

InterLoire, Press Release – 6th November 2017

2017 in the Loire Valley: Early Harvests and Enviably Quality

The Loire Valley vines have enjoyed excellent health throughout the season, reaching their milestones a good two weeks earlier than usual; and now we can report that harvesting has taken place under ideal conditions, and grapes are showing good levels of ripeness. April frosts impacted yields in some areas and last autumn's dry weather also limited harvests, but overall 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. Volumes are variable, offset, luckily, by excellent quality across all three colours. 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 have caused wide disparities in yield; some growers have achieved their targets, while others have 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 - giving a shortfall 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 pleasing wines with good concentration, vivacity, freshness and excellent persistence.

Dry and sweet Chenin: Excellent flavour potential

2007's Chenins, both sweet and dry, show very good flavour potential. In some areas, particularly Savannières, frosts has taken its toll, but in other areas – Vouvray and Anjou-Saumur, for example, harvests are good. The harvest weather has definitely been on-side, 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.

Cabernets Francs: Significant fluctuations

The majority of Cabernet Francs were picked between September 20th and October 5th. Outcomes have varied depending on the effects of the frost, both this year and last. Harvest levels have 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 flavours

In Loir-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 has been 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 pleasing balance on the palate.

Gamays: Rich, smooth and densely coloured

Gamays were harvested at an excellent stage of ripeness, both technological and phenolic. Health was good. There is general agreement that this year's Gamay wines will be rich, smooth and intensely coloured, with flavours 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 flavour

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 have not always been 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 flavours for Loire sparkling wines

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

ABOUT INTERLOIRE: InterLoire is an inter-professional association representing 3,000 operators within the wine industry – growers, négociants and cooperatives – selling an average of 2 million hectolitres of wine a year, the equivalent of 270 million bottles. It encompasses 50 appellations, denominations and PGIs across 43,000 hectares and 14 departments, from the Vendée to Puy-de-Dôme, representing 80% of volumes produced in the Loire Valley.

InterLoire lies at the heart of France's third largest wine region. Its missions include economic governance, research and experimentation, and promoting the wines of the Loire Valley.

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