

Figeac, 13th January 2019

AB At harvest-time, you were comparing the potential quality of the 2018 vintage with that of 2016. Now that the malos have finished, do you still see the quality of your 2018 in the same way?

Frédéric Faye Clearly now we have a more definite impression. And surprise, surprise, I'd say that that this 2018 vintage has gone beyond what we expected.

AB Even better than the 2016?

Frédéric Faye 2016 was superlative. But you know as a wine estate we've really gained in precision, and those fine margins are making a difference. It's very evident in this 2018 vintage.



AB And the new cellars are not even finished yet!

Frédéric Faye Yes, as you can imagine, we're expecting to perform with even greater precision in the future.

AB How will 2018 differ from 2016 at Figeac?

Frédéric Faye It has aspects of the 2016 but with more opulence and generosity. 2018 is a 2016 with some of the characteristics of the 2015 and 2009.

AB What aspects of the 2016 are there in the 2018?

Frédéric Faye Mainly the aromatic freshness and the tannic structure.

AB Have all the malos finished?

Frédéric Faye Yes, the lots are ageing in barrel, and we're already turning our thoughts to the blend possibilities.

AB What can you now tell us about the 3 grape varieties in 2018?

Frédéric Faye The Cabernet Sauvignon is superb. We were 15% down in volume because of the effects of evaporation from the drought, but the berries were sheer caviar. The dry autumn winds were great for the completion of the ripening but lowered the quantity of juice. The quality of the Cabernet Sauvignon however is outstanding. I don't think we've ever had such terrific quality in this variety.

AB Earlier in the vine cycle you had a few concerns about the development of the Cabernet Franc and then in October you predicted a great Cabernet Franc year. What's the latest?

Frédéric Faye The Cabernet Franc turned out fantastic. What's very interesting in the 2018 is that after performing some blending trials we've discovered a wonderful potential synergy between the three varieties, and the Cabernet Franc will really bring something to the table.

AB What about the Merlot? Is it on a par with the other two?

Frédéric Faye The Merlot is really excellent, but that's not such a surprise. The revelation is the contribution of the two Cabernets with their stunning aromatic freshness.

AB Is it possible to say this year that one variety is superior to another?

Frédéric Faye You can find batches that you might think aren't of the same high quality level as the others, but the beauty is that when you blend these the result is superior to the sum of the individual parts. That's the magic of blending. In 2018, the presence of the Cabernets at Figeac will make a terrific contribution to the freshness and balance of the blend. But as I said, the 2018 also has opulence and generosity.

AB Will it be superior to 2016.

Frédéric Faye It's too early to say at this stage.

AB Aside from the precision work in your vineyards and cellars, what made 2018 such a good vintage?

Frédéric Faye I think that our soils played a huge part in the success. We're not on clay-limestone at Figeac. With our gravelly soils, the drought caused a slow ripening, which made the vines delve deep down in the subsoil to get moisture. Often in these particular conditions, Figeac gets great concentration of fresh fruit aromatics.

AB How is the vintage showing right now? Is it easy to taste?

Frédéric Faye January is usually a terrible time to taste the new wine –it's often closed and inaccessible. Amazingly, it's expressive and really easy to taste. That's a sure sign of a great vintage.

AB What was your strategy for vinifying this vintage?

Frédéric Faye Like other properties today, Figeac wants to make vintages that are elegant when young and also have great ageing potential. We managed the extractions with great care and gentleness to make sure the wine's freshness and elegance were preserved. The grapes were so good that you didn't need to force anything.

AB The wine made itself!

Frédéric Faye Or put another way, the wine was made in the vineyard. There is a great Thierry Manoncourt legacy at Figeac. A part of this is to keep the vines and grapes (as well as the personnel) as stress-free as possible, whatever the vintage.

AB In great years like 2018, isn't it a temptation to put all the production into the First Wine?

Frédéric Faye The whole production is top quality, but Petit Figeac is a brand in its own right, and we intend to keep it on the market each year. The proportions can change, but it's too early to know that in detail at this stage.

AB Whether you're a fan of early-drinking, sexy wines or classic, balanced, long ageing-wines, there's something for everybody in your 2018. Is that how you'd describe this vintage?

Frédéric Faye Although deep down, I feel it's a pity to already be drinking young Figeac vintages like the 2015, as we saw on social media at Christmas, it's great that Figeac can be elegant and even sexy in its youth and still be capable of ageing for decades. That's what we are endeavouring to achieve at Figeac today. And we've succeeded in the 2018 vintage.