



2016 Harvests in the Loire Valley End on a high note

New York, NY, December 6th, 2016 - Ideal weather conditions at the end of harvest season put a smile back on the faces of the Loire winegrowers, who had to deal with a complex array of weather patterns throughout the year. But this vintage is set to be flavorsome and fruit-driven, with good balance and ample availability to supply market needs. See below for a description of each grape's harvests.

- **MELON DE BOURGOGNE – fresh and full of flavor**

Harvesting for **Muscadet** started on September 15th. Vines were badly affected by both frost and hydric stress; however, September's perfect weather conditions ensured perfectly healthy and high-quality grapes. Initial tastings indicate a concentrated, flavorsome, fresh wines. The **Melon de Bourgogne** grapes show excellent balance, leading us to expect wines similar to those of 2009 and 2010 – very fruit-forward, with good texture and mouthfeel. In terms of volume, the ODG has revisited the estimates to the better, with a prediction of 180,000 hl.

- **SAUVIGNON - concentrated grapes and good aromatic expression**

In Loir-et-Cher, the **Sauvignons** are concentrated and show excellent aromatic expression. Good grape health combined with harvest weather conditions (sun, rain and wind each taking turns center stage) have led to a juice yield often 10-15% higher than initially predicted. The aromatic profile of the musts focuses primarily on citrus and tropical fruit, reflecting Sauvignon's thiol-based typicity. In the **Touraine AOP**, the Loir-et-Cher area is showing good yields; the Indre-et-Loire area slightly less so. The ODG forecasts 160,000 hl, a fall of 30% on 2015 levels.

- **CHENIN, DRY AND SWEET - a noteworthy success**

All agree that the high quality of this vintage needs to be emphasized. Apart from parcels affected by frost, this year's Chenin harvests have given us both quality and quantity - thanks in no small part to the Indian summer which helped the grapes achieve peak ripeness. Colors and aromas are looking particularly attractive. In **Anjou**, the fall in volume for whites could be as much as 20-30% compared to 2015, while in Touraine yields are variable, depending on the amount of frost damage suffered. Falls in harvest volumes in the **Vouvray appellation** (100,000 hl) are set to be around the 15% mark (as compared to 2015).

- **LOIRE SPARKLERS – Well-balanced base wines**

Chardonnay and Chenin - September's excellent weather meant that growers were in no hurry to harvest, and were able to wait for grapes to reach peak ripeness before starting off their base wines. In **Anjou**, juice yields at pressing have been very high, in some cases partially offsetting low per-hectare yields. Base wines are fresh and well-balanced, showing notes of citrus. A fall of 5% in harvest volume compared with 2015 is predicted for **Crémant-de-Loire** and **Saumur sparkling wines**.

- **CABERNET FRANC - elegantly distinctive**

The end of the season brought weather we had never even dreamed of, taking grapes to peak levels of ripeness for the Loire Valley and giving a high quality harvest. Tastings of the first juices confirm good extraction with supple fruit and a touch of elegance. Harvests in **Chinon** are down by some 50% (50,000 hl), while in the Saumur and Anjou areas - which were spared the worst of the weather - the fall will be around 15%. Good news too for **Saint-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil**, where the drop in volume is no more than 15-20% (50,000 hl).

Harvests for **Cabernet-d'Anjou** are also looking good - around the 300,000 hl mark (a drop of 10% compared to 2015).

- **GAMAY - excellent ripeness**

To the east of **Touraine**, the **Gamay** grapes ripened well in the warm September sun. The fruit is beautifully fresh and shows a lovely fuchsia-purple color. While the wines are set to be a great success, general enthusiasm is tempered by the fact that this year's harvest levels may only equal half of the normal harvest.

- **GROLLEAU - focusing on fruit**

The Grolleau juices have reached fermentation stage without encountering any particular problems. Focus is on highlighting the fruity flavors using a process of *débourbage*. **Rosé-d'Anjou** and **Rosé-de-Loire** are predicted to fall by 10% (160,000 hl) in comparison to last year's figures.

- **CENTRE-LOIRE AREA – on the quality**

In Centre-Loire too, 2016 has been somewhat patchy; but for growers who managed to escape the worst of the frosts, the year is set to end on a high. Weather-wise, the vintage is relatively simple to explain:

- On April 26th, the vineyards of Menetou-Salon and Coteaux du Giennois - and to a lesser extent Pouilly-Fumé, Quincy, Reuilly and some Sancerre villages - were severely affected by an outbreak of frost.
- Persistent rainfall throughout May and June put growers on constant alert in an effort to prevent and combat mildew and oidium.
- Then the rain stopped. July to mid-September brought a full two and a half months of dry weather, with extreme heat in the second half of August.

A day of rain in mid-September ensured ripening was back on track. Some harvests could start towards the end of September, while the bulk waited until the beginning of October. Cool nights and sunny days provided ideal harvesting conditions, and growers were able to wait until the grapes, both white and red, reached optimal ripeness.

But quantities have varied enormously from appellation to appellation. Sancerre and Châteaumeillant in particular have been very fortunate, according to Gilles Guillerault, President of the Syndicat de Sancerre. Pouilly-Fumé, Quincy and Reuilly all report low volumes, but the average figures given mask differences between the various domains. Menetou-Salon and Coteaux du Giennois are the areas worst affected by frosts; growers had to take measures to protect their vines, and hand-pick the surviving grapes to end the year on a high note.

Nevertheless, **there are no concerns of the wines' quality**. White wines are expected to mirror the style of 2015, well balanced with appealing aromas. Even better, with excellent grapes, excellent colors, fine tannins and good balance, 2016 is set to see a significant rise in the quality of Centre Loire reds. **To sum up, the 2016 vintage in Centre Loire may be small in places - but it is perfectly formed.**

About Loire Valley Wines

The Loire Valley, referred as the Garden of France is known for its magnificent chateaux, rich history and runs at the heart of France with 5 distinct wine regions - Pays Nantais, Anjou, Saumur, Touraine, Centre-Loire – each with its own characteristics of grapes, appellations and styles. The wine-growing regions dotting the Loire's banks feature no less than 4,000 wineries, 170,000 acres of vineyards and 61 appellations of origin, thus making the Loire Valley the third largest French wine making region. Producing 380 million bottles per year – be they red, rosé or white; still or sparkling; dry or semi-dry, supple or sweet – the Loire Valley is also France's leading producer of white wines and ranks second for rosés. The region as a whole exports 68 million bottles every year to 157 export markets.

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