



2017

quick but nonetheless soothing

Late 2016 : once all the grapes were pressed and the fermentations routine had started in the cellar, once again it didn't take long before the wines fell asleep as a very early winter suddenly took the vineyard by surprise. The usual scenario was repeating : wines dozing the whole winter time, with still a lot of sugar left to ferment, meaning that the return of the spring would be a busy time in the cellar, and busy it was !

Yet there is always something positive in each complication, and while we are now perfectly used to these languid fermentations (but how good for the wines' complexity), it had been a while since the vines outside had seen such a punctual, cool and wet winter. And after such a difficult season for all kinds of organisms, it was more than welcome for the underground world to be able to fully regenerate.

2017 was therefore starting under the best auspices, and while there were a few climatic bumps without which we would lose our bearings, the season unfolded without major trouble. As if they were making light of the previous year's sequelae, the vines grew at an impressive pace, should I even say with a certain pride, giving us faith for the months to come.

Sadly it didn't go that smoothly for many european wine regions, whose hopes of a great vintage were swept away over just 2 nights of an unprecedented frost wave that ravaged thousands of hectares. Even at our doors it wiped out hundreds of hectares in the most vulnerable sites. Miraculously we escaped it, high perched on our old Epfig hill, and only a few buds and younger vines were killed by the freezing flames.

Radiant and perfectly balanced, the vines finally set the tone of the vintage, appeasing us vigneronns, first worried until that April incident and then staggered by this spectacular renaissance.

But such a feat necessarily has a cost : having to regenerate its weakened woods from the exhausting previous year, the vine only produced little fruit in order to be able to direct as much energy as possible into its skeleton, infinitely more precious to them that the year's production. We won't blame it for that : the true essence of our work is about being patient and respectful of nature's cycles, not about forcing the vines to produce more than they can naturally handle.

Once the growing season was over, a heatwave arrived and remained, and the grapes' phenolics started to ripen while not really making any juice. At that point we understood that 2017 would be an early vintage, but above all, given the extreme temperatures and the lack of water, we were expecting a very difficult end of season.

However, even though we stayed on a knife edge during all August, once more we witnessed the results of our work in the vineyard, especially focused on draught management these last few years. While many vineyards were switching off because they couldn't access any water, our more balanced, deeply rooted and less loaded vines reacted well and didn't seem to be stressing that much even though the conditions were rather extreme.

No maturity blockage was observed in our vines and the proof is that 2017 was one of the very few vintages where phenolic ripeness was ahead of technological ripeness, allowing us to harvest each plot at its optimum stage, without letting the sugar shooting up, and keeping high acidities for such a dry year.

Our harvest started on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September with the Auxerrois, followed by the Pinot Noir *les jardins* and Pinot Gris Fronholz. After 3 intense weeks of harvest under perfect conditions, we finished the dry wines on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September in the Muenchberg grand cru.

2017 also allowed us to make beautiful *vendanges tardives* and *sélections de grains nobles*, picked late October in very small quantity but with a great quality of botrytis.

Cherry on the cake, there's no weak variety in 2017 and each wine this year embodies the finest expression in its class.

2017 has made wines of flesh and concentration, powerful and energetic, with a very dry balance combined to a sweet texture like a juicy, fully ripened fruit.

They are wines of volume, of mouthfeel, of structure. The perfectly healthy grapes made very pure aromatic expressions, and the acidities are high but ripe, structuring without being hard.

2017, first vintage made in large part by Arthur, might be one of the greatest ever made here, and it will probably compete with the most glorious vintages in terms of longevity.

Cheers,  
Team Ostertag