

We finished our harvest in record time

Today is our last day of harvest we have just finished picking the last grapes for our sweet, botrytis infected wines. I am under the impression that we have never finished harvest this early!

The growing season was very unusual this year. Budburst was early this spring and flowering took place at the end of May under excellent conditions, about three weeks earlier than normal. Fine weather continued until early July. From the 9th of July onwards the summer was cool and wet, with 57 millimeters of rain falling in July and 102 millimeters in August. On the 2nd and 3rd of September we had a few millimeters of drizzle, since then the weather has been sunny and hot.

The weather during the summer months meant that our vineyards had some problems with disease, in particular mildew and then rot as the grapes started to mature. We would have liked to keep the red grapes for longer on the vine so that they could develop greater intensity of flavour but we had to pick each parcel just before the grey rot spread. As we are using bio-dynamic methods, no anti-rot treatments and sprays are able to be used we managed to get our grapes to maturity – even in this difficult year.

The dates below show the difference in harvest dates between 2011 and 2010.

	2010	2011
Start picking grapes for dry whites	8 th September	29 th August
Start picking grapes for reds	17 th September	6 th September
First picking of grapes for sweet white	15 th October	21 st September
Last picking of red grapes	19 th October	26 th September
Last picking of sweet white grapes	19 th November	5 th October

Picking started on 29th of August with Sauvignon Blanc and Sauvignon Gris. The sugar levels were quite high with potential alcohol levels between 12,5 – 13,5 %. We seem to have the same problem as in the previous years in that the sugar levels are high but actual physiological ripeness, or aromas and flavours, in the grapes are not at the levels we would have liked.

The grapes for wines under our Chateau Carsin labels are picked by hand. Some of our vineyards are not producing grapes of sufficient quality to be labeled as Chateau Carsin and so the grapes are picked by machine and the wines are to be sold in bulk. Some of these vineyards, which are situated some distance from our cellar we are trying to sell. Machine harvesting was also used to pick parcels of red used to make our rosé and for several other parcels of red grapes so that our hand-picking team was not overloaded with work as we needed to get the grapes in fast.

The first red fermenters (merlot) have already been pressed. This year we do not plan to keep any of the red grapes macerating for a long time on skins after the alcoholic fermentation. We are quite optimistic about the final results: whites will be fine and elegant with quite complex aromas. For the reds we are confident that we can make Cuvee Noire or Cuvee 2011, although a large part of this year's reds will either be Carsin rouge or "Terroir de Carsin".

Our first picking of botrytis infected grapes for sweet wine had very high sugar levels: 445 grams per liter. This juice went into oaks barrels for fermentation and we are eager to see the results. Normally in Sauternes an ideal sugar level would give a potential alcohol percent of 21 but with this first picking the sugars were 27!

The quality of the wines produced is just one important factor to note about this year's harvest but I would like to finish commenting on the quantity we produced.

Out of 21 hectares we expect to make about

- 42.000 liters of white wine
- 37.000 liters of red wine
- 7.000 liters of rose and
- 2.500 liters of sweet wine

All in all almost 90.000 liters or 42 hectoliers per hectare.

Juha Berglund

5th October 2011 at Ch. Carsin