



2015 **2016** 2017
The waltz of the vintages

Here we are again in the late August days, at this exact shifting point between vintages : the 2015s have flown for good to all corners of this planet, the 2016s are ready for their bottling and their great dive in the world's deep ocean, and the 2017 harvest looks like it will begin in the very first days of September.

The cycle of wine is very much like an incessant dance, that dictates its frantic pace to the *vigneron* and imposes him to live in 3 simultaneous space-times :

The *current time*, equivalent to the vine's seasons, time and weather : it is the vintage to come, the future wines that are slowly outlined in the horizon as the season unfolds... it is *time « T-1 »*, the one that isn't yet.

The *alchemical time*, the pace of the dark cellar depth where the wines are slowly taking shape, the gestation time of the vintage in progress, growing and evolving in the vats' dark bellies... it is *time « T »*, the one that is becoming.

The *revealed time*, in which the achieved wines start their great journey from their land of origin to their final destiny, the time of the accomplished work... it is *time « T+1 »*, the one that is.

The *vigneron* is at the heart of this three-step waltz, making room for the upcoming vintage to take possession of the cellar by setting the newly born vintage free, so that it can itself replace the previous vintage gone so quickly, often already drunk, sometimes silently asleep in the depth of cellars, sheltered from the frenzy of the outside world.

This waltz is never ending just like the world's thirst, and when the vintage wheel turns it is always a moment of truth for the wines that suddenly step in the spotlights. Only then can hopes finally come true, or vanish for good in the cemetery of illusions.

But what does this turning point teaches us today about the last vintages ?

First, that the 2015s are way above our hopes, combining power and subtlety, built on an incredible strength that will allow them to withstand time with the insolent ease of those who know they are well-born. 2015 is undeniably a great vintage.

The 2016s however, unlike the 2015s, have been forged in pain. With a complicated gestation troubled by mildew and hostile conditions, 2016 has fed so many doubts and questions that for months we thought we were going to lose it ; but it ended up giving birth to a wonder.

And that's probably because, living 2016 from the inside, we have never stopped believing in it because we knew that, behind their apparent suffering, our vines would not give up and would put up to their last breath of energy in their precious grapes.

And even though 2016 was not born a lord, that vintage is now emerging victorious from all the ordeals that it went through.

2016 has all I like in a wine, the transparency and the purity of a mountain lake, a sensual texture and a long saline imprint from the rock of the origins. But patience will be required, because the bottling shook them a bit.

The Rieslings, that were said to be difficult, are simply splendid and have nothing to be ashamed of compared to their glorious predecessors.

The Sylvaner has a delightful freshness, far from the extravagant opulence of the 2015 ; The Pinots Blanc and Gris will benefit from some time in the bottle to come out fully, but that put aside they are light, tonic and dynamic as we like them.

The Muscat, that was widely disparaged in 2016, is exquisitely sapid thanks to the Fronholz terroir that always brings it up. Too bad that the 1er cru classification wants to exclude it on the pretext of restraining the number of grape varieties on a single lieu-dit.

The Gewurztraminers have not benefited from favourable conditions to make *vendanges tardives*, but it was the perfect year to remake « *à l'orient d'Eden* » on the Fronholz parcels, a wine that was initially created in 2013 for cooler and lighter vintages.

And what can we say about the Pinot Noir, other than it is in my opinion one of the greatest vintages to date at the domaine, and we owe it to Arthur who came back from his travels with a science of the whole bunch that I personally never had, but which resultst I find amazing.

Arthur also made 3 wines entirely on his own this year, and he will communicate about them when he thinks that they are ready.

I will spare you the refrain about the fermentations this year, you know it well already and it is certainly not going to change soon. Could that be one of the numerous and unpredictable consequences of climate change ? As far as we're concened the link seems more than obvious...

In the end, 2016 turns out to be a real little gem, and once it comes out of its gangue, this vintage has the sparkle of a diamond, a subtle charm and flair which sets it far from the exhuberance of the 2015 except for the number of years they both have ahead of them.

André Ostertag, vigneron-jardinier
August 2017

*«Il faut beaucoup de silence pour faire de la musique,
Il faut beaucoup d'air pour faire de la poésie
Il faut beaucoup d'eau et d'au delà pour faire du vin»
A.O.*