



DE LAS

Grands Vins de la Vallée du Rhône

Delas 2012 harvest report

Viticulture for winemakers

Weather conditions experienced throughout the vine's growing cycle during 2012 severely tested both the nerves and the know-how of even the most experienced vinegrowers throughout France.

Alternating showers, heavy rains and very high temperatures caused a totally exuberant growth pattern in the vineyards, to the point where the final vine shoots were still growing until late August.

Yet it would have taken more than such conditions to reduce our determination to convert the Delas vineyards to organic farming techniques. This new approach was applied in the case of the Domaine des Grands Chemins, whose vineyards can be partially mechanised, but also on the hillside vineyards of Domaine des Tourettes.

Three vineyard plots (Sainte Epine, at Saint Joseph, le Grand «Curtil» at Crozes-Hermitage, and l'Oncle at Hermitage) are now farmed entirely according to the principles of organic viticulture. The soils were constantly tilled (with ploughs on the flatter land and with the help of winches on the steeper slopes) throughout the season. Copper sulfate and sulphur spraying, which has been around for ages, produced excellent results against fungal attacks.

Some plots in Crozes Hermitage required bud removal and bunch thinning to reduce what promised to be an over-generous crop by the Delas quality standards.

Maturity was quite slow to come, and the first pickings started on September 17th.

The upside of this slow process was the fact that all the plots were very homogenous in terms of ripeness. This meant that we were able to bring in the grapes both from our own vineyards and from our partner growers in the record time of two weeks. Only the slopes of Les Bessards and some plots in Cornas were harvested after October 5th.

The red wines from this 2012 vintage reveal the differences between terroirs and have good concentration. The tannins are rich and tightly knit, the fruit is ripe and the flavours lingering. These Syrah wines are already well defined in their flavours. The colours are exceptionally deep, particularly with the Hermitages.

Viogniers from Condrieu were picked early on (between September 17th and 25th), in order to maintain freshness of aromas. Some of the batches from Clos Boucher will probably only undergo partial malo-lactic fermentation, to preserve natural acidity and hence freshness in the wine.

We are impatient to discover all these very promising wines a few weeks into their maturing process.

In the southern part of the Rhône valley, our regular suppliers for the Côte du Rhône Saint Esprit have managed an exceptional vintage that could easily be compared to the extraordinary 2007. The only downside is that yields were very poor, as severe winter frosts killed numerous vines. Some plots are showing a loss rate of up to 40%!