

2016

WHY IS 2016 A GREAT VINTAGE AT LAROZE?

(I write "at Laroze", because what I experienced took place here.)

Hot weather in summer is usually followed by storms that more or less frequently provide water. The period between 14th July and 15th August is well-known for this pattern. In some years, there is never a substantially warm episode without a storm, but this was definitely not the case in 2016, even though we certainly had the high temperatures! We saw the clouds slowly forming in the sky and billowing up until around 4.0 in the afternoon, but then instead of continuing to swell before bursting into a storm, they shrank and collapsed leaving blue sky behind them around 7.0 in the evening. This was because temperatures fell towards the end of the day and nights were always cooler: differences between peak daytime and night-time temperatures reached as much as 14°C.

This explains the summer drought and the water stress, as well as the almost atypical aromatic character of this vintage – the cooler nights preserved the grapes' aromatic potential over the whole summer.

Mr. Benoît Decoster, who is a very keen follower of cosmic influences on weather, attributes this to the presence of the planet Neptune. Why not?

This summer was significantly brighter than the average and the extra light intensity contributed to the thickening of the grape skins, which meant more colour, aroma and tannin.

A long, beautiful Indian summer with no excessive temperatures, but cool nights, is one of the secrets behind a great Bordeaux wine. It allows the vines to recover from the summer heat, to regain strength with 50 mm of salutary rainfall, which we had in September, and to gently soften the grape skins, which are able to release perfectly ripened tannins, aromas from the preserved freshness and deep colour.

The end of the ripening process builds length and elegance in wines, which are hallmarks of well-ripened Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon grapes.

HOW IS THE GREATNESS OF THE 2016 VINTAGE EXPRESSED AT LAROZE?

The aromas of red and black fruit are very strong.

The aromatic freshness could make you expect a mouthfeel with a certain vigour, but this is not at all the case. The 2016 caresses the palate with dense, velvety tannins, it is rich, aromatic and has very elegant, clear-cut tannins. The finish echoes the fruity intensity on the palate with lovely persistence. It is full of flavour. Its freshness is enhanced by greater acidity than usual, which will support the wine as it ages.

A great vintage in Bordeaux depends on squaring the circle of combining ripe tannins with acidity.

2016 is definitely a great vintage!

