



2017 in the Loire Valley: Early Harvests and Enviably Quality

New York, NY, December 7th 2017 - The Loire Valley's vines enjoyed excellent health throughout the season, reaching their milestones a good two weeks earlier than usual. We can now report that harvesting took place under ideal conditions and grapes are showing good levels of ripeness. While yields were somewhat affected by April frosts and last autumn's dry weather, still some 2.3 million hl of Loire Valley PDO and PGI grapes have made it to the wineries. This is a rise of 6% compared to 2016, but still less than we would expect in an average year. Variable volumes are luckily offset by consistently excellent quality across all three colors. The 2017 vintage is looking extremely promising.

Melon de Bourgogne: High quality despite patchy volumes

In the Muscadet appellations, the Ban des Vendanges – the Harvest Proclamation – was declared on August 28th. Late April frosts caused wide disparities in yield; some growers achieved their targets, while others lost up to 80% of their fruit, notably at the heart of Sèvre-et-Maine. The harvest is estimated at between 280,000 and 300,000 hl across the Muscadet appellations as a whole, compared with 244,000 hl last year, coming short of 35-40% compared to a normal year. The quality of this early vintage, however, is impeccable, thanks largely to the August sunshine. We can expect some very pleasant wines with good concentration, vivacity, freshness and excellent persistence.

Dry and sweet Chenin: Excellent flavor potential

2017's Chenins, both sweet and dry, show very good flavor potential. In some areas, particularly Savannières, frosts took its toll, but in other areas, such as Vouvray and Anjou-Saumur, harvests are good. The harvest weather was definitely clement, giving growers plenty of time to sort their grapes, and although volumes are limited, the quality of the fruit entering the winery is very high indeed.

Cabernet Francs: Significant fluctuations

The majority of Cabernet Franc grapes was picked between September 20th and October 5th. Outcomes varied depending on the impacts of the frost, both this year's and last's. Harvest levels hit 100% of the norm in Saint-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil, but were down to 80% in Chinon. In Saumur-Champigny, where frost impact was at its most severe, volumes look to be around 70% of the average, but show roundness and a full body - a beautiful vintage. Overall, Cabernet Francs are

light and supple with low acidity; others are richer and more dense, with a very pleasant vein of tannin and a good balance of sugar to acidity – similar to 2011.

Sauvignon: Pleasing flavors

In Loire-et-Cher, fluctuating temperatures and a lack of water resulted in yields varying from 3 hl/ha in the frost-damaged areas to 35-40 hl/ha in unaffected areas – still lower than the expected results. There was an overall drop in yield of 30% across all areas and varieties, again with significant variations. When it comes to quality, however, there are no complaints about the Loire Sauvignons. They are fruit-driven, show all the traditional Sauvignon characteristics, and despite their advanced state of ripeness at harvest this year, they feature good acidity and a pleasant balance on the palate.

Gamays: Rich, smooth and densely colored

Gamays were very healthy and harvested at an excellent stage of ripeness, both technological and phenolic. There is a general agreement that this year's Gamay wines will be rich, smooth and intensely colored, with flavors of black fruit rather than the traditional pear drops. They may not be typical Loire Valley Gamays, but quality is very good indeed and volumes are higher than expected.

Rosés: Outstanding flavor

Excellent grape health and good ripeness meant that vinification proceeded without a hitch and resulted in some very attractive rosés. After alcoholic fermentation, Gamay, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Franc wines are rich, dense and fruity. However, although we cannot deny the quality of 2017's rosés, yields were not always as high as we had hoped due to the weather conditions mentioned above. Cabernet Francs have been the worst hit.

Fines Bulles de Loire: Rich flavors for Loire sparkling wines

The Ban de Vendanges for Loire's sparkling wines was declared on August 28th. The Chenins picked for base wines show good acidity, while the Chardonnays boast an excellent range of flavors. Volumes remain difficult to assess, but good harvest conditions and healthy grapes lead us to anticipate a very interesting vintage.

2017 Vintage in the Centre-Loire

According to the Centre-Loire Interprofessional organization (BIVC), which regroups the Sancerre, Pouilly Fumé, Pouilly-sur-Loire, Menetou-Salon,

Quincy, Reuilly, Coteaux du Giennois and Châteaumeillant appellations, very few vines were affected by disease, despite this year's weather challenges. In the spring, some vineyards were subject to several nights of frost from April 18th to April 29th, which interfered slightly with the vines' flowering. In the summer, rainstorms with different precipitation levels (sometimes from 0 to 50 mm) caused the vines to evolve disparately depending on the appellation, domain or even parcel where they were located. A short heat wave in August also affected some parcels.

Determining the right time to begin harvesting grapes in order to preserve a perfect balance between freshness and fruit expression was even more important this year given the heterogeneous

levels of maturity caused by these weather episodes. In the Reuilly vineyard, the harvest for Pinot Gris began on August 30th - about two weeks earlier than the average starting time - followed by other vineyards throughout September and October. Sorting was sometimes necessary for the red grapes, given some had been affected by the summer's harsh climate, in order to preserve the overall quality to the highest standard. The fermentation went well and the first previews of the 2017 vintage are very promising.

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About Loire Valley Wines

The Loire Valley, referred to 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 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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