



MAISON FONDÉE EN 1776

LOUIS ROEDERER

C H A M P A G N E

2015...

An extraordinary harvest registered as part of UNESCO's world heritage!

The vines and the weather

A continental year with a record for drought and heat!

After a damp and relatively hot autumn, very encouraging for refilling groundwater tables and excellent for stocking energy for the roots, winter came with very traditional temperatures and rainfall. These conditions ensured the opening of the first buds on 14th April for Chardonnay, 17th April for Pinot Noir and 19th April for Meunier, exactly 4/5 days later than average over the last 10 years.

Spring was exceptionally bright from April onwards and it lasted...until August! The summer weather seemed not to want to leave Champagne. Temperatures were higher than average but it was the lack of rain that was to enter the Champagne record books. A few days of heatwave occurred in spring and summer with, in particular, impressive temperature peaks in the first few days of June.

In these ideal conditions, flowers blossomed throughout the vines on 11th June for Chardonnay, 12th June for Pinot Noir and 15th June for Meunier. The flowers came fast and healthy. The magnificent spring with its rare and light rain managed to catch up the late start to the season; the flowering dates are a perfect match to the decade's average.

The continental summer, both dry and hot, lasted until 11th August and meant that picking began 4 days earlier than average. A few rare storms without damage passed through Champagne, bringing a welcome and refreshing change for the grass in our gardens which had suffered from the surface drought.

The 2nd half of August saw very welcome rain but uneven rainfall depending on the sectors. Between 40 and 80mm nourished the soils, ideal for effectively launching the final ripening phase. The rainy episode on 15th August was decisive for some sand and clay which was beginning to suffer gravely from the lack of water!

The Meunier sectors had the most rain and particular care was given to this grape which, we all know, often reacts badly to alternating very dry and very wet weather.

In terms of incidents, the 2015 campaign was calm. The lack of frost and continental conditions reduced the mildew to nothing. Oidium, however, enjoyed these dry conditions and reared its ugly head in many sectors, particularly but not only on the Chardonnay.

The harvest

A rare ambition... Capture the concentrated signature of a brand new vintage!

The day before the harvest we found ourselves in the same weather situation as 1976, 1989 and even 1947... Three magnificent Champagne vintages! The yields were moderate with bunches of small grapes in perfect condition with no sign of botrytis. We were very optimistic - all that remained was the harvesting decisions!

Looking through our archives, I found the 1952 harvest notes. A dry and hot year, a harvest that began on 8th September for Côte des Blancs and 10th September for the Marne Valley and the Montagne de Reims. However, this was affected by diluvian rain a few days before the harvest and during its first days. The wines were nevertheless remarkable!

Nature helped us a great deal in 2015... It was up to us to carefully select the harvest dates to capture the quintessence of this extraordinary year!

At the end of August, the alcohol content was high and acidity below average but the dry extract was immense and the skins thick... We were already hearing concerns about the acidity level which was considered low by some! In the "*galipes*", people were even talking about bringing the harvest forward to keep the acidity! But the colour of the grapes was not convincing and the skins/pips were still too plant-flavoured. The aromatic ripeness wasn't there yet. As it turned out, it was still a long way off and we had to be very patient!

Our team in the vineyard and the cellars decided unanimously to be much more ambitious: forget the "traditional" analytical parameters (acidity and sugar) and base our decision on appearance and taste. We were relying on the dry extract and significant concentration to be the signature and guardians of the 2015 vintage.

Furthermore, the hot conditions at the end of August were not really ideal for working the grapes. The weather forecast suggested a change with the new moon: a Northern front would progressively appear accompanied by a fall in temperatures of more than 10°C. Days at 20°C and nights at 10°C... The autumnal Champagne "*fridge*" weather was coming a little early but perfectly in time to press the grapes and work the juices in the best conditions.

We began by harvesting the Pinot Noir: 7th September in Cumières, 8th September in Ay and 10th September in Verzenay, Verzy and Mareuil sur Ay. The Chardonnay waited until 8th September in Avize and Oger then Chouilly, Cramant, Vertus and, finally Le Mesnil-sur-Oger! Each vineyard was harvested for around 10 days.

The first week of picking enjoyed ideal conditions and the arrival of rain showers over the last 4 days had no negative effects on the grapes.



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The day after the harvest, the analytical results were spectacular:

Natural content 10.8% alcohol
Acidity 6.8 g/l
pH 3.05
Malic acid 5.9 g/l

And not forgetting a certain vintage from 2002:

Natural content 10.7 % alcohol
Acidity 6.9 g/l
pH 3.03
Malic acid 5.8 g/l

The first tastings have only just started but are full of promise! Still immersed in the Maison Roederer archives, I can't resist copying almost word for word the notes of Louis Collet, Cellar Master, as he describes a fabulous harvest:

"Picking began on 8th September and finished on 18th. Like in 1947, it was very early and the quality of the grapes was such that no sorting was necessary.

For the vineyards at Verzenay, Verzy, Ay, Cumières, Avize, Le Mesnil-sur-Oger, Vertus and Chouilly, we can confidently say that the quality was greatly superior.

Fermentation is going well and even though it is too early to describe these wines in detail, we already know enough to say with certainty that we are creating a fantastic vintage! "

Louis Collet

This was written in September...1952!

So what will 2015 be like? A 1952 but even more concentrated? A 1947? Another 2002? This is a vintage the will certainly be a great (and good) historical emissary!

Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon

Photo report and Journey to the Heart of the 2015 Harvest at Champagne Louis Roederer:

*Follow the harvest reports and photos on Twitter throughout the picking season, in English and in French.
Follow Louis-Roederer on Twitter: @LouisRoederer_*