



## 2013: very first impressions after the harvest

We just finished the 2013 harvest and here are my first impressions as the last press is still running.

It has been a complicated year, with the winter eating the spring and the cold lasting until the end of June. Happily we had a true summer that helped to catch up with part of the delay, but in spite of this 2013 is definitely to be considered a late vintage.

Once again the flower was hindered by the bad weather conditions and this time the Riesling, Muscat and Gewurztraminer have suffered from it, showing a lot of *coulure* and *millerandage* (hen-and-chicken).

On the other hand we have been spared by the numerous hail storms and the summer has been rather calm, unlike the autumn which has been soaked and was alternatively hot and cold.

We started picking on the 7<sup>th</sup> October with the Pinot Gris and have kept picking until the 25<sup>th</sup> without any break, since the weather and the quick evolution of the skins didn't allow any waiting. We didn't even try to make a *vendange tardive* with the Fronholz's Gewurztraminer as the grapes were so delicate they could barely hold on the vine stocks.

There's not a lot we can say about this vintage yet, but what is sure is that it shares with 2012 a difficult flowering, yet the yields are even smaller. It also has alcohol levels from before global warming and pronounced acidities, and remembers me of musts from the early '90s with a greater feeling of achievement as, since then, biodynamy has come into play.

Indeed, even if the berries were hanging by a thread, the juices flowing out of the press were clear and tasted pure and clean ; it is worth mentioning that we sprayed a silica 501 preparation before the September rains, in order to strengthen the skins and enhance the grapes' ripening. And our seeds were ripe despite sugar contents lower by 1° to 1.5° in potential alcohol, compared to the recent vintages.

This is where I make the analogy with vintages before global warming, that I set in 1997, and we can already say that 2013 will make lighter wines with a thirst-quenching freshness that will fulfil those who have nostalgia for the wines of yesteryear.

After all the real concern of the 2013 vintage will be about the yielded quantity : it is indeed the smallest of my 34 harvests, equal to 2010 ; and if we add 2012 it makes 3 crops out of the last 4 years that have been in deficit !

André Ostertag, Vigneron  
Epfing, le 30 octobre 2013

## **2013 or the Philosophers' Wine** **Reflections and first impressions after the spring bottling**

It goes the same for both vines and wines: there are two different ways of growing vines, as well as two different approaches to winemaking.

The first approach, whereby vines are put in chains and taken out of their natural environment through chemistry, is usually followed suit by a technological winemaking process during which wines, regarded as analytically quantifiable matter, are formatted like any manufactured products; and then, enriched with a full range of oenological additives.

This approach resembles more a legalized mass-illusion rather than the expression of the original terroir!

The second one focuses on taking good care of vines and helping them be part of their ecosystem -you set them free by making them self-contained-, by the way aka **Terroir**.

This alternative, that is, organic and biodynamic farming, is also extended in the cellar thanks to a "natural" approach diametrically opposed to the industrial one.

Making wines turns here into a watchful wait-and-see attitude; and, as René Lafon put it, "***Il faut savoir ne rien faire.***" - i.e. "we have to learn to keep our hands off."

Far from laissez-faire winemaking, this is rather an invitation not to act in a hurry, so as to patiently leave the wines take shape.

In fact, ***savoir ne rien faire*** comes down to being able to keep our fears in check and trust our wines. By doing so, winemaking becomes a true spiritual act, since the necessary work on ourselves is such a prerequisite to the work on wines.

And if we acknowledge vines can absorb the earth and sky energies that make the terroir's identity, shall we then ignore the vintner's spiritual impact on his/her wines, knowing that thoughts are another form of energy wine is receptive to ?

So it is important to enter -in a way- a state of awareness with our wines, in order not to have them under control but rather to get to know them, as well as to notify them of our intentions.

Making wines means talking to them to help them grow up and fulfil themselves. This is the true meaning of the word "***élever***" - i.e. *nurture* ; is it? *Nous élevons nos vins* just the way we nurture our children.

That being said, we shall bear in mind wines are a drink with the gift of feeding our bodies, minds and souls; this is digestible art, sort of!

And the quality of a foodstuff, like that of a work of art, is assessed on what each of them brings to their respective recipient.

Now we are a long way from the technical approach that reduces wines to a mere chemical equation; by paying them full spiritual attention, we breathe them that precious life they need to grow up.

The 2013 vintage has perfectly epitomised a winemaking approach enhanced through inner work on ourselves.

Indeed, first we were on a razor's edge during harvest, so we had to keep our heads cool and our nerves of steel; then, to trust native yeasts in spite of hard fermenting conditions; and, finally, to keep patience while fermentations were going on and on forever!

Nevermind. Since we had good faith in our grapes, of which wines are after all just the outcome or, should we say, transmutation, we were able to overcome our existential anguish and let wines get ready at their own pace.

And the effort did pay off since the 2013 vintage will almost be the *alter ego* of amazing 2012.

They already shared the same dark side as a result of a challenging flowering period, now there is also the same bright side.

Alcohol levels are down by 0.8% by vol. on average compared to 2012, which makes the wines a bit less powerful, but tell me, who will dare complain about this nowadays!

On the other hand, they have the same velvety *toucher de bouche* – *i.e. mouthfeel*, full of grace, and a little more acidity to them, so they look more tonic, with strong and incredibly fine noses.

This is how 2013 is shaping up to be 2012's younger brother, since our spring bottlings are now showing such an obvious kinship between these two vintages, both in terms of structure and tantalising taste.

André Ostertag  
Eufig, le 20 mai 2014