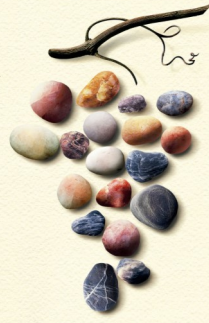
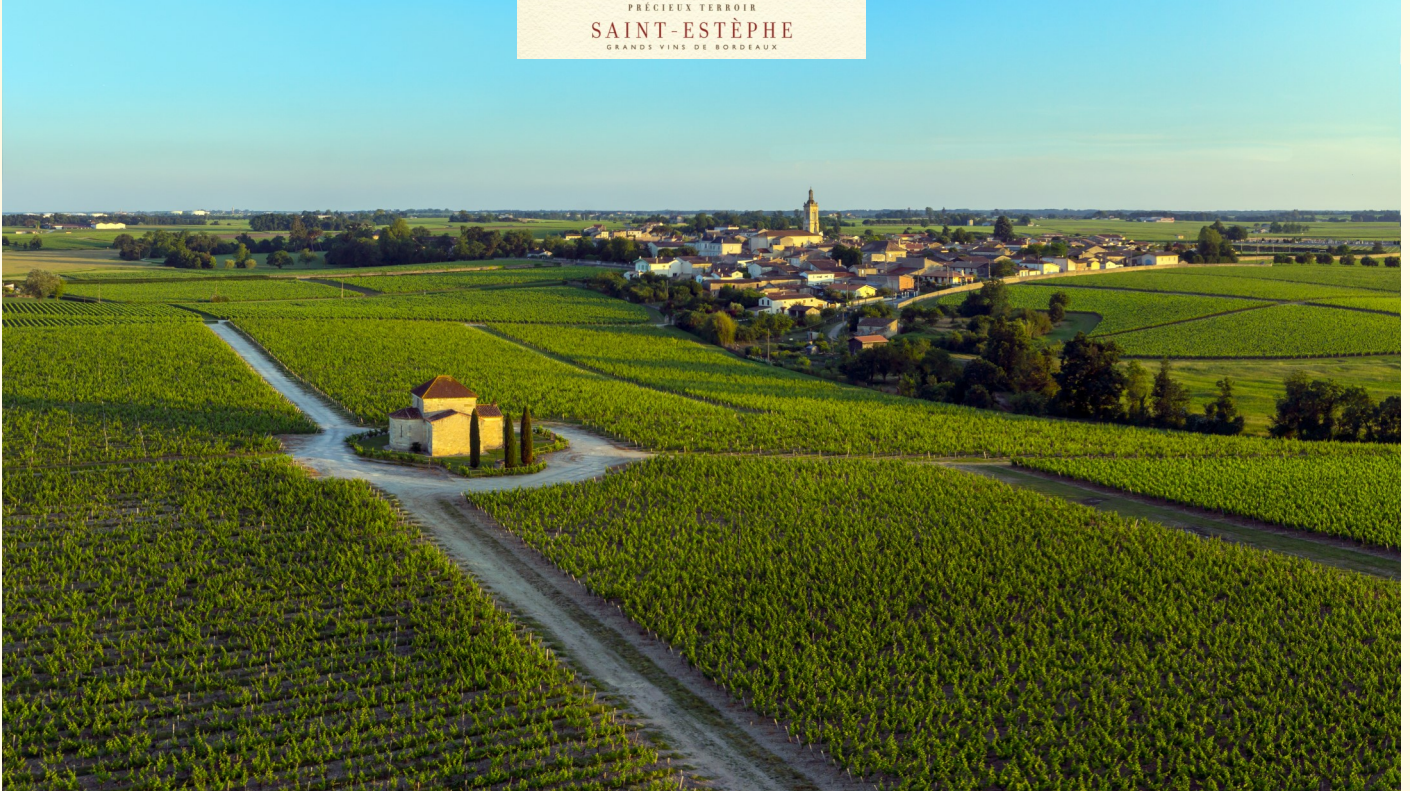


Number 1 – March 2017



PRÉCIEUX TERROIR
SAINT-ESTÈPHE
GRANDS VINS DE BORDEAUX



SAINT-ESTÈPHE 2016

AN AMAZING VINTAGE!

The reflection of a great terroir

O.D.G. de Saint-Estèphe



2016 marks the first in a series of vintage reports with information about the specific conditions in our appellation. We are tremendously enthusiastic about the 2016 vintage, which inspired us to provide a few explanations. And yet... Who would have predicted such quality at the beginning of the year? Fortunately, Mother Nature has the magical ability to completely change course! In fact, the weather pattern for the 2016 growing season was unprecedented. Record precipitation from January to June was followed by a long unbroken period of warm Mediterranean-type conditions that transformed 2016 into a truly great vintage. Nature will never cease to amaze us...

Despite a period of intense drought with several temperature spikes during the summer, there was no actual heat wave like in 2003. Alternating chilly nights and sunny days, as well as the presence of "cool" soils, were decided advantages. Saint-Estèphe's clay-limestone terroir was able to cope perfectly with the lack of water. In fact, the vines benefited from the drought conditions, which contributed to the power and elegance of the 2016 vintage.

Bernard Audoy, President of the Saint-Estèphe Defence and Management Organisation

A wet, mild winter with early, even bud break

The beginning of 2016 was marked by **heavy rainfall**, especially in January and February, and by **mild temperatures**. Saint-Estèphe received some 700 mm of rain from January to June.

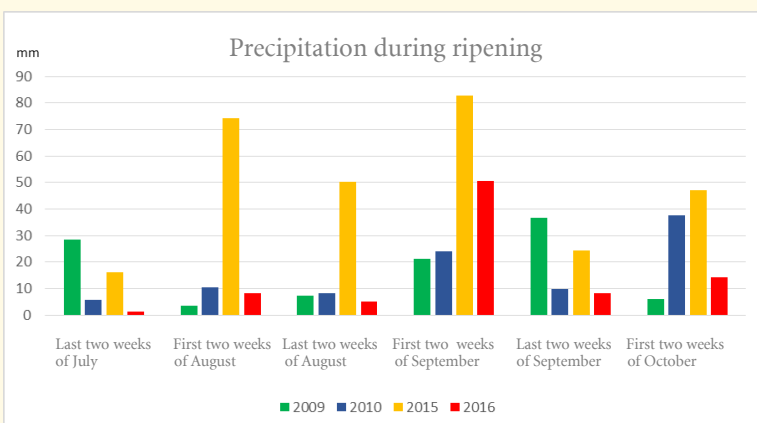
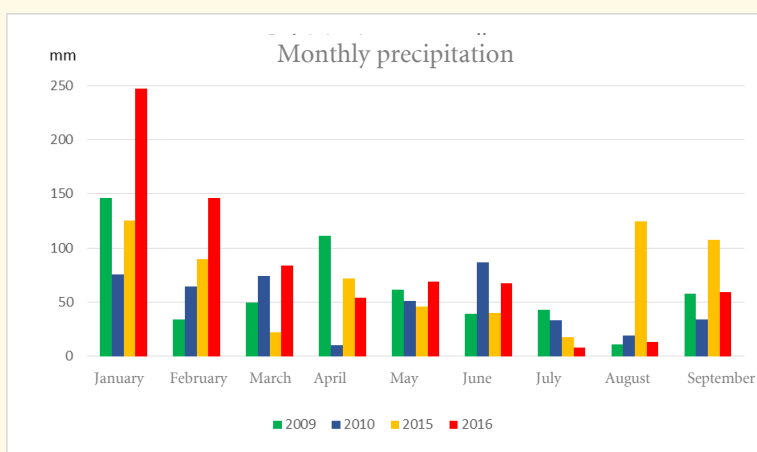
Mild temperatures lasting until the month of February led to **early bud break** (a week earlier than the multi-annual average). This took place smoothly in late March during a relatively cool, damp period. Even vine growth continued until flowering, which happened later than usual and went miraculously well.

Late, but miraculous flowering

The **damp winter weather** continued into spring and caused considerable worry when mildew appeared in late May/early June. This called for great vigilance. Full flowering took place from the 7th to the 12th of June during a 5-day period of beautiful weather with warm average temperatures of greater than 20°C. This was followed by satisfactory fruit set, without coulure, accompanied by **homogeneous phenolic maturity**. The rain finally stopped on the 20th of June.

A very hot, dry summer

Fine weather eliminated the threat of mildew. There were just 5.5 mm of rain in Saint-Estèphe in July 2016, compared to an average of 50 mm. Temperatures were close to normal, but with **spikes** of 38-40°C on the 18th and 19th of July. August was also very dry and hot. The vines nevertheless coped well with the high temperatures thanks to plentiful water reserves in the subsoil from winter showers. **The quality of the 2016 vintage is due to this hot, very dry summer.**



A propitious rainy period

Much-needed and much-welcomed showers (30-40 mm) on the 13th of September enabled the grapes to finish ripening. The fine weather continued into September and October, leading to **perfect maturity**. Alternating hot days and cool nights maintained good acidity and beautiful aromatic freshness.

The harvest was late – the longest and most unperturbed on record

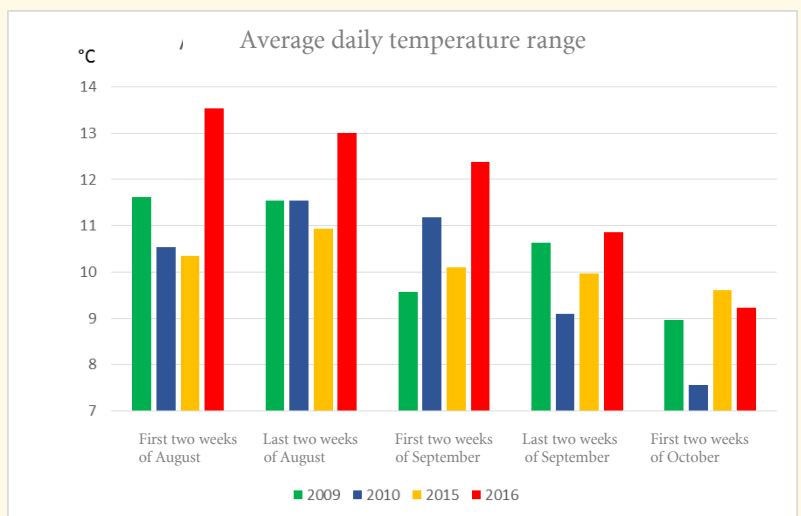
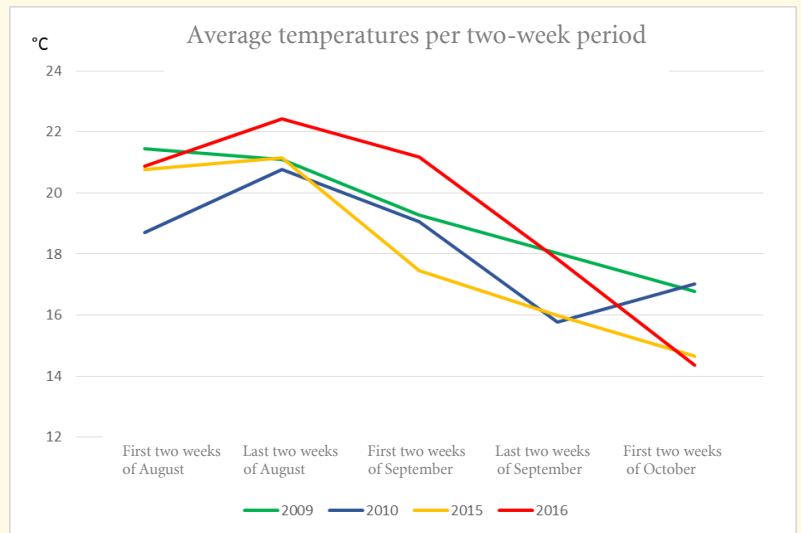
Picking began around the 25th of September on the most early-maturing terroirs, and ended as late as the 20th of October at certain châteaux in Saint-Estèphe. This was unprecedented and there was no stress whatsoever!

The grapes were **tasty and tannic**. Their ripeness was obvious from the very first, and they displayed intense colour, easy extractability, and excellent tannin. All grape varieties achieved **complete ripeness**. The berries were small, especially the Cabernets, which enhanced structure and aromas in the wine. The ITP (Index of Total Polyphenols) set a new record. 2016 will long be remembered by the winegrowers of Saint-Estèphe...

2016: an amazing vintage! The reflection of a great terroir

2016 has all the characteristics of a **very great year**: even flowering with good fertilisation, a water deficit with abundant sunshine in summer, homogeneous *véraison* (colour change), drought conditions tempered by cool nighttime temperatures, and a magnificent Indian summer.

Power, finesse, and elegance. 2016 is a very great vintage.



THE 2016 VINTAGE IN SAINT-ESTÈPHE AS SEEN BY AN EXPERT

David Pernet, manager of Sovivins

It is important to have an overview of the weather to understand why 2016 was particularly favourable to terroirs in Saint-Estèphe. Bud break began very early, around the 25th of March, i.e. nearly a week earlier than usual. As with the rest of Bordeaux, this early bud break followed on the heels of an exceptionally damp and mild winter (over 400 mm of rain were recorded in the south of Saint-Estèphe between the 1st of January and the 15th of March – compared to an average of less than 200 mm...). The wet winter weather completely replenished the water reserves of both gravelly and clay-limestone terroirs. The latter represent nearly half of the appellation's area under vine. This rainy period lasted until spring, with 170 mm of precipitation between the 1st of April and the 30th of June.

Despite early bud break, very cool spring weather led to late flowering. This only began in the first days of June in the more early-maturing eastern parts of the appellation. Although there was rain more than two days out of three between the 21st of May and the 19th of June, homogeneous full flowering was reached in most plots by the 10th of June thanks to a miraculous window of fine weather. The growing season changed radically starting on the 20th of June, with summer temperatures significantly above average during the second half of August and the first half of September.

There were only 22 mm of rain between the 20th of June and the 12th of September in Saint-Estèphe. The summer water deficit increased to record levels comparable with 2005 and 2010. *Véraison* (colour change) maintained the crop's homogeneous maturity since flowering. Conditions were particularly favourable to terroirs in Saint-Estèphe at this point. Merlot vines, mostly planted in plots with the highest clay and/or limestone content, benefited from moderate water stress, as proved by the rare degree of ripeness in the seeds and tannins. Water stress was markedly greater on gravelly rises in the eastern part of the appellation. The fact that, over the years, each different grape variety has been adapted to the most suitable soil means that Cabernet Sauvignon vines planted on these rises are particularly well-suited to significant water stress. This capacity, combined with high temperatures in August and early September, eliminated herbaceous aromas and ripened the tannins beautifully. This accounts for the velvety texture of the Cabernet Sauvignon wines found only in the greatest vintages.

The first and only major incidence of rain that summer took place on the 13th of September (about 45 mm). This hastened ripening, especially for Cabernet grapes on gravelly soil, and had no negative effects. The grapes continued to mature in mid-September with summerlike daytime temperatures and cool nights. This wide temperature range was conducive to the accumulation of anthocyanins and flavour compounds, as well as maintaining acidity. Picking started at the very end of September and finished in mid-October during dry weather. Thanks to this sharply contrasting weather, the 2016 vintage will unquestionably be considered one of the greatest in Saint-Estèphe in the past twenty years.



Crédit photo Georges-Henri Cateland©

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