



Friday 18 September 2009
Day Eleven

A New Moon



Today is a “fruit” day in the lunar calendar, which is favorable for developing the fruit flavors in the wine— a promise of some delicious delights to come.

With the Côte de Beaune harvested, this morning we dodged the raindrops and returned to **Gevrey-Chambertin Les Evocelles** in the En Foule section of the vine. This area of sloping vines is a tricky one to pick as it was planted in 2002 in staggered rows rather than in the traditional straight lines. It has to be cultivated by hand because it contains as many as 36,000 plants per hectare as opposed to a traditional average of just 10,000. This competition between the vines produces many fewer bunches – an average of four per vine as opposed to the usual eight – but they are naturally much more concentrated. It is something of an acrobatic experience for the pickers as the plants are staked just 50cms apart rather than a meter. Harvesting here requires a certain degree of contortion between the stakes and the slimmer pickers clearly have an advantage.

This is the fourth harvest from this plot and the crop was superb with a good level of potential alcohol and just 3% discarded. Vinified in stainless-steel vats, these magnificent grapes with wonderful *millerandage* deserve to be vinified with only 30% destalked. They are being kept cold between two layers of Carboglace. This *cuvée* will be vinified separately. The 42 year-old Les Evocelles vines have character and with age have acquired both a certain gentleness and ruggedness. These young vines seem riper than one would expect after seven years, but nonetheless betray a certain nervousness, a more lively freshness and greater energy in the resulting wine. With these two strikingly different personalities in one single *terroir*, opinions are split: How to choose between them? Indeed, should a choice be made? For how much longer will they be too young?

A short afternoon was spent a little farther south, again in **Gevrey-Chambertin** but this time with the **Premier Cru Bel Air**. This is another of the Domaine’s mythical vines, which grows on the edge of a forest at the top of the hill beside those cursed Austrian pines that have such a dreadful influence on its production. So as usual the yields were low which is a shame for this vine, which grows on inhospitable rock, and thus gives rise to fabulous bunches. The day finished an hour at early at 4.30pm when the job was done.

In Premeaux, our brave and dedicated team finished off the last four crates of **Musigny** under a wonderful yet heavy sun. The little n° 31 vat reserved for this special wine will not, alas, be fuller than usual but it does contain a splendid *marc* of **70% whole bunches**, kept cool for a few more days so the fermentation begins as gently as possible. With this wine and all the other *grand crus*, Pierre wants to follow the **lunar cycle** of 28 days for all the stages of the wine. It is the start of maceration that sets the pace and devatting and racking off should also be done on “fruit” days if nature allows. This is a total quest for harmony.

Meanwhile, our first vat, the n°5, has finished fermenting. It will be kept at 26°C in order to extract the very essence of the grapes. We are seeing intense colors, vat after vat, and twelve are now fermenting. Jean-Luc is carrying out a non-stop task of putting the whites in barrels. Tomorrow night the end of the harvest will be celebrated with the *paillée*, and we draw courage from this as we have to soak, rinse and wedge the barrels in neat rows before they can be filled. The appearance of the cellar changes from day to day as it fills with casks.



All the harvesting has been done under a **waning moon** that, it is said, concentrates the aromas. Of course, there are many elements that must come together before we finally dare say this is an “exceptional” year, especially when the stars get involved too!