

2006 Harvest Report: An optimal phenolic ripeness!!!



As 2006 harvest came to an end on September 30 at Château de Lascaux, I would like to share with you my first impressions of this vintage that may be spectacular for those who patiently waited.

2006 is another example of a dry vintage with a hot weather from mid-June through the very beginning of August. However, and this is a major difference with 2003 for instance, the abundant rains of last winter have ensured that the vines, with very few exceptions, would have all their water needs covered throughout the year. August, which was rather cool with marked temperature differences, was very beneficial to the slow phenolic ripening of the grapes with acidities keeping well. The rains that usually hit our region around August 15th have been pretty low this year with only 33 millimeters on August 15th.

Notwithstanding this dryness, we did not start picking earlier this year. The first grapes were picked on September 1st instead of August 30th last year. Even though the sugar level was high, we decided, based on a skin tasting and thanks to the weather and the vines' healthy state, to wait for optimal ripeness before to start picking. Today, while the whites have finished their fermentation, I can only say that the results are well worth the wait: 2006 will be a sublime vintage!

The low rains of September 14th and 15th, at a time where all the whites and the Syrah were already harvested, did not damage the remaining grapes. In fact, thanks to the excellent health state of the vines and the Mistral that dried the grapes right afterwards, the remaining grapes could be picked in excellent condition. Although the quality of the grapes was sublime, all of them have been sorted to eliminate any green debris that would have prevented the full expression of the fruit.

As harvest finished on September 30th, we can definitely say that we had a strong grouping of the maturities amongst varieties. Yields are pretty low, especially for the Syrah and Cinsaults, but not as much as 2003 however.

Following the first tastings, 2006 looks very promising. The whites, whose alcoholic fermentation is completed, are already very expressive, exhaling fruit and floral aromas typical of the varieties and the *terroir*. The mouth is round, rich with crisp acidity. As for the reds, for which we anticipate smooth and long vatting, color is deep, tannins are round, powerful and ripe.

On a personal basis, 2006 rewards the considerable work we have done in the vineyard. Such great phenolic ripeness may never have been reached under such a dry vintage without all that we have done in the vineyard. This work (weed planting, natural composting, working of the soil, etc.) has permitted us, not only to do only 1 mildew treatment and a few dusting against Oidium, but also to ensure a great health state of the vines. Since I took over the *Domaine* in 1984, I have always been respectful of the equilibrium of the vineyard in its environment. I have never used any chemical product, whether the climatic conditions were favorable or not. I have recently decided to formalize this approach. Indeed, on September 1st, we started a certification process with Ecocert that will lead, after a 3-year conversion period, to the possibility to claim for the "wine made with grapes from the organic farming" mention.

I wish all of you to enjoy the 2006 vintage as much as I am enjoying elaborating it.

Warmest regards,

Jean-Benoît Cavalier