



Saturday 19 September 2009
Day Twelve

The Last Day

The rain we have been promised for some days now finally arrived last night. This morning was a disaster with very heavy showers bucketing down on a washed-out landscape and Pierre hesitated before giving the green light to the pickers. Only the winery team will enjoy the promised shorter day: With the mud clinging to their boots, the pickers will have to head out again in the afternoon. Fine weather for snails means working at a snail's pace.

One plot remained to be harvested. Amazing as it may seem, Pierre almost forgot the Pinot Noirs **En Bollery**. Its flatness accentuated the impact of the rain, which couldn't drain away, and the trucks had to limit their loads to avoid getting stuck in the mud. Thierry, our team leader, was not there to lift the moral of the troops. His second-in-command, Jean-Claude Seguin, held the fort while Thierry got down to the all-important task of preparing for tonight's *paulée* celebrations, a job that would take him all day along with Christian Lapouge. This year, we'll be enjoying spit-roasted lamb and chicken, which requires a lot of organization. We await the feast with anticipation.

At around 9.30am, the rain stopped. The Montagne de Beaune glowed like a mirage among the clouds, the sky cleared, and incredible as it seems, a glorious sun reappeared and shone for the rest of the day. The rain is not a problem for the grapes as it takes two days on the vine for it to be absorbed. If we'd picked tomorrow, the berries would have been diluted by 30%. In the event, it was the perfect time to pick them as two weeks ago, the fruits weren't ripe.



In the winery, the arrival of grapes – still just as high in anthocyanines concentrated in the skins – has now slowed. For the first time, we're giving their yeasts an energy boost by oxygenating the white juice with a powerful jet to aerate it before transferring to barrels. The casks are only filled up to 210 liters to leave some room for bubbling during fermentation and the bungs are left slightly askew so the CO₂ can escape. **Intense aromas** of pear and toasted wood – another very positive sign – are forced out of the barrel as they are filled, permeating into the surroundings.

And today we continued with the **baptism of the newcomers**, that began yesterday with Isabelle. Today, it was Fred Ligier's daughter Marie and then Maxime who received a grape shampoo. Some pay a lot of money for beauty treatments so high in polyphenolics! The afternoon ended with a water fight with all hands on deck.

At 4.30pm, there was just enough time to grab a quick shower before the *paulée*. It was a memorable feast for this particularly intense and magnificent year that will stick in our minds as the start of a **great vintage**. The hardest work is nonetheless yet to come to turn the superb raw material into unforgettable wine. And this is where Pierre steps in, the most passionate of us all who faces the most challenges because every decision he makes regarding maceration, good extraction but no more, *pigeages*, pumpings over, devatting, vertical pressing and ageing must be taken with surgical precision. But it's a challenge he loves, and you'll be able to follow his work through our letters, one for every season, offering a sneak peak of a great year for Burgundy: 2009!

