



The 2012 Burgundy Harvest

September 2012

Two thousand and twelve is an exemplar of the fact that the quality of a vintage is dependent on the weather from mid-July onwards - one would have said first August onwards in the days before Global Warning. It matters not, except from the point of view of the quantity of the harvest, whether the spring and early summer conditions are fine or not. The quality is decided by what the climate is like in August and September, that is by the month's run up to the harvest, and the weather during it.

The first half of 2012 could hardly have been worse. While March was mild, April, May and June were almost uninterruptedly cold, wet and miserable. The development of the vine was retarded, the threat of mildew and oïdium was rife (and hardly had you applied a treatment than the rain would wash it away and it would be necessary to repeat the process), the flowering was late and drawn out, and there was extensive hail damage, particularly on June 30th and August 1st. The hail struck mainly in the Côte de Beaune and especially on the hillside above Puligny and in Volnay - and at the best (southern) end of Volnay at that. Apart from the southern part of Nuits-Saint-Georges the Côte de Nuits seems to have survived unscathed. Naturally - you have to be a bit of a pessimist to be a farmer - growers were fearing the worst. '*Une année de merde*', was the pronouncement of one lady in Volnay not accustomed to using coarse language. For not only was there the hail damage, but, especially in the white wine villages, *coulure*, mildew and oïdium.

But in the end - quality-wise - 2012 has turned out, not merely 'all right', but really very good indeed, if not perhaps even very fine. I have already heard the wines referred to as 'classic'. There are some who regard the potential of 2012 reds as superior to anything recent, and that includes 2010, 2009, 2005 and other years.

The explanation, simply, is that from mid-July onwards the weather was warm, sometimes hot, mainly dry, and extremely sunny. It could hardly have been better. And this weather continued through August and well into September. While the summer heat cooled off somewhat as the harvest approached it remained largely dry, and if a bit nippy over-night from time to time (which preserves the acidities), nevertheless nice and warm in the afternoon.

The vintage generally started on Monday 17th September for the red wines of the Côte de Beaune and the southern Côte de Nuits, and was finished by the following week-end. Many in Gevrey, however, waited until Friday 21st or Monday 24th. Meanwhile the chardonnays had been harvested from the 14th

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or 15 onwards. Happily the vintage was only rarely interrupted by rain. The fruit remained concentrated and healthy, with both good sugar levels and good acidities.

So we have very little wine – in some cases, where there was the worst of the hail damage, only half a crop – but what remains shows deep colour, plenty of backbone, no shortage of tannin (but sophisticated tannins), very good acidity and concentrated, profound, rich fruit. The aromas in the growers' cellars are intoxicating. The whites are fine too. A vintage for the long term, but a pretty good one.

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