

Domaine Alice Hartmann

Wormeldange

Wormeldange, 10 December 2020

CHRONICLES 2020

Despite the upheaval affecting everyday life throughout the world this year, work on the estate has more or less followed the familiar routine. Regardless of the public health situation, the vines grew (quickly, even flourishing), producing some fantastic grapes which, as always, had to be made into wine!

Naturally, new procedures were introduced to protect the safety of all our staff. Contact between teams in the vineyard and cellar was, for instance, minimised to prevent the risk of infection. These methods proved effective and we fortunately had no positive cases to report.

Winter was mild and dry on the Moselle. Due to this clement weather, we were spared the customary frosts, with the first buds emerging very early in mid-April. May saw a day's rainfall every week, eliminating any risk of water shortages. This precipitation enabled the vines to tap all the energy they needed for strong vegetative growth.

Following this frantic start to the season, the first flowers appeared very early on 3 June. This is generally good news, as the earlier the process starts, the more time the grapes have to ripen. However, a cold front gripped the valley just a few days later, with regular showers falling on its slopes between 5 and 16 June. Vine stocks in the latest developing parcels let the wintry weather and damp pass before flowering, sometimes as late as 19 June.

Up to that point, the vines had been in excellent health, although significant variations in temperature increased the risk of oidium. Fortunately, it was possible to avoid this problem due to the tireless efforts of our teams.

Early summer was sunny and warm. From 22 June, the thermometer showed 30°C every day. By sheer good fortune, our vines narrowly escaped the hailstorms of 26 June that broke out in the southern half of the Luxembourg wine-growing region between Schengen and Remich. The next day, heavy showers unleashed 30 litres of rainwater per square metre, temporarily fending off water stress.

In July, the weather proved consistent, with maximum temperatures of 26°C. The conditions were perfect for good vine growth. However, in the last days of the month, the mercury shot up, reaching 36°C on 31 July. The Riesling and Pinot Noir grapes, which were beginning to colour, were particularly hard hit by this hot spell. The heatwave persisted until 13 August, with temperatures reaching 35°C on a daily basis. Rainfall that would have helped the grapes revive the ripening process was confined to areas north and south of Wormeldange, so the berries' development was temporarily checked.

The last week in August was spent preparing for the grape harvest. Measures aimed at protecting the health of harvesters and production teams were meticulously implemented – we simply couldn't risk anyone being quarantined.

We picked our first grape clusters on 1 September in ... Burgundy from our vineyards in Saint-Aubin ("Sur Gamay" premier cru). These French Chardonnay grapes are blended with their Luxembourgish cousins in our prestigious Adigio cuvée. In Luxembourg, the first week of harvesting (from 7 September) was spent picking grapes to make crémants: Pinot Noir for rosé and Chardonnay, which were of such a high quality that they may prove to be the source of some new ideas! Subsequent weeks turned out to be hot, dry and



Domaine Alice Hartmann

Wormeldange

free of fog, which is ideal for harvesting perfectly healthy grapes. Once again, temperatures reached 36°C in the third week of September, leading to a rapid increase in sugar content (calculated in degrees Oechsle). The Pinot Noir grapes were absolutely magnificent, sometimes exceeding 95 degrees Oechsle! It was a real shame then that yields were halved compared to a normal year, due to unfavourable weather conditions for this grape variety.

Our first Riesling grapes, harvested on 23 September, were earmarked exclusively for crémant. Their sugar content was measured (80-83 degrees Oechsle), which is ideal for making fizz. However, they were still insufficiently ripe to meet the criteria of our quality charter for still wines. With falling temperatures and a long period of rainfall forecast, we risked taking a break to give these grapes a chance to fulfil their potential. This was a real gamble, as just one day's sun in the wake of all the previous dampness would have caused an outbreak of rot. We were virtually the only estate in Luxembourg to take such action.

Our patience paid dividends. On 9 October, His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri honoured us with a visit to the heights of our beautiful Koeppchen terroir. In his company, we started harvesting Riesling grapes for still wines just below the chapel dedicated to Saint Donat.

Harvests then took place successively in the Palmberg (Ahn), Fels (Grevenmacher) and Felsberg (Wintrange) terroirs, as well as in our Apotheke vineyard on the German Moselle (Trittenheim) until 15 October. These grapes were visually stunning with their bright golden colour! Analysis confirmed initial impressions, with exceptional levels of ripeness (up to 92 degrees Oechsle).

Without wishing to curse the future, we can already affirm that nature has provided us with the materials to make some very fine wines of all colours. This has involved a lot of hard work, which is far from over. However, we have all the best cards in our hand, which is a major source of satisfaction.

