



AY, CHAMPAGNE, FRANCE - CHAMPAGNE BOLLINGER

The viticultural year: 2018

The 2018 viticultural year stood out with a very wet winter (50% more than the decade average). The Marne burst its banks for several weeks, something that had not been seen for a long time.

The start of the year was more “classic”, with quite a late budburst... followed by a real acceleration in the vegetative cycle thanks to a very mild spring: flowering was 10 days earlier than the decade average, then bunch closure was 16 days earlier.

Few difficulties were encountered, despite a little hail and significant pressure from mildew... but then none from 15 June, as hot and dry weather set in over a long period (only 50 mm of rain in Aÿ over two-and-a-half weeks).

From July, we knew that the harvest would be plentiful and would begin early; what we didn't know was how the botrytis would develop. Ultimately, the absence of rain meant the absence of botrytis, and therefore perfectly healthy grapes throughout Champagne.

The harvest at Bollinger: new challenges and an exercise in adaptation for an exceptional result

The earliness of the harvest this year was a challenge: the first grapes were picked in Aÿ and Verzenay on 23 August!

It was the second consecutive year that a harvest began in August at Bollinger, and the fifth time in 15 years. Before that, the previous harvest to begin in August dated back to 1893.

The abundance of grapes was also one of the challenges of this harvest, during which it was key to pick and vinify as many grapes as possible in this high-potential year. The new winery site in Aÿ, completed in July 2018, was extremely valuable.

This harvest was also an exercise in adaptation: maturity sampling began on 13 August, and we had to radically change our harvest circuits due to the reversal of the late and early sectors.

The fruit of this harvest was exceptional:

- It confirmed the quality of our viticultural practices, with an average degree superior to 11 for our Pinot Noirs (purchased grapes were 10.4° on average), with sustained acidity and pH of nearly 3.
- The Pinot Noirs from the Montagne de Reims are especially remarkable: the grapes are highly concentrated (with small berries) thanks, in particular, to the very low rainfall (half as much as on the Côte des Blancs).

The chalk of the Grands crus has played its water-regulating role fully, and the vines have not suffered in the slightest.

Due to its exceptional nature, the 2018 vintage can be compared to 3 great years at Bollinger: 2002 for its analytic profile, 2004 for its generosity and 2003 for its earliness... an unquestionably winning trio!

A few observations:

- Vieilles Vignes Françaises harvested on 23 August
- The Petit Meslier variety is as interesting as ever: harvested in Cuis on 4 September at 12° potential alcohol with a pH below 2.9!
- All the red wines have a degree of between 12 and 13. Trial of non-destemmed grapes in a small vat.