

# BURGUNDY 2017 VINTAGE REPORT

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This is the vintage everyone has been waiting for. After years of famine, 2017 is, if not quite a feast, a very good meal that will keep hunger at bay. It is not an exaggeration to say that another short crop would have put the final nail in the coffin for a number of domaines. This precarious situation brings into sharp focus the uniquely human nature of the region.

While the weather conditions themselves were not as challenging as in 2016, vineyard management was essential in ensuring nature's generosity did not have a negative impact on quality. The vintage could have been an enormous crop and, where growers were greedy, dilution could be an issue. We pride ourselves on working with the most quality-focused vigneron, who took the difficult decision to prune their vines short in the spring, de-bud or carry out a green harvest, knowing that frost or hail could drastically risk their livelihood. After several short crops, this was a tough decision, but one which our growers did not hesitate to take, and one which has been vindicated in the quality of the wines.

This is arguably a vintage in which the vigneron played a larger role than the village, but it is worth highlighting the red wines of the Côte de Beaune. Despite successive years of hail and frost, Beaune, Pommard and Volnay offer real excitement and value in 2017. After the travails of its predecessor, 2017 was relatively straightforward, although it certainly sailed very close to the wind. At the end of April a cold snap descended. The Côte d'Or came together in solidarity, growers burning dampened straw bales to create cloud cover and raise temperatures to prevent disaster striking.

While this was largely successful, those in Chablis were not so lucky; with all of the Grands Crus and many top Premiers Crus badly hit, resulting in a loss of around 50 percent. In contrast to 2016, a warm, dry spring and summer followed, with relatively little disease pressure, but with rain at the right moments. Some hail hit Morey-St Denis on the 10th July, seemingly as punishment for having the audacity to have avoided the frosts in 2016. The warm and sunny conditions continued through July and August, meaning that maturity arrived quickly. Harvest began in the Côte de Beaune in the last week of August, with a relatively wide array of picking dates, but the fruit was of excellent quality.

## **The White Wines:**

The 2017 white wines are excellent and this is certainly one of the top vintages of recent years. While it is difficult to surpass the outstanding 2014s, growers, colleagues and I all struggled to find a superior vintage in the last dozen or so years. The wines display a charming amalgamation of 2015's ripe fruit with the vigour and tension of 2014, while the wines of Chablis are classically styled. Growers have reflected upon the issues of premature oxidation, taken various steps to rectify the situation and we feel that white Burgundy is truly back.

## **The red wines:**

The reds offer the kind of vintage we love; wines with balance and transparency. Rarely have I had so much pleasure and delight in tasting young wines from barrel. While there is not yet the density and concentration of 2015 or 2016, these are wines which will give enormous pleasure in youth and the medium term. Comparisons were drawn frequently with the 2000 vintage, a year which was charming in its youth and still gives great pleasure today.