

2008: yet another turnaround vintage

Nobody's going to believe it, and I'm not making this up, but 2008 in Bordeaux is rather a good vintage.

Yet, meteorologically, 2008 looks to be the identical twin vintage of 2007: Each month's temperatures and rainfall figures are about the same and show clearly that both vintages started with a mild winter, continued into a wet spring, had a mediocre dull and damp summer, and were then saved by a miraculous last-minute turnaround in the form of a glorious autumn. And, in addition, 2008 was the second La Nina year running, the second year running to reverse the recent warming trend.....and the second year running of 13 Moons!

So how come the wines of 2007, whilst retaining the same late-harvest characteristics of relatively high acidity, had turned out so radically different from those of 2008, the former bright, fruit-driven, fine-styled and elegant, the latter darker, richer, more generous and more tannic? Even to the growers, the outcome came as something of a surprise. They were expecting 12°5 and suddenly it all came in at 14°; anthocyanin counts of 7-800 and they got over 1000; IPTs (tannin measure) of 50 and they ended up often over 90.

The answer seems to lie, despite the apparent similarities, in the vine's radically different behaviour in 2008 to 2007. In 2007, it had got off to an early and rapid start, with a quick early budding, followed by an early, if erratic, flowering; and it was only then that it got slowed down by the dreary summer months, then achieving a flash last-minute ripening in those fine September days. 2008 was entirely different: From the beginning of the season right up to the end, the vine never did anything fast all year; it took its time over all the stages; it seemed lazy, didn't want to bud, grow leaves, flower or do anything at speed. Consequently, it had very slow cycles which, despite the strain put on it by the April frost, by the excess of water in May and by a mediocre summer, allowed it to perform more effective ripening transformations in its grapes all very gradually and very inconspicuously.

This was especially so in July, a month that was cool but in the end sunny and dry, which, just as in 2000, made the phenolic components of the grape synthesise early. As in 2000, without this month, the grapes would certainly never have been so well prepared for the final ripening and would not have concentrated so effectively under the dehydrating effect of the autumn's dry northeasterly breezes.

Yet July's virtues went virtually unnoticed, and amidst August's and early September's atmosphere of doom and gloom, in the vineyards as well as at the investment banks, it was raining a little every day and there was a distinct possibility the crop was going to be lost. Unlike at the banks, things were in fact not that bad: the precipitation figures were finally not that high and nobody had noticed that the soil was in fact much drier than we had thought. This was of immense importance since it meant that there would be no risk of rot, and therefore no need to pick in a hurry, everyone waiting for that final touch of concentration, some even right into November.

And finally, it was the small size of the crop that allowed all this ripening to happen so effectively. With a crop the size of 92 or 04, there would have been just too many bunches for them all to stay healthy. Growers had cursed the naturally low "sortie" at the start, later further reduced by frost damage, by the poor flowering, by mildew, by culling and green harvesting, and by the final dehydration effect. But it paid untold dividends on the quality of the harvest, and - who knows? - without it, there may never have been a harvest at all.

Winter 2007/8

This year, it is necessary to start further back than we usually do. The origin of the vines' reluctance and of the low yield is to be found right back in the 2007 growing season. This is because the number of "inflorescences", the microscopic embryo bunches, is determined by conditions during the flowering of the previous year, and their vigour is decided at the "véraison" of the previous year. Well, the June weather 2007 had not been exactly ideal and this seems to have discouraged the vine from producing a large number of embryos for 2008, whilst, for the véraison, August 2007 was rainy and cold which seems to have accounted for the 2008's lack of vigour. So that makes 2007 and 2008 more like father and son vintages rather than twin vintages!

The effect of all this would not be seen until the first shoots appeared, and in the mean time, a good hard winter was needed to kill off the bugs, to allow the sap to stay right down for the pruning, and to prevent a too early start to the vegetation. November was cold enough, then December colder still. There were 18 nights of frost during these 2 months compared to the normal 9. So far so good, but with the dawn of the New Year, it then got much warmer: apart from a few small cold snaps late January, mid February and early March, these three months were much warmer than usual. February was exceptionally warm, 0°6C warmer than even March was to be, and daytime highs for the month were 3°7C over the norm, putting it as the second warmest February since records began in 1920.

Apart from the latter part of December, of January and of most of February, it was also a wet winter with repeated westerly storms, not necessarily with a lot of rain in them, but enough to keep the ground very wet.

Spring 2008 and the budding

Such warm and wet conditions were just what the vine needed to get off to an early start. Some swellings were noticed as early as 22nd February. Nobody really understood why the buds didn't burst there and then, as the temperatures didn't drop back again until a full 10 days later. But they didn't, and everyone was thankful for that: In spite of the fact that most of the greatest vintages of the recent past budded very early (82-89-90-95-03-05), others had ended in disastrous frosts (77-91-94). It was the first sign that the vines were going to take their time to do anything this year.

With the return of the warmth that accompanied the mid-March storms, the swellings started again, and this time the buds started to burst, some right away (particularly Right Bank Merlot), others a few days later, and some much later. It was here that started the disparity of ripening between areas, villages, vineyards, and even between individual bunches and grapes, that was to stick with us all year. It got further compounded when the budding halted in its tracks with some sudden 1-2°C night-time temperatures, followed by the resumption of westerly storms for the remainder of the month.

So, by the end of the first week of April, the early start to the budding had got spun out into a late finish, and only parts of Bordeaux were showing foliage, beginning to reveal the small numbers of embryo bunches, whilst others remained stubbornly at varying stages of budding and bud burst.

On the night of 6th April, a shallow low pressure system over England sucked Arctic air round it and down into France. For the following morning, the forecast had been relatively harmless: 0°C in some places – nothing much to worry about: with the leaves burst by then, 0°C, even -2°C is never much of a problem. And in most of Bordeaux, this was the case. But for those buds that were still bursting, especially those in Sauternes, Southern Graves and many parts of the Entre-Deux-Mers, and elsewhere a little bit in just about every estate, the damage was to be serious. All these areas are mainly of white wine, and this was the beginning of the year's severe shortfall in white wine production.

The temperature got down to -4°C in the Southern Graves and Sauternes, -2°C in the Western and Southern Médoc: Listrac was particularly hard hit. But it only registered -0°C on the Right Bank and the Northern Médoc. Of course every vineyard had some damage here and there, wherever the buds were still breaking. Even in the worst hit areas, the damage was not immediately apparent, the weakened buds often going on to produce embryo bunches and then aborting later before they could flower (“filage” – see chapter on Sauternes for this rare phenomenon). Generally the clay soils did better than the lighter gravel soils, so this was not the usual frost which hits at the bottom of the vineyard under the trees: the worst hit areas were rather the gravel soils on the top: the plateaus of the communes of Bommès and Sauternes really caught it bad.

Early Summer 2008 and the flowering

Apart from these badly-hit areas, the frost itself was not the main problem. It was more a question of the effect of the frost, providing a further weakening of already weak embryos and of slow-functioning vines, especially of the older vines, less resilient than the younger ones to deal with such things. By the end of April, the vegetation was getting late, and as we went into a very wet and very warm May, normally ideal conditions for rapid growth, it just got later and later instead.

Now there was another problem to deal with: mildew. It had been bad last year, and now growers were saying it was more virulent still and appeared even earlier this time. One vineyard had its first attack on 20th March! But most saw its first appearances in the hot rainy final days of April. However, after last year’s experience, everyone was ready this time and did preventative sprayings just in time. Maybe last year the fine April of 2007 had tricked growers into thinking they didn’t need to spray, whereas this year the warm wet conditions of early spring 2008 had made the danger more obvious. Whatever the reason, it was kept under control much better than last year, in spite of the continuous showers that often washed away each spraying. In most cases, and unlike Burgundy, it all but went away in the sunnier conditions of end June and of July, leaving only the other usual less virulent problems such as “ver de la grappe” (grape worm), these days quite easy to deal with, both chemically and non-chemically.

And so we arrived at the flowering, most of which commenced during the warm, stormy last days of May, and then continued on for a full month. The disparity of the budding had not caught up over the intervening two months and had even increased by the extra time it had taken for the frosted vines’ counter-buds to produce bunches – which they had done only sparingly.

This month of flowering saw five distinct periods: 27th May – 2nd June (stable, warm temperatures with good but heavy outbursts of rain that caused many Merlots and Sémillons to fail), 3rd – 8th June (damp, cool but regular conditions: this period went better), 9th – 12th June (very warm and stormy: this was the most active period, with pollen counts of up to 140 per square metre and saw quite good results), 13th – 17th June (this period went quite well under calm damp and regular conditions), 18th – 23rd June (Here there was a burst of excessive heat that caused many flowers to abort). Everyone had a little “coulure” at each of these five stages, but the main problems were right at the beginning, so affecting primarily the white varieties and the Right Bank Merlots, and right at the end, affecting the later Cabernets and Sauternes. Together with the effect of “millerandage” (abortion of the embryos after they had at first successfully flowered) that was to become apparent over the following few weeks, the size of the 2008 crop had taken another serious hit.

2007 had also been through a similarly laborious one-month flowering, suffering a lot of “coulure” in the latter part (and as we have seen, this problem from the previous year was certainly the origin of the small amount of bunches in 2008). But in 2007 it had all happened

12-13 days earlier, whilst for the 2008, it now started to become apparent that the harvest was going to be running up to three weeks later than normal. So tentative plans could now be made for a very late harvest, with no predictions of a start to the reds before the final days of September and, with such disparity amongst the bunches, probably running well into October.

July and August

Just as in 2000, a year that got off to a similarly difficult start, we now needed dry hot weather. At first, this is exactly what we got. Apart from the thunderstorms of 21st-22nd, the final 14 days of June were totally dry, even more so on the Left Bank than the Right. With temperatures a full 4°C over the norm and with 25% more hours of sunshine than normal, the foliage started catching up. At long last, it looked vigorous, bright green and strong – just as it should have looked back in May.

The damper, cooler conditions of the first 7 days of July then quickly gave way to a very dry spell that would last right to the end of the month. July ended up with a total 20.2 mm of rainfall, way below the norm of 54.5 and equalling the drought year 2005. The temperatures were just above normal, especially in the final 10 days, with good, regular heat rather than any exceptional spikes: It was a period of good, fine weather with no excesses: There were 20 days over 25°C (the norm is 18.93 days) but only 5 days over 30°C (the norm is 6.4). The maximum daytime temperature never reached 35°C, just as the minimum never fell below 11°C.

These dry, regular conditions of July were to become the determining feature of the vintage's relative success. They created the only period when this year's lazy vine was jolted by any drought stress. It had the effect of creating an early synthesis of the phenols and tannins in the young grapes that would arm them to better resist the damp August that was to follow and, beyond all expectations, allow them to quickly take advantage of the ensuing Indian summer.

If only it could have continued another month. But it was not to last. August started off damp, and then gradually got wetter as the month wore on. 2008 was a La Nina year. It is strange to imagine how the cooling of the Pacific Equatorial current can have an effect on faraway Bordeaux, but it is certain that it really does upset the whole world's airflows, and particularly causes a more Southern flow over the Atlantic during the summer months. The result was that, for the second year running, one after the other, a series of depressions slammed into Ireland and England, rather than veering off to the North as they normally do, creating round them diagonal rain-laden fronts over western France.

They didn't in fact produce as much rainfall as it had appeared at the time: the total for August ended up at 82 mm, above the norm of 59, but 2/3 of it fell in only four days of heavy rain 10th, 14th, 21st and 30th and certainly it was way way below the record 248 mm of 1992. The month was just grey, damp, cloudy and drizzly with 17 of the 31 days registering rainfall, as opposed to the usual "seven fine days then a thunderstorm" August weather.

August went down as a cold month but, being a vacation period, this was mostly psychological and in the end it was only marginally down on the norm: 20°5C instead of 20°9C. It just never got very hot: There were 17 days when the thermometer went over 25°C (the norm is 19.17 days), but only 4 over 30°C (5th, 6th, 29th and 30th), vs the norm of 6.33, and, as in July, none over 35°C.

Consequently, the véraison (changing of colour of grapes) got off to a good start under the hot conditions of late July, but then got spun out under the cooler and rainy middle part of August. This had the effect of creating even further disparity in the ripening cycles that had originated from the frost in April and from the irregular flowering in June and of ensuring that after all the harvest would be very late.

Nowadays, such disparity is corrected at this time by green harvesting. Teams of cullers had already been in the vineyard in late June and early July thinning out the bunches where necessary, although, with the vine already bearing so little fruit, this practice had not been as widespread as usual, especially in the lesser estates. It was now time to go round a second time culling all the bunches that could now be seen to be laggardly, and at the same time to pluck the lower foliage. So the yield, already low, took a further knock. None of this would have been done thirty years ago. Little or no culling was performed on that other similarly late vintage 1978 when the bunches remained speckled right up to picking.

Such a difficult August drifted into an even damper September. The tail ends of hurricanes Gustav, Hannah and Ike were forecast to bring heavy rain, but they never did. In most areas, there was a total of no more than 30 mm over the first 14 days of September but it rained a little on 11 of those 14 days. The grapes were beginning to swell dangerously, and there was beginning to be an atmosphere of despair. More of this and rot would attack the splitting grapes. After a year of trench combat, could what was left of the harvest just simply get washed out?

September-October-November and the harvest

Over the weekend of 13th September, the weather started to change radically. The succession of wet south-westerlies that had been coming through for a month and a half started to be ousted by the build-up of a North Atlantic high pressure system that gradually ballooned over all of Europe, attracting cool dry Scandinavian air into Bordeaux. Apart from an occasional innocuous shower, this weather pattern was to stay right up to mid-October.

For the second year running, it was just too good to be true. As the vineyard dried, the rot risk receded – in the end it had never been much of a problem anyway – and any split grapes healed quickly. The recovery was instantaneous and its rapidity surprised everyone. How could such a sudden turnaround benefit the vines so quickly? Well, that fine July had certainly been more beneficial than originally thought, and, amidst those drab August days, there had been some short periods of hot dry conditions that, unseeingly, had helped the vine build on its July synthesis of tannins. In addition, this fine September period was also cool, especially the nights of the last 10 days, an effective barrier to the spreading of any rot. It also ensured that the acidities, built up over the summer, would stay quite high.

In 2007, the turnaround had happened two weeks earlier. However, the vineyard cycle had been three weeks earlier, so in reality, 2008 had a week in hand going into the fine weather, and in addition in July it had enjoyed a much better preparation of the ripening. These two features seem to account for the essential differences between two apparently similar vintages.

Meanwhile, at the end of the first week of September, the white harvest had started, as usual with the Pessac-Léognans. They picked slowly and intermittently at first, only during the sunny intervals, and often only in the afternoons, then, with the weather set fair from 14th, the harvest took on a more regular pace as each vineyard got to full ripeness. The main body of the straight Bordeaux whites was picked under the permanently blue skies of the second half of the month.

Most of the red producers, apart from those very early vineyards of Pomerol and Pessac-Léognan who started in the final week of September, wanted their grapes to take the fullest advantage possible of this ripening process and did not plan to harvest until October. But, as every year, there were many generic growers and lesser estates who had maybe not done all the vineyard work properly, and whose bunches were now deteriorating two weeks before they were ripe, so they had no option but to pick then and there. Once again there will be an ocean of difference between such generic wines and those of the well-tended estates.

Apart from a storm that dropped 10 mm of rain on the Right Bank 18th September, the whole latter 16 days of the month were totally dry, with exactly double the normal amount of sun hours. The white pickers could take their time and the reds could wait.

October opened with a 7 day relapse to those by now familiar English depressions and their attendant damper westerly winds. It rained lightly several of those days, just as the earlier Merlots were starting to be picked (on both banks), but most of this rain fell at night or in the early morning, so it had little effect on the quality of the harvest. The soil was surprisingly so dry by now that it never got into the vines' system and so didn't dilute the grapes at all. Most of the Merlots started on Monday 6th, right at the end of this patch of lesser weather, and enjoyed a second totally dry 20 day period that was to last right up to the end of the main part of the Cabernet harvest around 27th.

Unlike the cooler September one, this dry period was very warm, and with the wind mostly in the South-East, the middle 10 days of October were a full 2°8C warmer than normal. This accounts for all the dehydration that occurred in the grapes, and their unexpected concentration. Of course, by the same token, the yields went down even further. Meanwhile in Sauternes, after a tremendous first picking in September, these dry conditions made the botrytis very slow for the second and third pickings that were being undertaken now.

On 27th October, just as everyone was finishing, the fine weather came to an end and depressions started forming even further South than they had done in August, in fact right over Central France, producing five days of heavy rain that continued with light showers into the first few days of November. This was only now of concern to the Sauternais, who were hoping for a small final glorious mid-November "trie" (which would now lose concentration to the rain) and a few resolute Saint-Emilionnais who can never resist holding out for just that extra bit of concentration (which they ended up getting – it rained half as much on the Right Bank than on the Left so they got lucky).

So ended a very late harvest that everyone could finally be proud of. If only its volume had been as satisfactory...

Yields

This was to be a naturally low-yielding vintage from the start, with a low "sortie" of quite small bunches. From then on, it just kept getting smaller and smaller, first of all from the effects of the 7th April frost and ensuing "filage", then from a very imperfect flowering, from the mildew, from the nonetheless necessary crop-thinning and green harvesting measures undertaken over the summer, from the year's frequent local hail-storms, and finally from all that dehydration of the grapes in the dry run-up to the harvest.

The lowest yields of all were in Sauternes, especially on the top of the gravel slopes rather than on the lower areas, nobody higher than 14 or 15 hectolitres per hectare, many at 7-12, and some as low as 3 or 4 (cf max permitted 25 ho). Next were the dry whites, especially in the Southern Graves and Entre-Deux-Mers, most around 20-30 ho. The reds are more variable, some as low as 20 ho, most between 30 and 40 ho, with just a few, especially in the Northern half of the Médoc, almost at 50.

Overall, it was the lowest yield since the Great Frost of 1991.

The wines

2008 dry whites

This is clearly another good vintage for dry whites. As in 2007, the earlier ones were picked before the September good weather could really get to them, so they are similarly fresh-styled and have quite high acidities. However, they seem to have a bit more 06-type fatness than the tighter 07s, and also, so far, a much later development of aromatic expression.

The Sauvignons are slightly less expressive than last year: pomelo last year and white grapefruit this? The Sémillons generally need more summer heat than the Sauvignons, and maybe that is why they have an unusually sharper kind of character right now.

2008 red wines

The best of the red 08s surprised the people who made them and are certainly going to surprise others too. Of course, with such disparity in the ripening cycles, there is enormous variation. The rushed harvesting of those unprepared estates in mid-September has nothing at all to do with the relaxed pickings of totally concentrated grapes sometimes 6 weeks later. The hallmark of the vintage, for the more successful wines, is clearly to be found in their common sweetness of attractive fruit and fatness, combined with a certain freshness of acidity, and in the strength of their tannins. This makes them of a totally different style than their two predecessors, from which they also differ by their higher alcohol and by their stronger constitution.

The skins were generally thick, perfectly healthy and much more extractable than in 06 and 07. Only the nature of the pips sometimes held winemakers back from stronger extraction, but generally they could let themselves go much more than the previous year. The press wines are also almost universally of excellent quality and will be very useful later on.

Another general rule may be that the Right Bank has made excellent Merlots, profiting more from the good July conditions, whereas the Left Bank's Cabernet Sauvignons quite clearly benefited more from the final end of season dry warmth. But it's not going to be as easy as that. There are some excellent, rich Left Bank Merlots and some extremely concentrated late harvest Right Bank Cabernets, whose acidity prevents them from losing flavour – so often a problem with these very late harvest wines.

Variation from vineyard to vineyard and from vat to vat makes any further generalisations difficult, but certainly the wines are miles away from what they could have been if the August weather had continued.

Sauternes

Last year, Sauternes was clearly top of the vintage. Well, in Sauternes, your luck never holds for long, and in 08, they had the hardest time of everyone. At enormous expense, they have ended up making a tiny amount of wine.

Their problems started right early on, when Sauternes got harder hit by the 7th April frost than elsewhere. There was a local rain shower at midnight, which had the effect of creating an ice prism around the buds next morning – these were at “cotton stage” and therefore had absorbed water. Some of these buds burned right away, but others seemed alright at first, then, over the following weeks, just withered away. These embryo bunches went on to form, then gradually aborted and turned into tendrils. This “filage” is an unusual phenomenon; a kind of pre-flowering millerandage. It was devastating to watch the crop gradually diminish like that, then to have to spend time and money on combating the mildew, to save the few remaining bunches.

The summer went better for Sauternes than elsewhere, which registered the least June and July rainfall of all the Bordeaux regions. And if the damp conditions of August and early September were very worrying for the reds, they were beneficial to Sauternes, laying the basis for an excellent early botrytisation. The totally dry and warm last 20 days of September perfected and concentrated it, and these first “tries” were to become almost universally the best and biggest part of the harvest.

By the first days of October, this first “trie” was completed, and with the help of a few showers, a second round of botrytis quickly formed. However, the nights were too cold to get it really going, and it stuck at “chocolat” stage for several days. The desired “rôti” stage only

came very slowly, so the 2nd and 3rd “tries” were undertaken very gradually during the rest of October, producing again fine, pure musts but, apart from a few exceptions, generally less strong than the first ones.

By the time the rain arrived 27th October, most of the harvest was in, but many estates waited the rain out, then picked a 4th or 5th “trie” in relatively good conditions right up to 20th November. Now the nights were warmer and the days rainier, so, although the grapes did not deteriorate during this time, the concentration got impaired and mostly these final pickings were not the best.

The final assemblages will be interesting to see, most containing a majority from the pure, fine, very concentrated botrytis of the first pick, which in most châteaux contained more of the year’s stylish Sauvignon than the blander Sémillon. The balance is generally of moderate alcohol, high sweetness and quite high acidity, stylistically quite similar to the excellent 07s, even sometimes finer, but possibly less rich and less complex. There seems to be some comparison to other vintages dominated by their first picks like 2000, made solely from the first pick (because it rained thereafter) so they are lighter and more steely than 08; 2002, made essentially from grapes that shrivelled in the September drought before botrytising, so just as fine and elegant as the 08s but not so fat; 2004, made from rapid September botrytisation and dehydration of a vast crop after a wet August, so less structured than the 08s; and 2006, made from quick botrytis in the humid September, so less vibrant than the 08s. Certainly it will be a very good vintage, giving Sauternes its unprecedented 14th very good vintage in a row. It would have been also the only even-numbered great vintage out of those 14 if the second pick had botrytised quicker and if the final picks had not been diluted by rain.

Yields are Lilliputian, with the crus classés clocking in at anywhere between 3 and 14 hectolitres per hectare total production.

Conclusion

There were some very relieved smiles on growers’ faces as the harvest drew to a close. Once again, how could such a year of crisis have been turned into such a tranquil dénouement? Even more so than in 2007, the play had touched on tragedy then had arrived at a happy ending, with everyone wondering where all that concentration had come from.

Now, this is the time of year when we are all thirsty for comparisons. With the caveat that such an exercise is always a bit dangerous since each vintage is always so different, what other vintages does this one resemble? Certainly 08, with its miraculously fine autumn, has nothing to do with the rainy autumn vintages 71-72-73-74-76-79-80-87-91-92-93-94-99-06. Nor of course does it have anything in common with the all-through hot, sunny conditions of 70, 75, 82, 85, 86, 89, 90, 95, 96, 00, 03 and 05. Comparison has to be with other good vintages when a dull summer gave way to a dry autumn like 78, 83, 01, 02 and 07 and with other very late harvests like 78, 88, 98 and 04.

Of these, the wines seem to bear little resemblance to the grassier 78s, to the harder 02s, to the lighter 07s, to the greener Cabernets of 88 and 98 or to the stricter 04s. The closer matches seem to be, both meteorologically and wine-wise to 83 and 01, but both of these made tighter-styled and leaner wines than 08, 83 presumably because the warm June-July of that year arrived on grapes that were less well advanced than 08, with the result that the similarly cool showery August and dry autumn did not have time to finish the ripening so effectively as in 08, and 01 because, for some reason, the drab June-July of that year never really got caught up by the hot August and the cool dry autumn. The best of the 08s will certainly have a darkness of colour, a concentration of middle-weight and a strength of ripe tannin that these vintages don’t have, whilst retaining that fundamental slightly sharper character of all the late-harvest vintages.

08 will never possess the strength of 00 or 05, or the opulence of 89 or 90, and nobody is saying this is a great vintage, but its density and weight clearly put it high in the ranks of “very good” vintages, well ahead of the lighter, more fruit-driven 07s, and, by dint of the riper final tannins, probably of the 06s too.

The best way to find out is to come to our primeur tastings: Sunday 29th March and Sunday 5th April 2009, where we will be showing this and the previous two vintages.

Appendix 1: The year’s monthly rainfall and temperatures

	<u>Rainfall</u> <u>2008</u>	<u>Normal</u> <u>Rainfall</u>	<u>Rainfall</u> <u>2007</u>	<u>Temp</u> <u>to normal</u>		<u>Sun hours to normal</u>		
				<u>2008</u>	<u>2007</u>			
11/07	34 mm	102 mm	68 mm					
12/07	75	106	49	- 0.9°	- 1.6°			
01/08	108	92	81	+ 1.9°	+ 1.9°			
02/08	31	83	139	+ 2.9°	+ 2.7°	<u>2008</u>	<u>Normal</u>	<u>2007</u>
03/08	102	70	93	+ 0.2°	+ 0.4°			
04/08	77	80	35	+ 0.6°	+ 4.4°	- 4%		+ 12%
05/08	152	84	141	+ 1.7°	+ 1.2°	- 8%		- 32%
06/08	79	64	57	+ 0.7°	+ 1.1°	+ 5%		- 11%
07/08	20	55	58	- 0.2°	- 1.1°	+ 11%		- 15%
08/08	83	60	84	- 0.4°	- 0.7°	- 7%		- 5%
09/08	66	90	36	- 1.2°	- 2.0°	+ 20%		+ 40%
10/08	90	94	48	- 0.4°	0.0°	+ 19%		+ 37%
Total	<u>917 mm</u>	<u>980 mm</u>	<u>889 mm</u>			<u>1480 h</u>	<u>1423 h</u>	<u>1445 h</u>
2005/06		901 mm						
2004/05		472 mm						

Figures are as registered at Méridnac
Important figures are in bold type

Appendix 2: Diary of the 2008 vintage’s harvest

<u>Date</u>	<u>Temp°C</u>	<u>Weather</u>	<u>Rainfall</u>	<u>Harvesting dates</u>
<u>September (Norm:12°5 - 23°7)</u>				<u>Dry white</u>
05 F	16-27°	sh	1 mm	I
06 Sa	16-22°	sh	1 mm	I
07 Su	12-22°	s	2 mm	I
08 M	10-28°	s	I	I
09 T	18-25°	s/sh	5 mm	I
10 W	17-28°	s		I
11 Th	15-23°	r	7 mm	I
12 F	12-18°	r	10 mm	I
13 Sa	10-20°	c		I
14 Su	11-21°	s/dr		I
15 M	10-21°	s		I

<u>Date</u>	<u>Temp°C</u>	<u>Weather</u>	<u>Rainfall</u>	<u>Dry white</u>				
16 T	9-20°	s		I				
17 W	9-24°	s/dr	1 mm	I				<u>Sauternes</u>
18 Th	14-21°	r/s	11 mm	I				1
19 F	16-23°	s		I				1
20 Sa	11-22°	s		I				
21 Su	10-23°	s		I	<u>Merlot</u>			
22 M	9-20°	s		I	I			1
23 T	8-21°	s		I	I			1
24 W	9-20°	s		I	I			1
25 Th	9-21°	s		I	I			1
26 F	10-20°	s		I	I			1
27 Sa	8-23°	s						
28 Su	8-22°	s						1
29 M	6-21°	s			I			1
30 T	9-18°	s			I			1
<u>October</u> (Norm: 9°5 - 18°8)								
01 W	14-18°	c/sh	2 mm		I			1
02 Th	13-19°	r	4 mm		I			1
03 F	5-15°	sh/c	4 mm		I			1
04 Sa	4-16°	c/s			I	<u>Cab Franc</u>		
05 Su	6-21°	c/sh	1 mm		I		<u>Cab Sauv</u>	
06 M	14-24°	c			I	I	I	2
07 T	12-20°	c/r	12 mm**			I	I	2
08 W	12-18°	s			I	I	I	2
09 Th	7-19°	f/s			I	I	I	2
10 F	7-22°	f/s			I	I	I	2
11 Sa	11-24°	s			I	I	I	2+3
12 Su	15-24°	s			I	I	I	
13 M	15-26°	s			I	I	I	
14 T	14-18°	f/s			I	I	I	
15 W	15-23°	f/s			I	I	I	
16 Th	13-20°	s/sh	1 mm			I	I	
17 F	10-20°	s				I	I	
18 Sa	7-17°	s					I	
19 Su	3-20°	s					I	
20 M	12-25°	s			I	I	I	
21 T	12-16°	r/s	7 mm		I	I	I	2+3
22 W	10-15°	s			I	I	I	2+3
23 Th	2-15°	s			I	I	I	
24 F	4-16°	s/c			I	I	I	
25 Sa	5-20°	s					I	3+4
26 Su	5-20°	s					I	3+4
27 M	10-15°	r	9 mm			I	I	
28 T	7-11°	c				I	I	
29 W	2-10	r	20 mm*			I	I	4
30 Th	5-13°	r	17 mm*			I		4
31 F	7-14°	r	12 mm*			I		

The tail-end of the Sauternes harvest continued, in wet and cold conditions, up to 19th Nov.

Figures are as at the Met Station in Mérignac.

* = Right Bank 4-5 times less rainfall than this figure; Médoc 40% more

** = Médoc half and Right Bank double this figure

Bold type = the main days of harvesting

c = Cloud **f** = Fog

s = Sun **r** = Rain

sh = Showers **dr** = Drizzle

Bill Blatch, Bordeaux, 25th January 2009

With the collaboration of meteorology assistants
Luke Attawinda and Sam S.Yoojle