

Pomerol, 3rd October 2018

AB What a turnaround after that rainy spring! The weather's been practically perfect since the beginning of July. Can you believe it?

Vincent Priou In actual fact, it wasn't till the second week of July, around the 10th, that it really improved, and since then it's been glorious sunshine with just a bit of welcome rain at the beginning of September to freshen up the vines.



AB That rain didn't fall everywhere. Apparently there was more in Saint-Emilion than in Pomerol...

Vincent Priou At Beauregard we had 25mm around the 9^h and 10th September. It did a lot of good to the vines, especially the Cabernet Franc.

AB How do you see this 2018 vintage? What profile will it have? One of sunshine with opulence or one of rain with Atlantic classicism?

Vincent Priou A mixture of the two, I'd say. When you look at the weather conditions since the long dry sunny period set in, it would appear to be a "sunny" vintage; but the fact that there were lots of water reserves in the soil, the vines had hardly any water stress in 2018 until late August, which meant acidities remained high and the aromatics were very expressive. And the impression is a vintage with good freshness but also body and tannins.

AB More 2016 than 2015?

Vincent Priou Somewhere in between maybe. We'll see. It's still a bit early to say. I think the plentiful water reserves played a part and also the 25mm of rain in September, which preserved those good acidities.

AB And the summer never got excessively hot...

Vincent Priou That's right, and importantly, the summer nights were generally quite cool.

AB It just goes to show that you can never predict a vintage until the grapes are in the vat.

Vincent Priou **And there's that old saying, "août fait le moût" –August makes the must. In July we could never have imagined just how good this vintage would be. It really came down to the record amount of sunlight which brought about the high quality of anthocyanins and tannins.**

AB **And then of course it's down to the winemaker to choose the right picking dates and the best way to vinify this raw material. What choices have you made?**

Vincent Priou **One of the challenges of the winemaker is to find a balance between sugar ripeness and tannin ripeness in the grapes. The gap in timing between the two has tended to widen over recent years.**

AB **Years ago, winemakers were solely focussed on sugar ripeness, weren't they?**

Vincent Priou **Back then, we would have harvested two weeks earlier. But those days are long gone. Over the last 30 years, we've paid much more attention to tannin ripeness.**

AB **With perhaps the risk of overlooking the acidities...**

Vincent Priou **Well, the amazing thing about 2018, is that while we waited for the tannins to ripen, the pHs held their level.**

AB **What are your pHs in the lots you've harvested so far?**

Vincent Priou **3.50 to 3.60 after alcoholic fermentation. Then there's very little malic acid, so once the wines have completed their malo, I'll have pHs of 3.70, which is brilliant.**

AB **The disappointing thing this year is the volume. The dry weather has caused the berries to lose some of their juice. Is it the case at Beauregard?**

Vincent Priou **Yes, it was on the cards. The berries are also smaller and lighter.**

AB **How small will the production be this year?**

Vincent Priou **Smaller than 2016 but higher than 2015. It's too early to say because we have to see what proportions of wine are run off the skins, but we're hoping for an overall yield of 35hl/ha.**

AB **And what is your wine-making philosophy for this vintage?**

Vincent Priou The pips are very ripe and the skins a bit tough, but the tannins this year are easily extractable. And the colour has come very easily. I'm vinifying with gentle extractions, some pigeage and at temperatures a bit lower than usual, around 26 to 28°C.

AB With these balances, the 2018 already promises to be a long-ageing wine. Is that how you see it?

Vincent Priou Yes, particularly with these great acidities. And with the lovely ripe tannins and the high quality fruit character, which reminds me of the 1998 vintage in Pomerol. The vat-room is full of aromas of blackberry, cherry and strawberry. I'm confident that 2018 will be a really great vintage.

AB Turning to Sauternes, did Bastor Lamontagne get any of that early September rain? It would have been good for botrytis...

Vincent Priou Hardly a drop, I'm sad to say. We started the picking this morning with the Sauvignon Gris and then this afternoon the Sauvignon Blanc. There's high concentration in both, with good sugar and acidity and perfumed aromas. However, there's not a trace of botrytis. There's nothing dramatic about that. There's still plenty of time for rain. And it's not a problem for Sauvignon, because what we are looking for in this variety is aromatics and acidity. The great thing is high concentration. That bodes very well. We'll see what happens and if the weatherman is right about the rain we are supposed to get this weekend.