the potential virulence of an infection, the vulnerability of our grape variety and climatic conditions that were potentially propitious for its development (neither rainfall nor dew are necessary for the vine's development during the phase of vegetative growth). Sulphur remains the best weapon in our armoury when dealing with this fungus, although it needed to be used with caution as the high temperatures could have caused the grapes to develop burns. Constant vigilance and precise coordination were necessary to keep the fungal scourge at bay.

By the third week in August, the bunches were looking incredibly healthy and had developed a beautiful golden tinge. Somewhat later than usual, we decided on picking dates on 20 August. On 25 August, a southerly wind began blowing, and this pushed ripeness levels forwards. Picking began on 28 August, starting with the schist plateau and the sedimentary volcanic sandstones, then the rear slopes of Mont Pouilly, Le Clos, Tournant de Pouilly, Les Perrières and Les Ménétrières. Temperatures were still higher than usual for the time of year. Once again, the watchwords were precision and consistency: the harvesting of the grapes only took place in the morning. The bunches were brought to the domaine as fast as possible, and were then chilled until they were pressed. Settling was light. And our worst fears were not realised: thanks to the measured pace of fermentation, and the ease with which they proceeded to dryness, freshness and aromatic richness were preserved in all the cuvées. As September remained warm, malolactic fermentation began abruptly – indeed, in some instances it was positively explosive.

2015 was a year in which we were reminded of the importance of being proactive rather than reactive. It is a vintage in which the skills of the grower and the winemaker needed to be exercised to their fullest in order to bring out the best in the grapes.

At this stage, the wines are rich, vibrant and juicy. They suggest a great potential for development over the years to come.

Audrey Braccini

