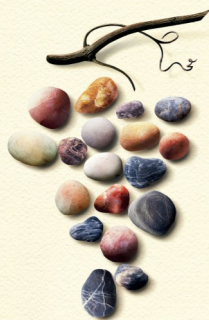


Number 4/March 2020



PRÉCIEUX TERROIR
SAINT-ESTÈPHE
GRANDS VINS DE BORDEAUX



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SAINT-ESTÈPHE 2019

Another great vintage ending in 9

The response of a great terroir

O.D.G. de Saint-Estèphe

Winegrowing and agriculture go hand in hand. The strength of our village does not only stem from its geographical location and terroir, but also the men and women who toil the soil all year round. Even if the 2019 weather worked in our favour, we still had plenty to do in the vineyard. For the vines, mildew posed less of a threat than previous years but we nevertheless remained cautious. Flowering was slightly disturbed by rainy episodes that were followed by one of the hottest summers on record. A few showers in September eventually enabled the grapes to reach optimal maturity. For many estates, the favourable weather conditions were conducive to minimal treatments and subsequently beneficial to the environment. The harvest date did not deviate from the thirty-year average. For the wines, sugar levels were relatively high, and extractions were performed rapidly to harness the tannins. All in all, this looks set to be a great vintage. I believe winegrowers are currently more concerned by the lingering economical and geopolitical issues rather than the content of their barrels, which they know is extremely promising. We are keeping our spirits up, and reassuring ourselves. This great vintage may not come at the best time, but this does not mean we will not taste and share it with immense pleasure and pride.

Basile Tesson, President of the Saint-Estèphe Winegrowers' Syndicate

A mild and dry winter

January may have begun on a rather cold note, but the rest of winter witnessed exceptionally high temperatures, often above 20°.

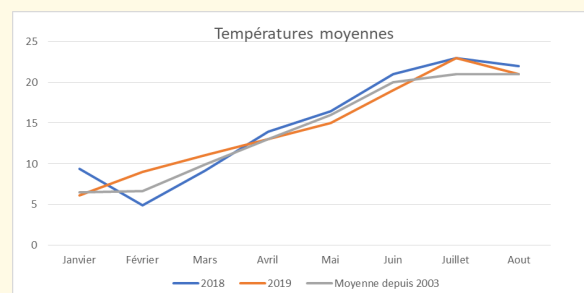
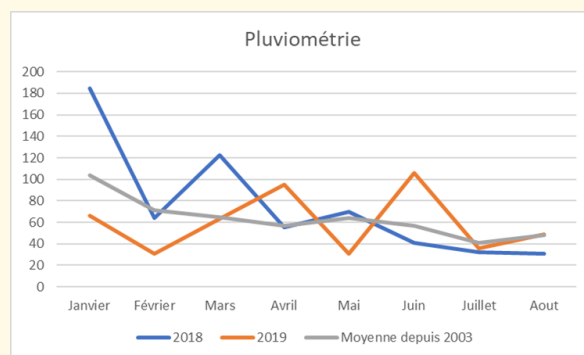
This mild weather led to **early bud break** as soon as late March.

A contrasting spring with quick and even flowering

Springtime weather was fairly cool and rainy. April and May were marked by lower than average temperatures, meaning the vines lost the lead they had gained at the start of the growth cycle. Sunshine was also scarce, 48% less than usual.

The Saint-Estèphe terroirs benefit from a privileged location bordering the estuary and good temperature regulation due to the neighbouring bodies of water, which contributed to **quick and even flowering**, in just a few days. This was not the case for later terroirs situated further away from the estuary that were affected by the relatively cold and rainy weather, witnessing more spread-out flowering and in certain cases, *coulure* (shot berries) and *mil-lerandage* (abnormal fruit set).

Despite the variable weather conditions during springtime, and regular rainfall, the threat of vine diseases was almost non-existent. The **vines' excellent condition** can be explained by the winter drought, which prevented the development of fungal diseases. Saint-Estèphe also benefits from ideal natural conditions and ecosystems thanks to the estuary, which drains the flow of runoff water through a vast network of rivers (known as the *jalles*) and *esteys* (small tidal rivulets) criss-crossing the entire winegrowing area. The water from the sky and earth worked in harmony!



The Saint-Estèphe terroirs and their ability to cope with drought

2019 will be remembered by winegrowers as **one of the hottest years** of the decade. The weather was mediocre until it radically changed from late June onwards. Temperatures soared, leading to a **heatwave lasting from the 26th of June until the 27th of July**. Accentuated by a lack of water, the threat of drought started to look like a real possibility for less well-exposed appellations. Other than a few plots of Cabernet Sauvignon grapes affected by water stress and scorching, the majority of the Saint-Estèphe vineyards, made up of deep-rooted vines, did not suffer from the lack of water. Once again, thanks to the **clay subsoil**, the Saint-Estèphe terroirs demonstrated their ability to manage periods of drought, which are becoming more frequent with climate change.

Colour change started out evenly and in ideal conditions, conducive to high-quality grapes. Rainfall in late August and mid-September was beneficial, putting an end to the heatwave and making way for end-of-season ripening.

Winegrowers were satisfied, there was no sign of botrytis, and the grapes reached peak maturity.

Grapes in perfect condition for a high calibre vintage

Glorious summer weather is often suggestive of a great vintage. The harvest took place under blue skies with **abundant sunshine** and high temperatures between 27 and 30°C, moderated by relatively cool nights. This difference between daytime and night-time temperatures enhanced the ripening of phenolic compounds.

Autumn showers helped soften the skins, liberating the anthocyanins and resulting in remarkably high-quality tannins. Cabernet Sauvignon did particularly well in these conditions, producing ripe and concentrated grapes. The vintage is characterised by grapes at optimum maturity with a high alcohol content and ripe seeds. **They are in perfect condition.**

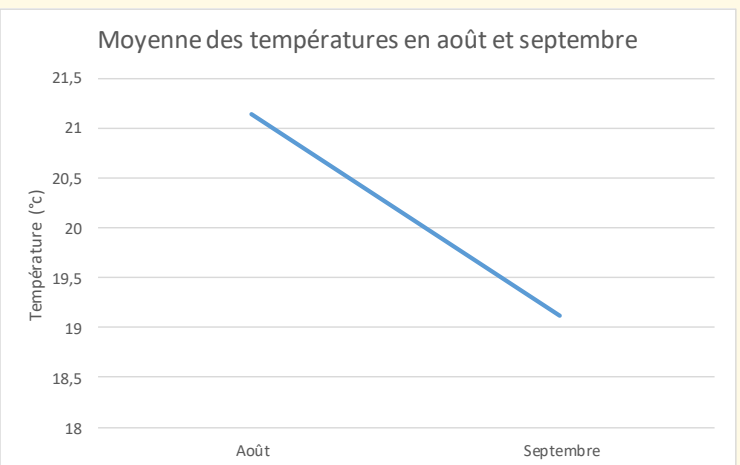
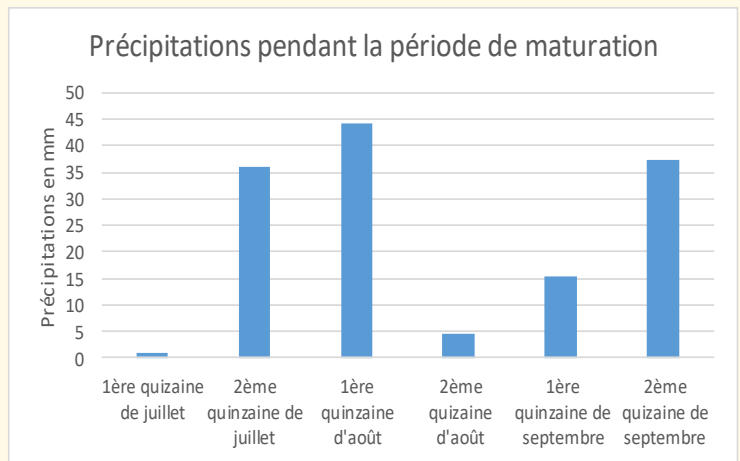
In spite of the heatwave, the appellation produced impressive **yields** of around 50 hl/ha.

Another outstanding vintage ending in "9"!

The Cabernet Sauvignon grapes are deeply coloured, rich and silky, the Petit Verdot have good grip with remarkable substance on the finish, and the Merlots are fruity and perfectly ripe.

Work in the cellar was straightforward given the high-quality grapes and good sugar-to-acid ratio. Controlled fermentation and maceration preserved the elegance and smoothness of this outstanding vintage. The wines are well-balanced, with controlled alcohol content and good acidity.

Often compared to 2010, or ranked between 2015 and 2016, the 2019 vintage is precise, straightforward, pure, and completes the beautiful series of vintages ending in "9".



WINEGROWERS' IMPRESSIONS

Patricia Teynac, Estate manager and Vincent Decup, Cellar/R&D manager, Château Montrose

“While the 2018 vintage definitely made a lasting impression, 2019 kept us on our toes up until the harvest! Not only did our team have to be extremely proactive every day and constantly adapt to the weather conditions, but the terroir also showed us, once again, how efficiently the soil copes with both heavy rain and drought conditions. At the beginning of the growing season, it was difficult to assess or even compare this vintage to others. The stressful weather conditions and late spring rainfall led to fears that the Merlots would not flower correctly but the exceptionally warm weather that quickly ensued reassured us, giving way to even flowering, particularly for the Cabernet Sauvignon grapes. The 2019 vintage is characterised by temperatures, almost always higher than seasonal averages, throughout the growing season. The particularly hot month of July slowed down growth and enabled the vines to focus their energy on increasing sugar levels. The vineyard looked wonderful, with dense, vigorous and very green foliage, indicative of an excellent harvest. In August, we kept our cool, as the saying goes, “August makes the must”. Water stress during this vintage was ideal for producing rich, well-balanced wines. When it was time to pick the grapes, yields were generous and of high quality. The harvest took place in ideal conditions, the grapes were perfectly ripe and sound. The wines are concentrated, complex, powerful and well-balanced: a great year for Cabernet Sauvignon. The 2019 Montrose wines are charming and shall undoubtedly age well over the decades.”

Véronique Dausse, Managing Director, Château Phélan-Ségur

“Early September, the vineyard was a feast for the eyes. Despite the hot summer conditions, the foliage was green and the bunches were not scorched: absolutely stunning! You just don't get tired of it! Our great gravel and clay soils are so expressive!

The Indian summer and cool nights enabled the grapes to reach ideal phenolic maturity. Water stress was optimal! The grapes were in perfect condition, presenting no risk of rot. Mid-September showers following up to the harvest resulted in beautifully balanced grapes. Picking unfolded as serenely as possible and it was an exceptional moment for us as winegrowers. The 2019 vintage expresses excellent concentration, combining freshness and power. All in all, a classy wine.”

Christophe Anney, Owner, Château Tour des Termes

“All great vintages are the result of optimal weather conditions. Such is the case this year, since we experienced a heatwave, which always bodes well for the Saint-Estèphe appellation thanks to our gravel and clay-limestone soils with great water-retention capacity. The grapes reached exceptional maturity and were picked under the sun with no water stress and no risk of rot, i.e.: the perfect harvest. Judging from its colour and elegant tannins, synonymous with freshness, the 2019 vintage should become a reference for Saint-Estèphe.”

Marc Druesne, Owner, Château Marceline

“The grapes were harvested by hand as of the 7th of October. Currently in barrel for 12 months, this vintage is particularly unusual given the weather conditions. The summer was very dry, with accentuated water stress until September, resulting in small, concentrated berries; however, September showers helped them gain in volume while controlling the sugar levels thanks to the choice of the harvest date. The 2019 vintage is charming, very fruity and fresh with plenty of tannin. I do not consider this wine to be the vintage of the century, but it is very promising, expressing a strong personality, which inspired me to try a special cuvée fermented in an amphora!”



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