



# DELAS

## Delas Frères: The 2008 harvest, a testing vintage

It has become quite commonplace to remind everyone that the best wines are more the result of work in the vineyards than of the winemaker's talents, however impressive these may be.

And those who work in the winery and cellars have humbly gone along with that.

But 2008 has underscored the necessity for true balance and complementarity between vineyard and cellar work.

The growing season was not an easy one this year. Exceptionally high rainfall (650 mm up to the end of August) made for a lot of work in the vineyards, and imposed some limits on what we could expect. Fungal diseases that we thought were now limited to less favourable climates than the northern Rhône valley returned to our hillsides, locally causing considerable losses in crop.

This also slowed down the maturation process, and, in some parts of the DELAS FRERES estate, veraison of grapes only completed around August 20th. This was the case, for example, in plots like Combe Clos, part of **Domaine des Grands Chemins**, the firm's latest acquisition.

The first week of September will be remembered by all. A series of sudden, violent storms caused considerable damage, with very heavy rainfall (350 mm in the week). About 1500 cubic metres of soil were washed off the Hermitage hill, and numerous retaining terrace walls crumbled on our **Domaine des Tourettes**. The grapes were thoroughly washed, but luckily were not damaged as there was no hail and the berries did not burst.

The fear of more storms with heavy rain motivated some growers to harvest at minimal levels of potential alcohol.

This is where the winemaker had to step in firmly in order to calm things down and encourage the growers who bring in the grapes to wait. The fact of waiting longer for harvest, coupled with severe sorting of grapes, further reduced yields that were already low. The quantities brought in were below 25 hectolitres per hectare in our Hermitage estate **Domaine des Tourettes**, and 32 hectolitres per hectare at our **Domaines des Grands Chemins**, producing Crozes Hermitage red. Winemaking techniques can correct a certain number of deficiencies in the raw material, but there is no way of compensating for insufficient maturity.

So harvest was very late this year. The first grapes (for white Crozes Hermitage) were picked on September 17th, and the last (for Cornas, and the Saint-Pierre vineyard) went into the tanks on October 11th.

Taking such risks enabled DELAS FRERES to obtain good natural levels of alcohol, around 12.5°. This will facilitate winemaking choices and the production of wines that show good balance and remain true to their origins.

Inevitably, maturity levels reached their highest in the oldest vines of **Domaine des Tourettes**, on the part of the hillside called « Bessard ». Here our syrah grapes produced potential alcohol levels of over 13°.

Wine-making and ageing will be aimed at preserving as much fruit flavours as possible, as well as encouraging suavity in the texture of the wines. Use of oak will be even more sparing than usual.