



2019 VINTAGE

Winter 2019 was exceptionally mild, particularly in February, when spring-like weather saw record-beating temperatures in some areas. It was also a very sunny winter, with few clouds in the sky during January and clear conditions persisting through to February and March.

In the end, it was also a very dry winter, and the first few months of 2019 ended with a 40% shortfall of rain compared to the seasonal norm, and a 50% deficit compared to the previous winter. Water reserves were already low and this deficit became an important challenge in the vineyards for the rest of the growing season.

Towards the end of March, the first buds were seen on the Chardonnay vines in the Côte Chalonnaise, the Mâconnais and some of the earliest zones of the Côte de Beaune. It was then, right at the start of spring, that a cold weather front set in, and two serious frosts affected the vineyards (on damp ground on 5 April and on dry soils on 14 April, during a blustery period with strong northerly winds). In the Mâconnais and the Côte Chalonnaise, the damage caused was extensive. April was very rainy, particularly in the Côte d'Or.

These cold conditions prevailed right through to the start of June, and as a result flowering stretched out over a longer period than usual, with some shatter and poor fruit set, particularly in zones showing early growth. Only the last few Pinot Noir vineyards to flower, such as those of Santenay and Marsannay, did so successfully.

The second half of June saw the return of clear skies and temperatures that rose above the norm. The first heatwave arrived towards the end of the month, between the 25th and 30th of June. A second heatwave set in towards the end of July. Both June and July were dry months.

The northern vineyards in the Yonne suffered more from hydric stress than those in the south, which saw a little bit more rainfall, particularly during August, which brought a few, rather violent, storms. These were hail-free, but their passage could be traced in the damage wreaked along some of the steepest slopes.

In the Côte d'Or the rainfall was gentler, and the vines seemed to enjoy the summer weather.

Downy mildew wasn't a problem in this very dry season. Only the threat of powdery mildew made us patrol the vineyards towards the end of July to ensure that the bunches were in a healthy state for the coming harvest.

In the south of the region, in the Mâconnais, some early signs of rot were seen, but these areas dried out quickly during the dry period that set in and lasted until harvest.

The rainfall in August allowed veraison to get going early, with the grapes in perfect health. The lack of water content in the soils limited the ripening towards the end of August. The hot weather and strong winds at the start of September saw the grapes develop great levels of concentration, and we saw ripening accelerate in the Chardonnays during the first week of September.

Picking in the Côte de Beaune began on the 10th of September, both for whites and the early-ripening Pinots in Volnay, Meursault and Beaune. On the 17th we began harvesting in the Côte de Nuits. No triage was necessary, and harvest proceeded smoothly under extremely sunny skies.

In the northern Mâconnais, where yields were at their lowest, picking began around the 7th of September as the sugar levels were mounting steeply in the area.

The start of harvest in Chablis began around 15 September, amid concerns about a potential lack of juice in the press.

It's no surprise that the unusually poor fruit set in our Chardonnay bunches, combined with the lack of water in the pulp, resulted in a lack of juice flowing through the press. Yields were particularly low for whites, down by around a half on the average.

For the reds, ripeness levels were ideal, and yields were a little bit higher than they were in whites.

There is no lack of concentration in the whites, and the balance between sugar levels and acidity are very good thanks to exemplary pH levels. The management of the malolactic fermentation has been key to maintaining the balance in these wines, due largely to the high levels of malic acid present in the musts.

The lack of water made us concerned that the skins of the red grapes would not ripen thoroughly and that we would see a harshness in the tannins towards the end of the maceration period. To the contrary, what we've seen is an astonishing level of finesse and the wines from this vintage area already extremely tasting. The colours are rich and the fruit is reassuringly fresh, given the hot nature of this vintage.

FRÉDÉRIC BARNIER



— MAISON —
LOUIS JADOT

Domaine J.A. Ferret

MILLÉSIMÉ

2019

The mild conditions that prevailed throughout January and temperatures that reached more than 20°C by mid-February were the earliest hints that this was going to be an unusually challenging vintage. No one mastered nature's trials in 2019. And, unlike the prevailing conditions in 2018, water reserves at the end of winter were already low, so there was already a noticeable water deficit by the time the vegetative growth kicked off.

The somewhat scary mildness of winter was followed by a painfully cold spring. In April frost ravaged some of the budding vines at the heart of the village of Fuissé. Luckily, however, the vines planted on the slopes were spared.

As in April, the temperatures in May were below the seasonal norms. Any precocity shown by the vines as a result of winter's gentleness melted away like a snowdrift on a sunny day. By the end of May, we were looking at some 13 days of delay relative to the previous year.

At the start of June the first flowers brought great promise. The number of incipient bunches seemed almost abundant... But our hopes were dashed by poor fruit set, in Fuissé at least. Harsh winds gusted across the amphitheatre of vines, reducing some of the promised generosity, then the bunches had to survive an unprecedented early heatwave. But all was not lost. June also saw some rainfall that was more abundant than the average for the decade. This gave us a glimmer of hope.

There were no surprises in store for us in July - it's warm, dry conditions were pretty much in line with current norms. We had no need to fear the development of downy mildew this year, although powdery mildew was pretty aggressive.

Amazingly, veraison rolled out fairly homogenously around 5 August. Several rainy episodes brought us both water and hope. Towards the end of August, the bunches in the Tournant de Pouilly weighed less than 50 grams. Skins were still very hard. We waited. We waited for ripening to proceed, we waited for the skins to soften, we waited for the grapes to reveal their flavours.

Despite the quasi-Mediterranean conditions, we began picking on 10 September, scarcely earlier than in the Côte d'Or, or even Chablis.

We struggled to fill the picking bins, even though we continued to cut. The musts were both pure and concentrated, with elevated sugar levels and unexpectedly high acidity.

On 23 September, the winery doors closed on our modest harvest.

AUDREY BRACCINI