

Pomerol, 3rd October 2018

AB After the stress of the rainy spring, you badly needed this long hot summer of 2018.

Marielle Cazaux Yes, it was like our prayers were answered!

AB It would have been nice to have had a bit more rain in August, wouldn't it?

Marielle Cazaux That wasn't so important. We had a tiny blockage on the young vines. Those under 10 years old. But as far as La Conseillante is concerned, we haven't had any problems from the drought. The core of the vineyard wasn't affected, despite having only 28mm in the whole of September, 18mm of which fell around the 9th/10th.



AB And those young vines? Did they turn out OK?

Marielle Cazaux We knew we were in for some rain on the 9th/10th, so we spiked the soils in the rows of those young vines, to allow the soils to absorb water better. And after three or four days they responded very well. Even had it not rained at all, the spiking alone was good for them. It always is in dry conditions. And then that bit of rain made it even better.

AB So in the rest of the vineyard, in the older vines, the ripening went smoothly?

Marielle Cazaux Yes it did. I've never known the vines to shut down at La Conseillante. It was the same scenario in 2016. The little bit of rain in September this year did a lot of good. It boosted the ripening and swelled the berries a bit, which was a good thing because, with the dry sunny weather that followed, the berries re-concentrated a bit. The rain enhanced the ripening without any doubt.

AB There have been reports of thick skins...

Marielle Cazaux It's true, but in general they've softened up now, and I'm sure the rain had a helping hand in that too.

AB How are the sugar/acidity balances?

Marielle Cazaux Very good. The alternating warm days and cool nights have been very beneficial in that respect. The average night temperature in September was 11°C, while the average daytime high was 28°C. This has preserved good acidities while the sugar has been going up. And the skins have developed rich polyphenols.

AB Are those tannins nicely extractible?

Marielle Cazaux Very much so, and the pips are amazingly ripe. Very “toasted hazelnuts”.

AB Are alcoholic degrees reasonable?

Marielle Cazaux I haven't picked all the Cabernet Franc yet, but so far we have an average of around 14° alcohol, with the Merlot a bit higher and the Cabernet Franc a bit lower.

AB How about the acidities?

Marielle Cazaux The pHs are about 3.65. Everything is nicely in balance, and the great thing is we haven't needed to rush, because the weather has been perfect.

AB When did you begin the harvest?

Marielle Cazaux On the Pomerol plateau we started on September 19th. And we finished it on the 21st. Then we did the part close to Cheval Blanc on the 27th, and the last Merlot was brought in on 1st October. We'll do the Cabernet Franc on 4th October.

AB That's quite a narrow gap, 3 days, between the last Merlot and the first Cabernet...

Marielle Cazaux That's because that Merlot is on cool soil and the Cabernet Franc is planted on warm terroir.

AB Is the Cabernet of the same high level of quality as the Merlot?

Marielle Cazaux Absolutely. It's a dream. And everything is still in perfect health.

AB 2018 is clearly a high quality vintage, but what style of vintage will it be? Will it reflect the wet spring or the warm dry and sunny summer?

Marielle Cazaux **The sunshine will have a great impact for sure, but I wouldn't describe 2018 as "solaire", as we say in Bordeaux. "Solaire" years are very ripe with high pHs. 2018 is not like that. It's not like 2009, for example. When the pHs are as low as they are in 2018, I wouldn't put the vintage into that category.**

AB **Which vintage would you compare it with?**

Marielle Cazaux **It reminds me of 2016. We had a very similar vine cycle with the very wet spring, plenty of water reserves and high crop size potential. Then there was the threat of downy mildew, although that was much less severe than this year. Then we had the same sunny weather with drought conditions setting in before some rain to freshen up the crop.**

AB **Do you think that the wines themselves are similar?**

Marielle Cazaux **Both of them are great vintages with lovely balances. And the grapes in 2018 are just as aromatic as in 2016. When you walk through the vat-room it's bursting with aromas of blackcurrant and especially of cherries. There are definite similarities.**

AB **How are you going about vinifying this 2018?**

Marielle Cazaux **Making sure I don't over-extract. This is really important this year. I'm taking a step back and letting it vinify itself.**

AB **Hasn't that been the tendency in Bordeaux of late, anyway?**

Marielle Cazaux **Yes, but even more so in 2018.**

AB **Yields are a bit down in most properties. Is it the same story at La Conseillante?**

Marielle Cazaux **We expect around 35hl/ha, lower than the more usual 38hl/ha. This was of course partly due to the drought, but in fact the main culprit was poor fruit-setting in the old Merlot.**

AB **So in conclusion, would you say that this 2018 vintage is neither "solaire" like the 2009 nor perhaps massive like the 2010, but a nice balance between the two –something like the 2016?**

Marielle Cazaux **Somebody very reliable has actually told me that there is another vintage that is even closer in terms of growing season to the 2018. In fact it's identical...and that is the 1947!**

