

VINTAGE FACT SHEET

2010

THE 2010 GROWTH CYCLE

What we remember the most about how the 2010 vintage kicked off was the long-lasting winter and early drought in spring. The vines slowly began to wake up again in the cool temperatures of April and May. It only became warmer in the second half of May, but the vines did not burst into vigorous growth the way they usually do at that time of year.

Flowering started in the last week of May at Laroze, whose *terroir* is warm and supports early development. The Merlot flowered when the weather was damp and still cool for the season, but then the following week the fine weather returned with normal temperatures and some wind which was good for proper fertilisation of the flowers. The earliest flowering Merlot suffered from poor fruit set and *millerandage* (hens and chickens), the later Merlot was better and the Cabernet flowered magnificently.

At the same time, water reserves became imbalanced quite early. There was a serious lack of water in March, April and May with 30% less rainfall than average. This, together with the cool temperatures in spring, made the vines even slower to return to growth. Because they did not have enough water, the vines' roots could not take advantage of the organic material in the soil, so growth remained slow and uneven. In mid-June, a lot of bunches of fruit appeared on scrawny-looking canes.

In the middle of June, happily the rain returned and gifted us with 68 mm, then the heat hit us at the end of the month and at the beginning of July with temperatures 5 to 7°C above the seasonal average. It was 35°C (95°F) on 1st July and 36°C (97°F) on the 8th.

July was also very dry with 16.5 mm of rainfall instead of a seasonal average of 52 mm. In the hot sun, the grape skins grew thicker, developing rich polyphenol levels. The weather-induced failure of the fruit to develop affected the Merlots evenly, thinning them out naturally. The bunches of Cabernet, less affected by setting problems, were more regular and in naturally limited quantities. At the end of July, the temperatures returned to normal and the nights were more refreshing. In these conditions at the very beginning of August, the initial colour change of the grapes began heralding the onset of ripening.

The hydric stress that we look forward to in August to ensure proper ripening of the fruit, arrived a month and a half early and had an obvious impact on the vintage. August was cool and dry until the 20th, when the temperatures went up again and very hot dry weather ensued. The bunches swelled slowly, some becoming tight in places, and we began our leaf removal and fruit thinning campaigns on the 9th for three weeks with a small team, who tailored their work to the specific needs of each plot, because the onset of ripening was far from uniform and all the late-ripening bunches had to be removed. We scheduled one last campaign of leaf removal in September to have as much air as possible around the bunches, enabling them to dry quickly after any rain.

We had 20 mm of rainfall at the beginning of September, which was enough to give the vines some respite. By then, the very high temperatures were over and the vines required less water. The slightly cooler nights also produced some dew, which was sufficient to fuel the ripening of the grapes as they gradually grew bigger.

On 17th September, the first impressions on tasting the grapes were very promising. They had thick skins, were still crisp and were packed with amazing colour. What was surprising was how ripe the pips were; many of them already had that slight hazelnut taste, which contributes sweetness to the wine. The grapes were small and concentrated. At this point, the potential quality of the vintage appeared even higher than the previous year.

The 13 mm of rainfall that fell on September 23rd and 24th were a relief for the vines as they ended their growth cycle. The grapes grew bigger and their skins became more tender. The weather turned clearly colder on Friday 24th with minimum temperatures around 5°C (41°F) and maximum temperatures no higher than 21° (70°F), which is about 5 degrees lower than the seasonal average. This did not speed up grape ripening and it looked like we were heading for a late harvest date.

THE HARVEST

The rain we had on Monday 4th was very beneficial and improved the ripeness of the grape skins, which we found insufficient up to that point. The vintage had such great promise, it would have been a pity to miss the opportunity by going too fast, even if it is never easy to wait, when many others are already harvesting around you. We picked the Merlot from the 6th to the 13th October.

The Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes finished ripening in the very bright, sunny weather when daytime temperatures ranged between 17 and 20°C (63 and 68°F) and the nights were cool, averaging 5°C (41°F). We pick ed them on 21st and 22nd October. The bunches of fruit were very clean and healthy and the conditions were ideal for the Cabernet to finish ripening perfectly. Perfect timing.

THE WINE

We have in our hands a fine vintage with remarkable colour, good acidity and tannins that are just right, mellow, subtle and elegant. A great vintage!

2010 facts and figures

MID-FLOWERING DATES	Merlot: 1 st June	Cabernet: 1 st June	
MID-VERAISON* DATES	Merlot: 7 th August	Cabernet:	
HARVESTING DATES	Merlot: from 7 th to 13 th October	Cabernet Franc: 20 th October	Cabernet Sauvignon: 21 st October
WINE YIELD	38.5 hectolitres per hectare		
LENGTH OF BARREL AGEING	15 months		
%AGE OF NEW BARRELS	70% new barrels	20% 1-year-old barrels	
BOTTLING	Laroze: July 2012	Lafleur Laroze: May 2012	
NUMBER OF BOTTLES	Laroze: 83,000	Lafleur Laroze: 36,000	
%AGE 1 st and 2 nd WINE	Laroze: 70%	Lafleur Laroze: 30%	
BLEND	70% Merlot	25% Cab. Franc	5% Cab. Sauv.

*The date at which 50% of the grapes in each bunch have changed colour, indicating that ripening has begun.



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