

DOMAINE DE VILLAINÉ

Propriétaire à Bouzeron et Rully

Bouzeron, 11 décembre 2023

After the year 2021 during which the weather was “difficult” and reluctant to let us produce what we had hoped, since the catastrophic frost, which occurred early April 2021, reduced our production between 65 and 70%, 2022 is a very different vintage, one that warms the heart and mind of vine growers.

Indeed, the vine, having produced very few grapes due to this 2021 frost, was able to make energy and nutrients reserves to use them in 2022. It is often the case, in the year following hardship, in this case the April 2021 frost, the vine is generous. Thus the significant production of grapes, experienced in 2022, was driven by “friendly” climatic conditions. Through our actions, it allowed us to magnify the terroirs while respecting nature and its cycles, not to intervene too much and to stay with simple, healthy viticulture, sensitive to the message, the said nature, had to tell us.

Autumn that followed the 2021 harvest remained quite mild and allowed us to prepare the vines to survive the winter by spraying the biodynamic preparation 500 based on horn dung. It connects the vine, which had turned towards the sunlight to ripen the grapes, to the earth, to the world below to draw from it the essential reserves for the passage of the winter.

This winter was contrasted with a colder than normal January and a very mild February. This excess in mild temperatures continued until March with a fairly cool first fortnight and a very mild second one, which stimulated the renewal of the vegetative cycle. We thus saw the very first green shoots in the first days of April, notably in the white Premiers Crus Rully.

We experienced few worrying days between 3rd and 10th April, moments during which the arrival of a descent of Scandinavian air caused 4 nights of frost. Fortunately, the vine had not yet fully started its cycle and damages were more than limited.

From mid-April, the temperatures started again to rise again and remained above seasonal norms. May became one of the hottest of the last 50 years. The vine resumed a rapid growth.

The periods of heat followed one another from the end of June up until the end of August, interspersed with storms and therefore rain which cooled the vines, people and animals down. As a result, close to half of the rainfall recorded in June fell in the shape of storms between 21st and 25th June, putting our nerves to the test!

During this period relatively unstable, where the heat peaks followed storms, the evolution of the vegetative cycle of the vine was very fast. These high temperatures combined with some rainfall between May 16th and 24th enabled flowering to start as early as mid-May and to end in such good conditions that all the berries were fertilised and already hinted the prevision of a generous harvest.

The véraison started early, a little before mid-July, then was slowed down by the high temperatures at the beginning of August. It then finished mid-August.

During the whole season, the health of the vines remained excellent: mildew pressure was moderated and the powdery mildew, present in some of the Chardonnay vineyards, was controlled by a light leaf removal and the addition of volcanic sulphur combined to whey.

Up until flowering, we treated normally with sulphur and copper, then, from the end of flowering, we moved to a more “biodynamic” sanitary protection using decoction and herbal teas of wicker, yarrow and dandelions.

We must also thank all our team at the domaine who stayed continuously mobilised to follow the pace the vine relentlessly imposed on us during the pruning, the de-budding, the tying-up, the tying-down or the hoeing. We were able to practice the viticulture that we wanted to even if the vine through its rapid growth, was demanding and required a real great effort from us to adapt to this challenge.

Considering the favourable development of the weather at the end of august, we decided to wait before starting harvesting so the grapes could be picked at full maturity and benefit the ultimate moments of freedom in the vineyards.

This extremely mild end of season weather, with beneficial rains at the right time, followed by favourable periods of heat, allowed a regular development of the sugar levels, maintenance of the total acidity and a good degradation of the malic acid, a sign of good balance between the physiological maturity of the grapes and the phenolic one of their tannins. We started the harvest on 2nd September, under radiant sunshine with the “La Fortune” vineyard in Bouzeron. The grapes that we harvested there were magnificent, ripe, requiring hardly any sorting and augured a great vintage for the rest of the harvest.

This 2022 vintage showed us how the vines were able to find resilience in the face of these increasingly frequent climatic extremes. It would certainly be necessary to support it to adapt it to the climatic challenges of tomorrow.

It confirmed to us in 2022 that it already seems to know some of the answers...If we manage to use the vine to connect in a single place and between them the energy linked to the momentum generated by the stars and the celestial bodies on one side, the world below, that of the earth on the other, we are convinced that the vine will be able to continue to reveal the personality of each terroir while resisting future climatic changes. It is a global vision of the terroir that we must have in mind, and no longer a definition linked to a single element such as the soil, the weather or the work of the man. Everything is linked and centered around our vines. It is up to us to listen to them.

We thank you in advance for the trust that you give us, please accept our warmest regards.

Pierre de Benoist