

MARGAUX 2012

History of a vintage

APRIL 2013

N°11

Editorial

To maintain excellence in 2012 required considerable effort at every stage. Margaux's soil offers tremendous potential, but this potential would be nothing without the people who work day after day, vine after vine, bunch after bunch, to give expression to this wonderful gift that nature offers us.

The capricious weather at the start of the growing season demonstrated the vital importance of the winegrower's expertise.

2012 - a surprising year!

The second, much more favourable, half of the summer rewarded us amply for our efforts. The 2012 vintage, more than any other, is the fruit of nature and of man's labours. The appellation is pleased to present this new vintage.

We hope that you enjoy it!

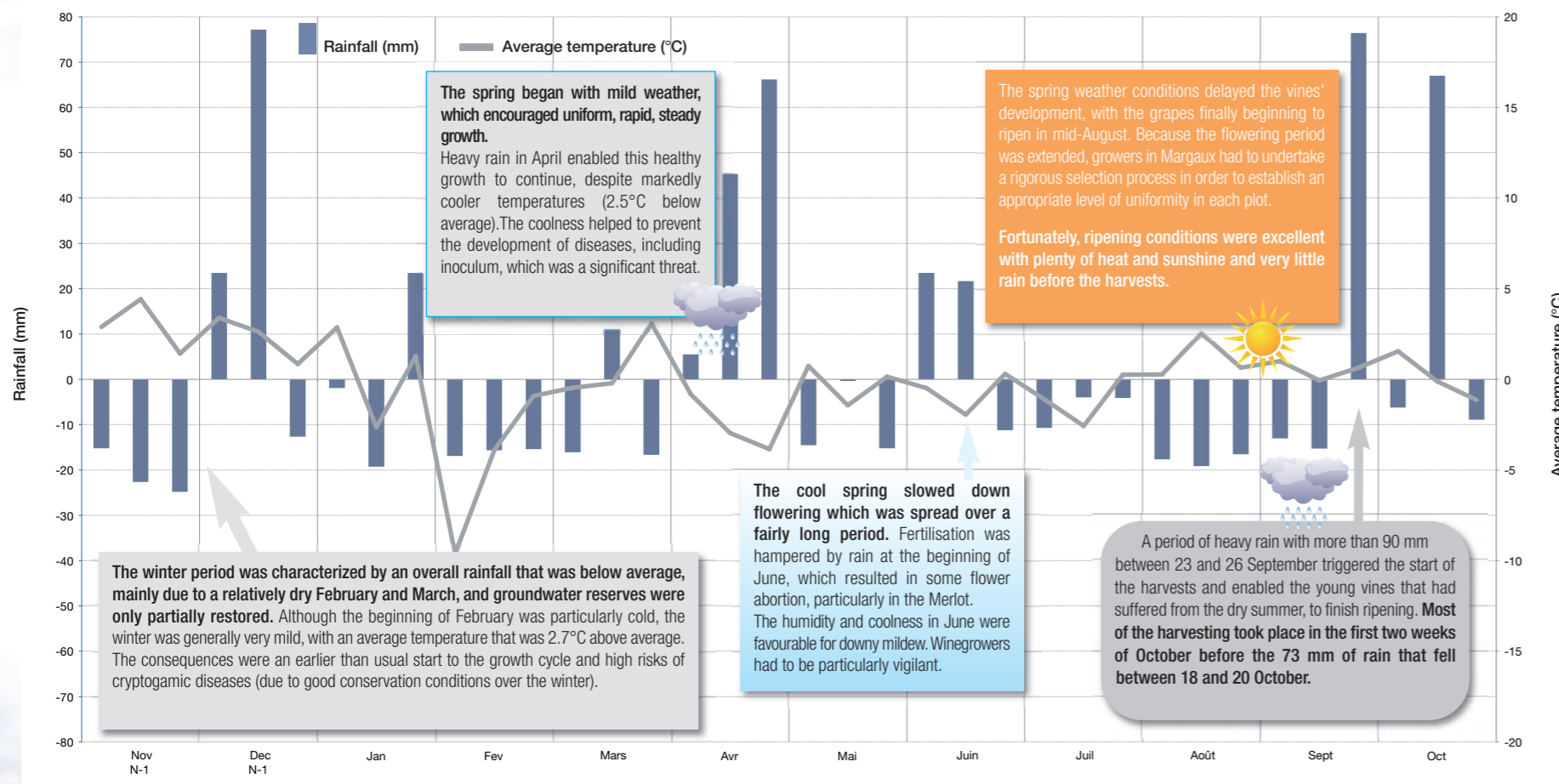
José Sanfins

Vice President
of the Syndicat Viticole de Margaux



SYNDICAT VITICOLE DE MARGAUX

2012: Deviations from the average from 1996 to 2011 - Margaux Weather Station



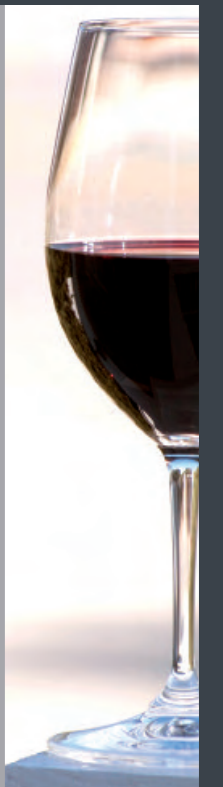
Oenologist's comments

I am sure that 2012 is a much more interesting vintage than it might seem, and it would be a shame not to give it full consideration. The product of difficult conditions, the wines combine grace and complexity. For it has to be said that nature was not kind, following a cold wet spring with a hot, very dry summer. The growth cycle remained late compared to previous years, but yields were very low and the vines, despite being thirsty, were able to ripen their grapes slowly. Several weeks of rain at the end of September obliged us to speed up the harvests, but this was not really a problem, as the grapes were ripe. Whatever the situation, any undesirable grapes were rejected, and rigorous sorting remained a priority for everyone.

Finally a vintage with a reasonable alcohol content.

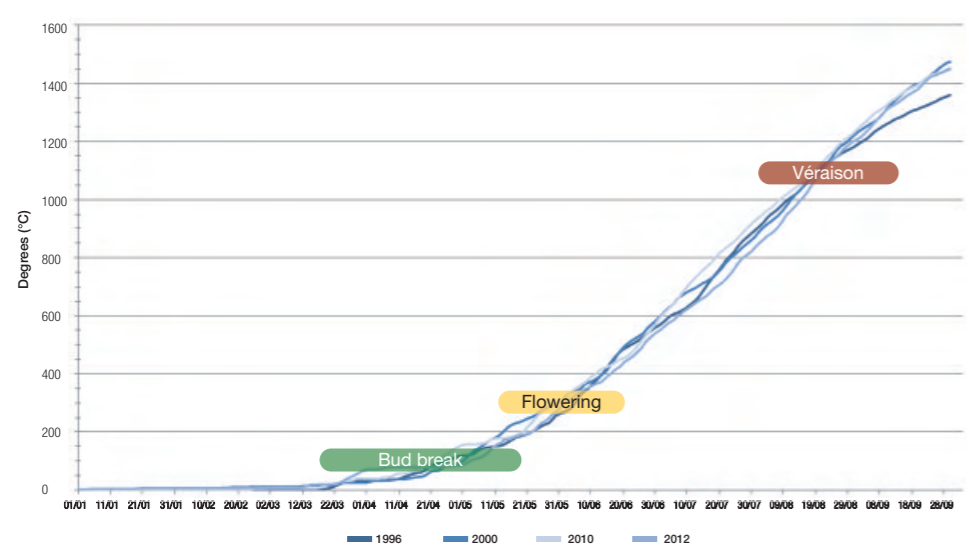
The Merlot grapes quickly revealed remarkable flesh of a rare quality. As for the Cabernet Sauvignon, there was no need to fear, they did not disappoint, faithfully expressing our Médoc terroir with delightful elegance and finesse. These will be powerful, yet delicate wines that are easy to drink and digest. 2012 is a very good vintage and that we will see a great many successful wines.

Eric Boissenot
Oenologist, PhD Science.



Due to the particularly mild winter, with temperatures 2°C above average until the end of January, 2012 seemed set to be an early year, with an earlier bud break than 1996, 2000 or 2010, which are often cited as classic vintages in the appellation.

Sum of the average daily temperatures above 10°C



But then the cool spring slowed down the vines' growth cycle until the start of ripening, which took place in mid-August as in these benchmark years.

In terms of temperature, 2012 subsequently saw a very similar pattern to that observed in 2000 and 2010, i.e. warm, but not excessively so, due to the cool nights. Ripening was therefore slow and regular as in these two great years. However, the delay introduced by the cool spring reappeared at the end of the cycle with most harvests not starting until October.

The ripeness of the grapes:

Although later than the last three years, 2012 presented levels of phenolic ripeness that were better than last year, and could even be compared to 2009 and 2010. One could think that the weight of the berries, which was much higher than in recent years, was due to the rain at the end of September, but the high ratios of marc to juice confirm a very good level of concentration in the grapes at the time of harvest. 2012 is outstanding for its excellent levels of phenolic maturity, particularly with regard to the seeds (with SM% even lower since the seeds were ripe). The skins were thick with high levels of extractable anthocyanins. Finally, the high acidity levels of the Cabernet Sauvignon wines can be explained by the fact that the malic acid was less broken down than in 2009 or 2010.

Grape	Soil	Harvest Date	Probable Alcohol (%Vol)	P200b (g)	TA (gH ₂ SO ₄ /L)	pH	Marc/Juice	ApH ₁ (mg/L)	ApH _{3,2} (mg/L)	TPI	Mp (%)	MA (g/L)	
Merlot	Clay gravel	28-sept-09	14,40	280	2,55	3,79	145	1975	1022	66	38	1,9	
		27-sept-10	14,11	272	3,35	3,37	142	2811	1284	67	23	2,3	
		16-sept-11	12,69	257	3,50	3,32	121	2227	988	64	38	1,3	
			01-oct-12	13,54	358	2,95	3,59	192	2093	1135	56	18	2,4
	Sandy gravel	28-sept-09	14,46	301	2,65	3,63	139	1838	1001	58	31	1,3	
		30-sept-10	13,71	271	2,60	3,45	139	2413	989	57	31	1,6	
16-sept-11		13,03	291	3,40	3,30	117	1870	922	66	44	1,1		
		01-oct-12	14,06	337	2,90	3,57	218	2359	1211	58	17	1,8	
Cabernet sauvignon	Clay gravel	05-oct-09	13,77	238	3,15	3,74	170	2626	1291	56	8	2,7	
		05-oct-10	13,37	251	3,55	3,33	270	2868	1171	58	19	2,8	
		27-sept-11	12,74	187	3,60	3,47	161	2396	1181	58	19	3,8	
			08-oct-12	11,94	290	4,20	3,49	224	2015	1216	51	5	3,6
	Sandy gravel	05-oct-09	13,43	248	3,40	3,64	171	2144	1325	64	17	2,6	
		05-oct-10	12,51	286	3,45	3,36	151	2671	1259	57	11	2,8	
27-sept-11		12,51	219	3,50	3,48	167	2121	1057	54	21	3,2		
		08-oct-12	12,00	290	3,85	3,51	207	2098	1214	56	4	2,9	

ApH₁: Total anthocyanin concentration
ApH_{3,2}: Extractable anthocyanins (mg/L)
Mp (%): maturity of pips
MA: Malic Acid concentration (g/L)

Method for measuring phenolic maturity: Y.Glories

Winegrower's comments

2012 Vintage essentially owes its salvation to an almost perfect summer period, something that a lot of "commentators" have tended to forget in recent times. The vine's initial growth was met with a particularly cold, very wet April.

May brought a lull in these conditions, and we saw the first flowers on 29 May, but then there was another rainy spell at the end of May and early June, resulting in significant flower abortion and uneven grape size in the Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, with the inevitable consequence that yields were substantially reduced...

At the end of June, the winegrowers' morale was much like the weather: gloomy and overcast!

Fortunately fine weather returned in mid-July, and continued to improve virtually until the end of September; August was particularly hot, with 12 days above 30°C. Would this be enough to save the vintage?



Ripeness tests carried out at the end of August and in early September suggested a late harvest, but several quality indicators were very positive. For some, the harvests began in the last week of September, but the "action" did not start in most of Margaux's vineyards until the first week of October. The weather broke again on 5 and 6 October; the Merlot grapes picked until then were of excellent quality, while the Cabernet, provided that the vineyard had been meticulously prepared, was able to handle the cooler, damper weather. This was a vintage that

spared the winegrower nothing; it will be probably remembered as one of the most difficult that we have encountered in recent times.

Having being considered marginally superior to 2011, this vintage has revealed itself, as tastings have progressed, to be significantly superior to its predecessor, and, without achieving the density and the structure of 2009 and 2010, will certainly be among the finest of the decade.

Emmanuel Cruse
Château d'Issan

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