

Pomerol, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2018

**AB** After spending weeks in spring waiting for the rain to stop, you had to wait most of the summer for it to come back. You eventually got some at the beginning of September. Was it enough for your vines. They must have been getting seriously thirsty?



**Guillaume Thienpont** We got enough to reinvigorate them, but we could have done with more.

**AB** Was the drought starting to affect the amount of juice in the grapes?

**Guillaume Thienpont** In some of the Merlot, yes, particularly the young vines.

**AB** When did you start the harvest?

**Guillaume Thienpont** September 19<sup>th</sup>.

**AB** Which was in line with your forecasts after the veraison, wasn't it?

**Guillaume Thienpont** That's right, 19/20 September.

**AB** How has the ripening process gone?

**Guillaume Thienpont** The sugar ripening has gone quickly, but the tannin ripening has been a bit delayed. It's one of the realities of dry years, which we seem to be getting more and more lately.

**AB** In the recent past, you've decided to wait until those tannins were perfectly extractable. How extractable have they been this year?

**Guillaume Thienpont** The particularity of this vintage is that there are a lot of tannins in the pips.

**AB** ...which producers all around Bordeaux are saying are really ripe. That's good news isn't it?

**Guillaume Thienpont** That's right. But we nevertheless have to focus on the skin tannins, and make sure they are ripe, too.

**AB** Presumably, with all your Merlot now in, the parameters in those grapes were in good balance?

**Guillaume Thienpont** Yes, they were. Apart from odd vines that suffered from the drought (which we'll keep apart) all the Merlot is in vats. We're focussing now on the Cabernets.

**AB** To what extent have these dry conditions affected the size of your 2018 crop?

**Guillaume Thienpont** The potential crop size was big, and we needed to do some green harvesting, but with the drought and the small size and weight of the berries, we're expecting a lower than usual yield this year.

**AB** What impact have these conditions made on the profile of the juices you've tasted?

**Guillaume Thienpont** The weather has been dry but not really very hot compared with some more extreme years. The nights have been cool, and the sunlight has been very bright without the temperatures being excessively high. The result is that the juices we now have in the vat-room are very dense and dark in colour, and they have tremendous fresh fruit aromatics. The results so far are impressive.

**AB** Given the prolonged drought and the small, light berries, this profile must have come as a surprise to you? You might have expected a more "sunny" character...

**Guillaume Thienpont** You can never be sure why, but I think the explanation is the low night temperatures throughout summer and early autumn.

**AB** If your Cabernets confirm this potential freshness and structure in the 2018, could this vintage bear similarities with 2016? Some producers in Bordeaux are already suggesting this...

**Guillaume Thienpont** Well, there's no doubt that the vine cycle was similar. However, there was a difference and an important one, and that was that when the rain finally came it was earlier and more abundant in 2016. It enabled some growths to make sensational wines.

**AB** Perhaps 2005 was a more comparable year?

**Guillaume Thienpont** I believe so, yes. 2005 also had a prolonged period of drought like 2018.

**AB** Has that drought influenced the Cabernet Franc in any way?

**Guillaume Thienpont** Importantly, the Cabernet Franc in 2018 is unaffected by the drought. The vines are also perfectly healthy, and the berries are a good size. We can therefore be patient and wait for the skins to soften.

**AB** They're still a bit too hard for your liking?

**Guillaume Thienpont** They need to start to "mature" a bit. They're almost too fresh! Rain is forecast for this weekend and should kick-start that process, and then the tannins will be even more extractible.

**AB** You don't often hear producers complain about their grapes being too fresh!

**Guillaume Thienpont** I'm not really complaining. They just look a bit too "new" to pick now. So we'll wait patiently for perfect skin ripeness.

**AB** The very healthy condition of the crop in 2018 has meant that you haven't had to contend with botrytis or to gamble with the elements...

**Guillaume Thienpont** Actually, I've never seen the sorting tables looking so clean! The fruit is so fresh and compact.

**AB** Nothing jammy or over-ripe then.

**Guillaume Thienpont** No way.