



Château Laroze

SAINT-ÉMILION  
*Grand Cru Classé*



## VINTAGE FACT SHEET

2016

### THE CULTIVATION YEAR IN 2016

#### Three lucky breaks

Very contrasted weather patterns and a vintage that was saved three times!

- Saved from excess water in mid-June after downpours in spring.
- Saved from drought in mid-September after three months with no rain.
- And saved quite simply by the long Indian summer, which allowed all three grape varieties to ripen perfectly.
- We were extremely lucky!

#### In summary

Drowned in pouring rain until 20<sup>th</sup> June, then suffocated by heatwaves and drought until mid-September with substantial hydric stress from mid-August to mid-September. 30 mm of rain fell on 13<sup>th</sup> September, then more came on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> October. The drought was over. There was no threat of botrytis rot, except for a few days just before harvesting ended. Ripening had been slow and late, the harvest had been delayed, but we were able to pick at the very best time with a beautiful Indian summer, which enhanced the quality of the Merlot, then the Cabernet Franc grapes. The growth cycle was extended by a week at the end of the season.

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## In detail

**January** brought more than a quarter of the annual rainfall or 260 mm, something I personally have never seen before.

The extremely mild temperatures were concerning for what may follow. They only went below freezing four times.

**February:** Mild temperatures and more abundant rain - 123 mm. If budding and flowering come early, there could be a threat from late frost and poor fruit set.

**March – April – 1<sup>st</sup> fortnight of May:** Budding was one week early. We were saved from the risk of frost, which was highest on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, unlike many other more unfortunate winegrowing regions. The weather turned cooler and slowed down growth, which gradually came back to an almost “normal” calendar. Rainfall was still high in March with 87 mm and 97 mm in April.

Slow growth reduced overall earliness in the cycle. The emergence of the canes was amazingly regular. Lovely initial growth of the canopy.

**May & June:** Storms threatened and broke out, causing a lot of damage in other French winegrowing regions.

Flowering began on 5<sup>th</sup> June and in the following week, conditions were conducive for flowers to form nicely with increasing temperatures and fine weather, despite 15 mm of rain falling during the night of Monday 6<sup>th</sup>. Flowering was very uniform. May had average rainfall.

The weather changed from 18<sup>th</sup> July: the rain stopped and temperatures became hot within days, sometimes topping 30°C (86°F). It was high time, because we had already had more rain – more than 700 mm – than in the whole year of 2015, which was relatively dry with 611 mm.

**31<sup>st</sup> July:** No rain since 20<sup>th</sup> June, i.e. for five weeks. Only 2.5 mm recorded in July. The old vines are good and green and are still growing. The Cabernet vines have lovely regular bunches of fruit, while the Merlot is uneven and needs some thinning out.

The grapes have swollen nicely, so there must still be water reserves in the ground for the vines, whose root systems are well established. Ripening should begin unhindered.

**August:** In the first fortnight of August, we only received 6.5 mm of water on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Night time temperatures were cool, followed by days with nice weather that became very hot and exceeded 35°C (95°F) around the 15<sup>th</sup>.

The onset of ripening took place normally, and was very regular and even. At the same time, the vines stopped growing; a good sign.

20 mm of rain would have helped to finish the onset of ripening quickly and to enable the grapes to fatten afterwards.

The harvest is announced for the end of September, so it doesn't look like it's going to be an early vintage.

On Friday 19<sup>th</sup>, we had 6.5 mm of rain, which totals 13 mm within two months for which the average is 110 mm, so about 10%. Unfortunately, the very hot weather

hasn't finished and temperatures of 37°C (99°F) are forecast for tomorrow, the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Drought plus heatwave.

The end of the onset of ripening has slowed down in the Cabernet Franc grapes – things are crawling along.

### September:

The very hot weather and drought persisted until 13<sup>th</sup> September, when in the evening a storm gave us 20 mm of providential rain, which wasn't too hard and didn't cause much erosion. This was so lucky! Then we got 10 mm more the following day. We just hoped that the vines hadn't suffered too much from the drought and could spring back to life enough to finish ripening the fruit through to the end.

The forecast looking forward predicts wind from the north with distinctly cooler temperatures. This is just perfect; the grapes will swell more slowly, avoiding the risk of bursting and rot should be contained. The harvest is still a long way off, judging from the phenolic ripeness of the fruit.

**22<sup>nd</sup> September:** Having walked round the different plots and tasted the grapes, it is apparent that the vines began to function again after the rain. There's no greenness and quality potential is high. The grape skins are losing their hardness, which resulted from the drought. We have fine weather and are full of hope. Both the Cabernet Franc and the Cabernet Sauvignon have amazing potential for quality.

**3<sup>rd</sup> October:** The second wave of 23 mm of rain that fell during the night of the 30<sup>th</sup> September, will enable the vines to soften the tannins, to make the wines more persistent and to make the grape skins more tender. Just a few more days now! There's no pressure from the threat of rot and we can just relax and wait. We have had 53 mm of rain in two weeks, so we don't need any more now. The temperatures freshened on the 4<sup>th</sup> and will remain cooler throughout the harvest period with a wind from the north and maximum temperatures during the day ranging from 17 to 21°C (62 to 70°F)! The grapes are ripening slowly until the end, and we started picking the Merlot on Friday 7<sup>th</sup>, and continuing from Monday 10<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 13<sup>th</sup>. The ripeness of the fruit is just right. I stopped picking until Monday 17<sup>th</sup> and we picked the Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon until the 19<sup>th</sup>.

We were definitely spoilt all the way through!

Vinification has never been so long; we were vatting the various plots for 30 to 38 days. We will finish running the wine off by 25<sup>th</sup> November, instead of at the beginning of November as is usually the case.

### 2016 facts and figures

MID-FLOWERING DATES	5 June	5 June	5 June
MID-VERAISON* DATES	Merlot: 13 August	Cabernet Franc: 17 August	Cab. Sauvignon: 12 August
HARVESTING DATES	Merlot: from Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> to Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> October	Cabernet Franc: from 17 <sup>th</sup> to 19 <sup>th</sup> October	Cab. Sauvignon: 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> October
PRODUCTION	25 000 bottles		
BOTTLING	Avril 2018		
PERCENTAGE OF ALCOHOL	13,5 %		

\*The date at which 50% of the grapes in each bunch have changed colour, indicating that ripening is underway

