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Vintage 2023

**Bordeaux
Spain
Italy
Napa Valley**



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Vintage 2023

Bordeaux

the many facets

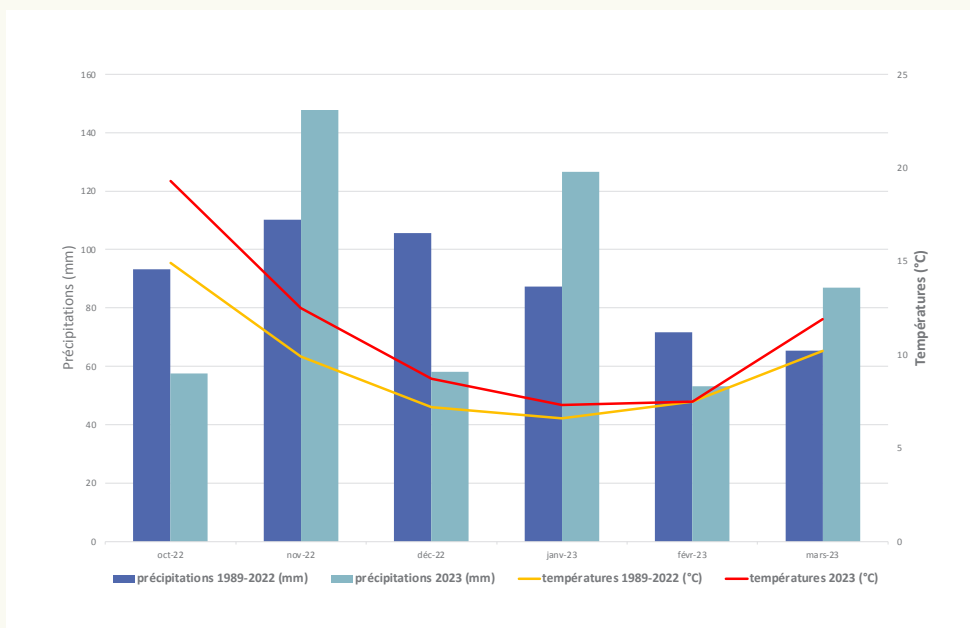
When people talk about Bordeaux wine, they often say that it is impossible to sum up the region in a few characteristics. Bordeaux is diverse, multifaceted and heterogeneous, and this was particularly the case in 2023.

Here is a review of the variations observed by our winemaking teams who followed the twists and turns of a vintage filled with surprises.

VARIED RESPONSES TO THE MILDEW THREAT

Autumn (2022) was very warm following on from a hot summer. Winter was slightly cooler than the previous year (temperatures dropped significantly at the start of January), remaining within the ten-year average. Temperatures dipped below 0°C during 17 nights, confirming a typically cold winter within the 20-year average.

Rainfall was in the seasonal norm, with considerable variations from one month to the next, and winter was very typical of an oceanic climate with moderate precipitation.



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**RAINFALL &
 TEMPERATURES DURING
 WINTER 2023 COMPARED
 TO THE TEN-YEAR AVERAGE
 (1989-2022)**

Spring was warmer than usual, with bud break occurring in the last few days of March. These conditions were conducive to even bud break throughout the region. Frost in early April had no significant impact on bud break and yields.



April was fairly warm and wet compared to the seasonal average (+1°C in April and May, +3°C in June). The combination of fairly warm temperatures and regular rainfall – remaining within the average range in terms of volume – led to a significant mildew threat.

“ **The vineyards therefore had to be monitored meticulously, with flawless timing of spraying and exemplary vineyard operations.** ”

This threat became stronger during fruit set in June (humid environment, alternating hot and rainy spells) and led to low yields in places. Vine growth was vigorous, which increased the risk of the spread of mildew and black rot.

The vineyards therefore had to be monitored meticulously, with flawless timing of spraying and exemplary vineyard operations. Winegrowers also had to be increasingly precise and responsive, whether they practised integrated, organic or biodynamic viticulture.

From this perspective, wide variations were observed, and the consequences of economic, technical and human-related issues varied: some producers suffered very dramatic losses, while others experienced very limited attacks.

Flowering unfolded in ideal conditions during a spell of fine, dry and windy weather, which facilitated pollination. The flowers, and later all the bunches, were fertilised very evenly.

● **THE SITUATION IN THE BORDEAUX VINEYARDS DURING FRUIT SET WAS VERY MIXED**

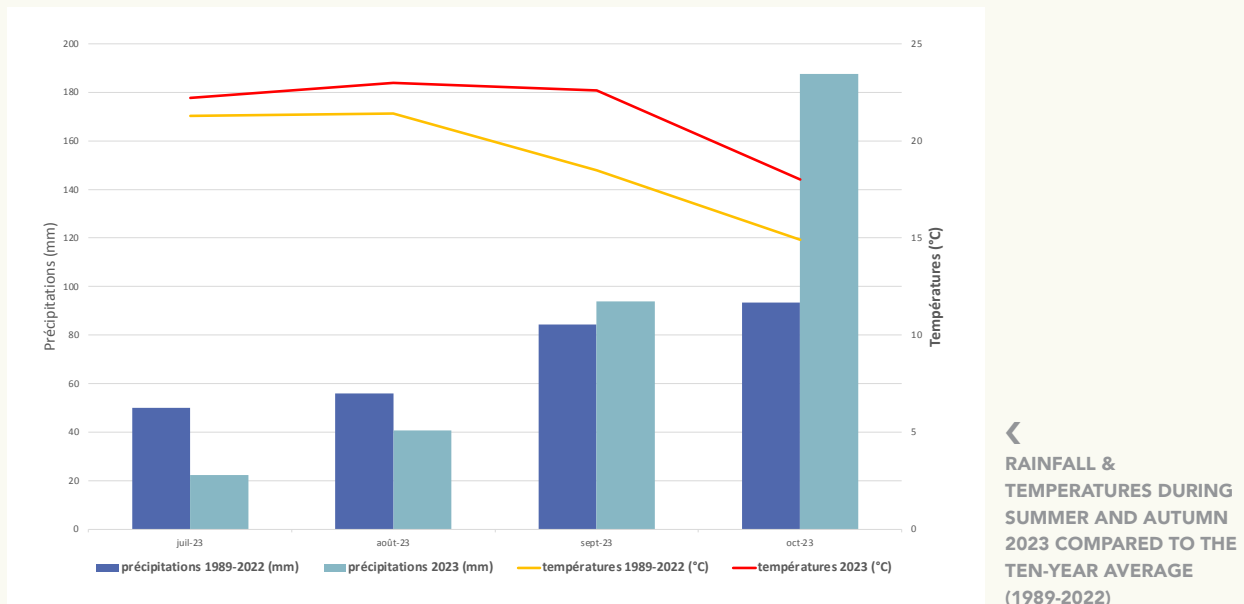
The situation in the Bordeaux vineyards during fruit set was very mixed. Some estates managed to mitigate the threat of mildew and black rot in plots where vines were healthy and yields were high while others suffered somewhat catastrophic crop losses.

In light of this, winegrowers had to step up their efforts to ensure that optimum ripeness was achieved. A wave of clean-up picking was undertaken to regulate the sometimes overly generous vines and to remove bunches damaged by mildew.

It later became evident that the efforts made by the teams to restore balance in the vineyards were crucial to ensuring the quality of the wines. Winegrowers' viticultural choices also contributed to the heterogeneity of the vintage.

A COOLER SUMMER COMPARED TO 2022 WITH A DISCREET VINTAGE TAKING SHAPE

After abundant rainfall in June which caused the berries to swell considerably, véraison (colour change) took place between 10 and 12 July (followed by mid-veraison on 24 July) in fairly dry conditions, with a slight water deficit (-90mm in July). Temperatures peaked in late June and early July (but only reached 28°C, compared with 31°C in 2022). From mid-July onwards, cooler conditions set in, both in terms of minimum and maximum temperatures (27°C compared with 30°C in 2020 and 2022).



Véraison ended in early August, and remained typical, especially compared to 2022 when it was inhibited by higher temperatures.

August was cooler than normal (21°C during the first 20 days of August, compared with an average of 26.5°C in 2022), and the rain swelled the berries, causing a risk of slight dilution and lack of concentration. Ripening seemed slower than usual, as was the case in 2022 when maximum temperatures were close to 34°C, although the maximum average was around 26.5°C in 2023.

A HEATWAVE BETWEEN 18 AND 24 AUGUST THAT CHANGED THE FACE OF THE VINTAGE FOR GOOD

Summer saw drought conditions and high temperatures (2°C above average), which boosted the ripening of the white grape varieties, harvested from 23 August onwards. The skins turned golden and the berries became concentrated. The berries were fresh and aromatic, with moderate levels of potential alcohol (12.5 to 13% abv).

A PARTICULARLY LONG HARVEST (LASTING FROM 20 AUGUST TO 8 OCTOBER)

Temperatures rose again between 4 and 7 September when the red grape varieties grown on young vines or planted on sandy and gravelly soils were picked. Rainfall around 10-12 September (35 mm on 12 September) delayed the harvest until the second half of September. While the rain slightly diluted the early-ripening Merlot grapes,



the Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon and the later-ripening Merlot picked in early October enjoyed an Indian summer in September and early October (30°C until 12 October). The harvest was a series of fits and starts. Plots were frequently divided up, and the grapes were picked in several passes in response to the significant heterogeneity of the grapes.

WITH REGARD TO WINEMAKING, THE RATHER DRY RIPENING CONDITIONS HAD NO IMPACT ON ACIDITY

Total acidity and pH levels were suitable, while alcohol levels were unequivocal (between 13 and 13.5% abv).

The aim was to properly evaluate the dilution of the Merlot grapes picked before the September rainfall. Traditionally, in heterogeneous years (between plots, but also on the same plot), the ratio between pomace and grape juice is fine-tuned and the balance is restored where necessary.

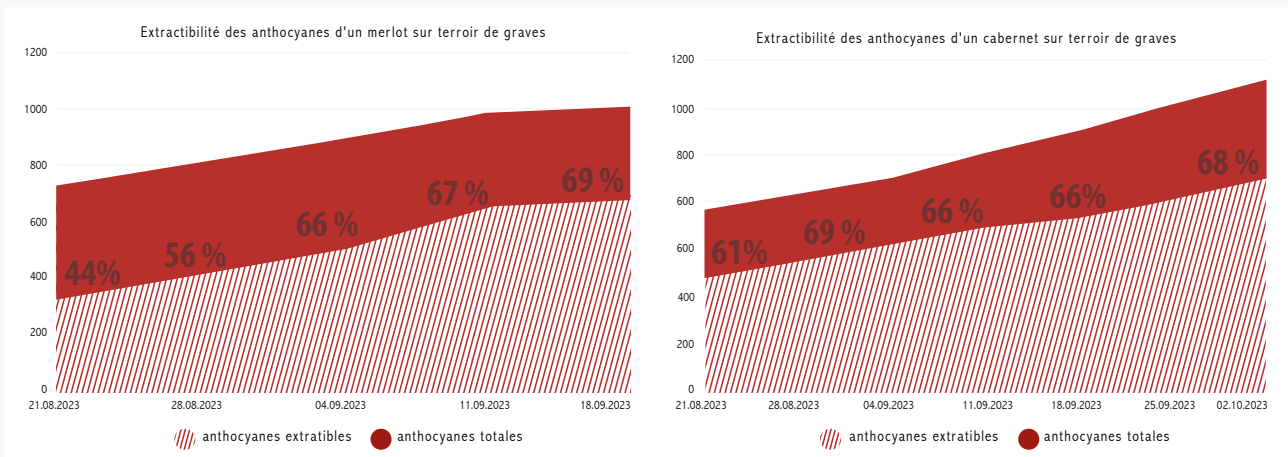
For the grape varieties harvested after this wet spell, winegrowers benefited from an idyllic

“ The harvest was a series of fits and starts. Plots were frequently divided up, and the grapes were picked in several passes. ”

Indian summer, allowing the Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon to ripen in perfect conditions. High temperatures in September caused shrivelling on certain bunches. Excessive shrivelling can lead to a taste of dried fruit, disrupting the aromatic precision always sought-after. Today's sorting tables are perfectly suited to managing this type of disparity.

A comparison of the two anthocyanin extractability profiles for Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon shows that it was important to wait for the right level of ripeness, reached in the last week of September for the Merlot and in early October for the Cabernet Sauvignon.

“ The aromatic potential was good, with excellent aromatic intensity and ripe fruit flavours. ”



EXTRACTABILITY OF ANTHOCYANINS

Extractions were moderate and gentle techniques were used on the pomace to extract the right polyphenolic compounds, without bitterness or imbalances in the tannic structure.

○ **The tannin and anthocyanin potentials** were in the normal range: 700-1000 mg/L of anthocyanins for tannin values of around 3.5 g/L, resulting in wines with moderate power and sufficient concentration mid-palate.

○ **The aromatic potential** was good for all grape varieties, with excellent aromatic intensity and ripe fruit flavours. The weather conditions in September and October eliminated any signs of herbaceous notes.

Malolactic fermentation got under way quickly, benefiting from a very warm autumn with no cold spells, and resulting in rapid ripening in November.

AN ENJOYABLE, DELICIOUS AND EASY-TO-DRINK 2023 VINTAGE

The white wines are elegantly balanced and easy to drink, with reasonable alcohol levels and an abv of around 13%.

The pH levels are between 3.1 and 3.2, guaranteeing a long finish. Lees stirring in barrels and vats between September and December enabled us to build the palate and add texture and consistency to the wines.

The Sauvignon Blancs and Gris picked early in late August add brilliance and yellow and tropical fruit aromas with no signs of herbaceousness.

The Semillon grapes were fortunately picked before the mid-September rains, giving the blends a fleshy texture.

The reds are well-balanced. 2023 is a vintage without excess and opulence. We were able to harvest ripe, healthy grapes in what turned out to be an interminably long harvesting period. Harvesting the grapes in several passes allowed us to pick the grapes at optimum ripeness and



with different, complementary profiles. From this perspective, blending is looking exciting, and we will be paying close attention to the quality of the tannins, to ensure they don't show any hardness and instead retain all the roundness and silkiness we observed at the start of fermentation. ■

FIVE KEY FACTORS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE 2023 VINTAGE

- A mildew attack in June created considerably heterogeneous grapes
- Rainfall in mid-September redistributed the vintage
- After a cool start to the season, an Indian summer gave another face to this vintage
- The harvest was widespread, lasting from 20 August to 8 October
- A magnificent year for Cabernet Sauvignon (particularly from the Left Bank).



Vintage 2023

Spain

September rainfall altered the profile of the 2023 Spanish vintage

A wide variety of Spanish winegrowing climates led to a more heterogeneous 2023 vintage with fairly moderate, less extreme characteristics compared to 2022. The tale of a contrasted Spanish vintage.

*By Mikaël Laizet, consulting oenologist
and associate at the Rolland & Associés laboratory*

A MODERATE CLIMATE

Winter 2023 was relatively dry, with spring-like conditions close to the ten-year average (not too dry, not too wet), followed by a fairly warm summer in Aragon, although significantly cooler compared to 2022. The weather became very hot and dry from mid-August onwards (except in Navarre which saw unusual precipitation in September). At the same time, the region of Rioja recorded heavy rainfall in September up until the harvest.

The more moderate weather last year allowed vine growth to unfold in less extreme conditions. The resulting vintage is well-balanced (particularly in Aragon) and traditional in style, marked by roundness, ripe fruit notes, and good concentration, with no excess.

THE HARVEST LASTED FROM 20 AUGUST TO EARLY OCTOBER

The harvest began on 20 August in Aragon. In Navarre, the Chardonnay grapes were picked at the very beginning of September to prevent water saturation in the grapes, soon followed by the Merlots which were picked at a steady pace. Since they were not yet ripe, the Cabernet Sauvignon grapes were not impacted by abundant rainfall in September (saving them from burst berries due to excess water). They ripened slowly in rather cool conditions. The resulting wines are well-balanced with a certain freshness and style influenced by the nearby Atlantic Ocean, which perfectly reflects the region's altitude (300 m).

The mood was very different in the Rioja region, with welcome rainfall just before the harvest. High summer temperatures sometimes damaged the vines which began to feel the effects of water stress; rainfall in September was therefore a godsend for the vintage.

In Aragon, the harvest took place in hot yet serene conditions, with only a few storms to cool down the high temperatures. This vintage is rather well-balanced and also more refreshing than in 2022.

ARAGON, NAVARRE: THE KEY FACTORS TO UNDERSTANDING THE 2023 VINTAGE

The 2023 vintage is marked by strong variations typical of the Spanish terroirs, which extreme weather conditions in recent years (particularly in 2022) had caused us to forget. Decisive factors therefore varied significantly from one wine region to the next.



- **In Aragon**, which suffered from drought conditions, irrigation clearly played a key role once again this year, supporting vegetative growth. Good conditions (fewer heatwaves) in the runup to the harvest made it possible to pick the grapes “à la carte” over a longer period to obtain just the right level of ripeness, when logistics allowed it.
- **In Navarre** – vine growth benefited from ideal conditions, and the quality of the vintage was determined in early September during heavy rainfall. Leaf thinning had to be carried out in the Merlot plots to prevent the development of *Botrytis cinerea* and ensure the grapes were picked at optimum ripeness.
- **In the Murcia region**, spring and early summer were very wet, which is really rare in the South. Despite winegrowers’ fears, the vineyards were spared from mildew attacks thanks to their isolated position and altitude (1200 m).

Healthy plant growth, a large leaf canopy and no coulure (shot berries) were therefore observed, resulting in the need for leaf and bunch thinning. The Tempranillo grapes ripened slowly and evenly without too much water stress.

GENTLE EXTRACTION

The vintage required gentle extraction, lasting three to four weeks on average, at temperatures around 26-28°C (particularly in Aragon, Rioja and Murcia). The silky tannins were of very high quality (particularly the Tempranillos) and required less ageing and lighter toasting.

The resulting 2023 vintage is very easy to drink and particularly well-balanced with no signs of heaviness.

A modern-day vintage, just as we like it, which we are keeping a close eye on! ■



Vintage 2023

Italy

revealed itself in all its facets

In 2023, significant climatic variations from one region to the next were also observed in Italy. This heterogeneous vintage was marked by periods of drought, heatwaves reaching 48°C, and long spells of rainfall.

Focus on Tuscany and Umbria where Julien Viaud, an associate oenologist of the Rolland & Associés laboratory observed the growing season.

A WET SPRING GAVE WAY TO A HOT, DRY SUMMER

Weather during spring was similar to what is typically seen in Bordeaux: April, May and June were mild and fairly wet, resulting in a significant threat of mildew in the vineyards.

Weather conditions remained unchanged up until July, followed by a particularly hot and dry summer in Tuscany and Umbria. The Merlots ripened very easily, reaching optimum maturity fairly early, at the beginning of September. Apart from the estates which had to contend with the threat of mildew, elsewhere the vintage was fairly homogeneous and yields were high.

A HARVEST LASTING UNTIL THE END OF OCTOBER

The Merlot harvest unfolded during the first few days of September, before 100 mm of rain fell mid-September. Pickers then had to wait around fifteen days for the vines to take up water before harvesting the later-ripening Merlots and the Cabernets which were slightly diluted by the rainfall. Fortunately, the rainwater ran off easily on the clay slopes and even

A VINTAGE DOMINATED BY MERLOT AND CABERNET

All the conditions were met to ensure a wonderful 2023 vintage in Italy: flowering, fruit set and véraison (colour change) were particularly homogeneous, the summer was warm yet with no heatwaves, ripening took place evenly, and to top it all off, winegrowers were blessed with a magnificent Indian summer.

The grapes were wonderfully ripe, resulting in aromatic wines without the excessive power typically seen in vintages produced in hot climates. These wines are concentrated and refreshing with well-balanced acidity and no signs of heaviness or too high alcohol levels, thanks to rainfall in September.

proved beneficial to the Cabernet Sauvignon (50% of the Ornellaia blend). The harvest seemed as though it would never end, constantly stopping and starting. The grapes were harvested little by little, during warm, windy days in order to pick at optimum ripeness. The harvest drew to a close in mid-October.

“ The grapes were harvested little by little, windy days in order to pick at optimum ripeness. ”

Although the Sangiovese grapes were more heterogeneous and the Sagrantino were harvested later than usual, the early-ripening Merlot and Cabernet undoubtedly enjoyed an excellent year! ■





Vintage 2023

Napa Valley

an idyllic vintage in California

Every vintage is different. It may sound obvious but it is worth reiterating. In California, 2023 was an incredible vintage synonymous with reliability and moderation, a combination which is becoming less and less common. So we should savour it.

The weather was quite homogeneous in California: a fairly wet winter was followed by a dry, mild spring, although still rather cool until May with scattered showers which provided the region with very useful water reserves. Summer was also temperate, with only two days of heatwaves beyond 35°C. Winegrowers thus adapted their leaf thinning to ensure the optimal ripening of the grapes! This very steady climatic context made 2023 one of the coolest, most stable and moderate vintages of the past two decades.



The absence of heavy rainfall delayed the harvest, which took place five weeks later compared to the 2022 vintage, and was spread out considerably: the first white grape varieties were picked on 7 September, and the first Cabernets on 10 October. Very light rainfall (between 12 and 20 mm depending on the area) came as a godsend, softening the Cabernet grape skins at just the right time.

Fermentation unfolded serenely: the substance was extracted very easily, with long maceration

(indigenous yeast played its part and slowed down fermentation and extractability), at temperatures around 28-30°C, with vatting lasting 18 to 23 days. Fermentation took place without any microbial issues.

At this stage, we obtained harmonious juice with very well-balanced pH levels (between 3.6 and 3.8), and wonderful aromatic intensity. The resulting wines are powerful and concentrated with good grip.

“ We obtained harmonious juice with wonderful aromatic intensity. The wines are powerful and concentrated with good grip. ”

THIS 2023 WINE CLEARLY RESEMBLES A VINTAGE FROM THE “PRE-CLIMATE CHANGE” ERA

With a steady ripening curve, a slow accumulation of sugars to balance out acidity, and slow, gradual ripening reminiscent of the vintages of yesteryear, which are becoming rarer and rarer. ■