



2009 Harvest Report

Once more, the year of 2009 was dry comparatively to the average of the last 30 years, and had lesser precipitation than 2008. The quantity of water fallen was particularly low during July/September, and even lesser than 2008. Once again, average temperatures at Ervamoira reached 1930-60 values, on account of the rise of maximum temperatures, and the same phenomenon was verified as to minimum temperatures. In August and September, the same happened at Bom Retiro, with the average temperatures superior in 2°C plus to the ones of last year.

Bursting appeared at the beginning of March, two or three days earlier in comparison to usual. Flowering happened in general, in the 2nd week of May, some time earlier, being much spaced, provoking a strong coulure (shatter) in some varieties. It was a healthy year, with few or null phytosanitary treatments. Maturity went well till the beginning of the 2nd week of August, just when very high temperatures appeared, near 45 °C, that turned grapes into raisin, mainly Barroca variety. Even with a great foliage and sun protection, much better than in previous years and more abundant watering, it was not possible to keep the grapes' turgidity. It was a generalized phenomenon in the Region. The sugar levels became higher and the grapes' productions in weight and liquid decreased very much.

At Ervamoira, the production diminished about 20%, being very irregular among the varieties, all of them being in decrease. The varieties that contributed more to the production's diminution were Touriga Francesa, Tinta da Barca and Barroca. At Bons Ares, the production had a slight increase of 6%, although the previous years had been weaker than in the other quintas. At Bom Retiro, a loss of about 20 %, mainly due to Barroca, that had been left to be picked up at the end.

At Quinta de Ervamoira, the harvest of the whites began only one day earlier comparatively to 2008, but the difference provoked by the sudden high temperatures obliged us to accelerate the harvest very much in order to avoid grapes' over ripening, instead of stopping the harvest. The wines are riper and, thus, less acid than in previous years, keeping a good fruit and body. Regarding red wines, the improvement in the harvest's logistic and the investments made at Bons Ares' wine cellar, originated a quicker harvest. The extreme climatic conditions lived in 2009 provoked an important quantity diminution, high alcoholic degrees in some varieties for Port Wine and less acidity than in the 2 previous years. The perspectives during the harvest showed little optimistic as to DOC Douro wines, but the final result, in this moment, is very positive, with concentrated and balanced wines.

In high areas of the Quinta dos Bons Ares, the extreme heat didn't affect negatively the final

maturity, on the contrary, it improved due to smoother and constant temperatures, and fresh nights. The white wines at Bons Ares were harvested immediately after Ervamoira, earlier than in previous years, although with some stops for some delayed parcels of land. There were less acid white wines than in 2008 and less ripe than in 2007. 2009 was a balanced year, with very good white wine at Bons Ares. The red wines are not yet finished but they promise fresh and fruited wines, with granitic character.

In Quinta do Bom Retiro, the high temperatures provoked also the anticipation of the beginning of the harvest. The main consequences on the grapes were a loss regarding the previous year and, so, even more as to 2007. We shall have grapes for Port Wine superior categories, with good maturity and sanity, and apparently a good potential, grapes for red wines with much concentration, not being too ripe, and grapes for the other Port categories, with too high alcoholic degrees, and less acidity and freshness than in previous years.

In general terms, if 2007 was a very homogeneous, good and balanced year all over the region, 2008 was heterogeneous, abnormally fresh, with more fine and elegant wines. 2009 is characterized by a quick maturation in the low zones, compensated by the equilibrium of the high zones, and the wines are surprising us positively.