

Ribera del Duero, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2018

**AB** Given your experience of producing wine in a dry, sunny wine region like Ribera del Duero, do you think that this 2018 vintage in Bordeaux is showing characteristics of a warm, very dry and sunny year, or as it's called by French winemakers: *une année solaire*?



**Peter Sisseck** No, I don't really, not at Rocheyron at least. It's certainly well-ripened, malic acid is low, and alcoholic degrees are on the high side, but that's relatively normal nowadays. Having tasted the vats at Rocheyron I'd say that the 2018 is fresh-tasting. The pHs are good. There are really no problems of low acidity, which is something you might expect in a "sunny" year.

**AB** Growers are reporting lots of tannins. Is that the case at Rocheyron, too?

**Peter Sisseck** Yes, it's a tannin-rich vintage and those tannins have very good extractability. The balances are good. At this stage, I'd say that this vintage is more than promising.

**AB** With these parameters, could you make comparisons with the profile of the 2016?

**Peter Sisseck** Yes, I think I could. Comparing all the data, it does bear similarities with the 2016. However, for us at Rocheyron, I think that in terms of quality, it might be even better than 2016. Who knows? In Bordeaux it could prove to be a legendary year. But it's still early days...

**AB** The disappointment for some growers is the relatively low yield. Some vines were affected by downy mildew, others by millerandage, and most by concentration of the juices due to the prolonged drought. How was your yield?

**Peter Sisseck** It was a bit lower. That has nothing to do with disease, I might add. We had zero losses on that score. However the impact of the drought brought us down to 23 hl/ha.

**AB** For Bordeaux, that's low, isn't it?

**Peter Sisseck** Yes, but not much lower than our target, which is between 25 and 30 hl/ha. Given the lack of rain over the previous 2 months, we'd expected that.

**AB** You often pick earlier these days in Ribera del Duero but not so early at Rocheyron. When did you do the harvest?

**Peter Sisseck**                    **September 24, 25 and 26 for the Merlot and 3rd October for the Cabernet Franc.**

**AB**        **If at Rocheyron 2018 proves to be better than 2016, it's going to be your best-ever vintage there, isn't it?**

**Peter Sisseck**                    **Compared to the great established growths of Bordeaux, Rocheyron is still a work in progress, so it's quite normal that we're getting better and better. The vineyard is really taking shape now with better balances. It's organic as you know, and I'm really proud of what the team has achieved there. We had no problems with downy mildew in 2018. That was a mammoth achievement by the team.**

**AB**        **And the results are encouraging...**

**Peter Sisseck**                    **Already 2017 was better than 2015, and I'm optimistic that 2018 will be better than 2016.**

**AB**        **Turning to Ribera del Duero, have you once again been among the first producers to harvest?**

**Peter Sisseck**                    **As I'm sure you've seen, driving in your car today, many vineyards haven't been picked yet. And I know for a fact that some producers haven't even started yet.**

**AB**        **And you're finishing?**

**Peter Sisseck**                    **We finished Pingus yesterday. We began on the 27<sup>th</sup> September.**

**AB**        **How is the quality of the Pingus crop?**

**Peter Sisseck**                    **At Pingus we had a homogeneously ripe harvest. That result required a good deal of hard work in the vineyard throughout the whole of the season. And even after that we cherry-picked during the harvesting.**

**AB**        **And in Ribera in general, what was the result if that hard work hadn't been put in?**

**Peter Sisseck**                    **There's been a lot of unevenness in the ripening across Ribera. Producers need to select and sort; otherwise they'll end up making wines from only 30% perfectly ripe grapes**

with the rest being over-ripe. It's a funny year in that respect, and with the Council allowing 10% extra yields, the situation hasn't been helped, as far as quality is concerned.

**AB** What has been the impact of the weather conditions in Ribera in general?

**Peter Sisseck** The rainy spring was very welcome. It filled up the water reserves and was a great relief. We then had a long, dry summer, which has kept the vines in perfect health. There was excellent potential for quality.

**AB** Depending on yields, evenness of ripening and picking dates...

**Peter Sisseck** The picking dates are very important to me, but more than anything it comes down to the style of wine you want to make, even though I realise that for some growers it's not always easy to pick exactly when they want. The Pingus vats are bursting with wonderful fresh fruit character, and that's what I'm looking for in my wines. And then there's the extraction of tannins. We're very careful. This year we have the prettiest fine-grained tannins I've probably ever seen in Ribera, and with the low pHs there's great freshness, which this year comes from early harvesting.

**AB** At Pingus you're able to work in a more "haute-couture" way. However, for the production of your PSI it's not quite so easy to apply the same precision and rigour, I imagine. How did you deal with the problems of unevenness this year?

**Peter Sisseck** It's true that with PSI, with a production of 450,000 kg today (our largest harvest so far), unevenness of ripeness in the crops is sometimes to be expected. For the last three years we've been using a high-performing automatic sorting table that selects the berries according to density. And in fact, this year the machine rejected over 10% of the fruit. That's a much higher figure than the previous years and shows just how important it is to sort and select carefully in 2018.

**AB** And the results so far?

**Peter Sisseck** We've got nicely evenly ripe PSI in 2018, which we've also vinified with gentle extractions. The tannins are abundant and fine, alcohol is 14°, and it's looking like a very good vintage.