



Domaine de Reuilly

2021 HARVEST AT DOMAINE DE REUILLY

There are no vintages which are alike since there are so many parameters which affect a vintage every year, that is well recognized by everyone. For sure the 2021 Millesime follows that rule; After two years which had been heavily impacted by the drought, the main characteristics of this year 2021 have been a severe frost in early spring and a lot of rain and low temperatures afterwards.

The winter has been relatively mild with a limited number of frost days and a normal level of rain, and the first buds came out in the last week of march.

Then arrived the very risky month of April and in the nights of the 6th and the 7th almost the entire French vineyard was hit by a terrible frost wave; In Reuilly we had temperatures as low as -6.5°C at the bottom of the hills. The damages were important but difficult to evaluate at the time since all the buds had not come out yet. Unfortunately we suffered an other frost episode on the night of May 2nd; The temperatures at -2.5°C were not as low as the first time but on that night there was a lot of moistness and since all the buds and the first leaves had appeared by that time, this 2nd frost caused even more damages than the first one.

Altogether, now that we have precisely the yields of the 2021 harvest, we can say that the losses related to the frost are close to 40% overall, and a little more than this level for both Pinots noirs and Pinots Gris.

Beside this frost impact, it is also the very high level of rain that we had in late spring and summer which has been a key characteristic of this vintage. We had 33 inches of rain between April 1st and September 1st (to be compared with an average yearly level of 52 inches in Reuilly) of which 14 inches for the period between June 15th and July 15th alone, in the middle of the vegetative season, which is extremely unfrequent. Actually we had very few consecutive days without rain during this period, which implied the need of a very strict vigilance for many weeks since obviously there was a permanent high risk of mildew. And when one does grow his vineyard organically and biodynamically as we do on the 50 acres of the Domaine, it is fully mandatory to anticipate all the time and react as quickly as possible to the climate conditions.

During this period our vineyard manager and our two persons driving tractors worked relentlessly, working the soil, weeding, spraying biodynamic potions 500P and 501P with nettle soup, valerian, presle, yarrow infusions. At the peak of the mildew period, we were also adding seaweeds and orange peels which both have drying effects on the vegetation.

After two years (2019 and 2020) which had been relatively easy in terms of sanitary situation follow up, 2021 was for sure a very tough one for all growers and more specifically for the organic growers. It was a real relief when the veraison started in the first week of August, since the potential risk for the vines (except for heat waves and hail) are much lower after that.

The harvest started on Friday September 17th, a date pretty normal when to start, but it seemed late compared to the average of the preceding years.

The climate conditions were excellent during this period, with chilly temperatures, very often below 10°C in the morning and rarely above 20°C in the middle of the afternoon.

There were some scattered showers during this period but nothing serious and we had completed harvesting when heavy rains fell at the beginning of October.

The decision of the date when to harvest each lot is always critical (specially when one has single vineyard cuvees). The ripeness of the grapes is obviously key, but their taste, the sanitary conditions of the lot, the weather forecast of the following days are also important elements to take into consideration. This year there were significative discrepancies of ripeness according to the soil characteristics of each parcel and the phenolic maturity was frequently more advanced than the technological maturity with sugar contents lower than the preceding years. We really think that we made the right decisions for the harvesting dates of each lot for the three grape varieties.



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The Pinots Gris were harvested first, on September 17th. This varietal is always the one which ripens the earliest among the three of the Reuilly appellation. Furthermore, this year, since the yields were specially low (which speeds up the concentration of sugar in the grapes) and since this grape varietal is very sensitive to botytris which can lead very quickly to sanitary problems, there was no reason to wait any longer to harvest.

The four lots of Chatillons (2), Conges, Pierres Plates which were harvested, had levels of natural sugar equivalent to an alcohol content in between 12.4 and 12.8 degrees and levels of total acidity close to 4gr/liter. The cuvees are well balanced and the juices still in the alcoholic fermentation process let appear aromas of white peach, pear, passion fruit. There is no doubt that the first bottlings next February will confirm the good balance and seducing taste of this Pinot Gris 2021.

The Pinots Noirs were harvested right after, starting September 21st. On the vines which had been hit by the frost the grapes were healthy and pretty big with an average weight of 130 grams, the skins were slim and the juice was coming out easily. The alcohol content of the various tanks is between 12.3 and 12.9 °C and the Ph around 3.4 which is the level of acidity that we like to have for this varietal.

After several days of cold soak at very low temperature (5°C), the alcoholic fermentations have started and progress without interruption, thanks to the good job of the indigenous yeasts fully acting.

At this stage of the fermentation it is still difficult to identify which of the red fruits aromas will be dominant, but we already know that the wines of this vintage will have less tannins and less colour than those of the two preceding solar vintages. For this reason, and also because we have a limited quantity of juice, we have decided that this year we would not have the usual cuvee of red Les Chênes that we traditionally age in the barrels made out of trees of the family forest.

The Sauvignons were harvested at last until the first week of October, also in very good climate conditions, just before few days of heavy rains, and the grapes were still very healthy. It was wise to let these grapes ripen a little longer to favor a decrease of malic acid which was higher this year since we did not have very high temperatures during the summer.

All the different lots of Sauvignon were harvested with an alcohol content between 12.2 and 13.1 degree and the total acidity levels are in between 3.9 and 4.5 gr/liter.

The characteristic aromas of citrus and white flowers are well present and the single vineyard cuvees all have their specific identity and character, provided by the Kimmeridgian soil of the Domaine so rich in limestone and fossils of the middle Jurassic period.

We have already selected and put in barrels the tank which, after a malolactic fermentation and an ageing of one year in barrel, will be bottled as the cuvee Les Chênes blancs 2021.

Overall we are very confident as far as the quality of this vintage 2021 is concerned. The wines will have more freshness and less alcohol content than those of the two preceding millesimes, which is a good thing since this is what is expected by the consumer when drinking a Loire Valley wine. Of course we would have liked to have a more plentiful harvest but at the time we write this note, we have a special thought for all our colleagues and friends within France, who have had almost no crop to harvest this year, a year 2021 terribly difficult.