



CHATEAU DE SAINT COSME

4^{ème} newsletter, by Louis Barruol, 2015

As Christmas gets closer and closer, the wines settle down and reveal their true nature. Then everyone can read and listen to the comments that are done about the vintage by the wine press and the growers. And I usually ask myself if everybody is really talking about the same story. Those who don't propose a great analysis because of their lack of interest or because of a poor observation don't bother me. But those who describe the vintage on a stupid way in order to « sell » something (wine, newspapers..etc..) or make some caricatural descriptions to show off bother me because they don't give a true and nice image of our occupation. Time flies, vintages come one after another and you (the wine amateurs) end up trusting nobody. With this vintage 2014 which was prolific and heterogeneous, we can (again..) hear and read some absurde and poor comments. This is a shame because the « vintage », whatever is its style or its level of quality, is one of the nicest things that Mother nature can offer us : a new wine every year, which will never be the same as any other one. Isn't it magical ? It will be my conclusion about this: spoil such a great thing does damage our passion and our pleasure of learning and discovering. I always tried to stick to the vintage realities and share with you the work that we do to get the best of it. I will keep going this way.

As I was explaining to you last year, we began to plant this year the nice terroir of Saint Martin : two hectares of Viognier and one hectare of Piquepoul white. The plantation is beautiful and the fact we had access to the little canal of violès really helped to water the babies in good conditions. In 2015, we will plant another four hectares : Viognier, Marsanne and Piquepoul again. The Viognier and Marsanne that we multiplicates at the moment are of a great pedigree...

There is a small bit of Hominis Fides that I never used in the Hominis Fides wine because the vine is very ill. It is situated in the north part of the plot. It's been years that I didn't even replace the dead plants. This little bit of vine of 0.26 hectare will be pulled out in a few weeks. It is geologically located in the limestony sands from the Miocène times, obviously. I will plant there (in 2016) some Clairette multiplied from a « sélection massale » done with the Clairette from le Poste. We will then have a Hominis Fides white in 2019 : just like le Poste, we will be able to taste this « lieu-dit » in both red and white. You can believe me we are going to look after this plantation very well..

To manage an estate properly, it is necessary to anticipate as much as possible. I take advantage of the vines planted by my grand-father. I hope my descendants will enjoy my plantings.

The wines of the southern Rhône in 2013

Everything or nearly everything was said about the vintage 2013 which was a very specific one. But I would like to clarify a few informations. The accident observed on the Grenache grape got all the attention because this is our main grape. But let's remember that the Syrah and Mourvèdre grapes were beautiful in 2013. Also, this is not true that only the bad flowering was responsible for this « crash ». The early rot at the beginning of a humid spring had already severely damaged the Grenache grapes, before the « coulure » finished this bad story. The yields were very low in 2013. The harvest was exceptionnally late as well. That is to say, if the yields had been normal, 2013 would have been maybe a bad vintage because the Grenache grapes would have then never ripen. A small yield always gives satisfaction : 2013 wines have been good at all times. They are well built, deep and balanced by a good freshness. We could just taste this great quality all the way through from the beginning and it became almost stunning at the moment I did the final blends. The wines are now waiting for the bottlings and it is usually a good time to taste them. I think you might be surprised by the level of quality of the Gigondas and the Deux Albions in the vintage 2013. It is obvious that these wines will keep well. They are built for a long life : low ph for our climate, balance, good depth, reasonable level of alcohol. The Gigondas wines from 1991 (which look like the 2013 for their fresh profile) had a wonderful evolution ; however, 1991 was a vintage with less potential than 2013. As usual we will have to wait to check that..

To conclude about 2013 in the southern rhone, I will just ask you to accept the bad news when I will announce the quantities available with the Gigondas wines. Because I lost 40% of the usual quantities for the Lieux-dits (Hominis Fides, Le Poste, Le Claux, Valbelle) and 30% for the Gigondas Classique. To finish on a positive note, I will say that we have a lot more wine with the vintage 2014..

The wines of the northern Rhône in 2013

The southern Rhône saw between 2010 and 2014 a succession of very different vintages in style while in the northern Rhone all the vintages since 2010 look like. Because the weather has been tempered, all these vintages have been classic ones. In this kind of vintages, the work achieved in the vineyards is very important. In 2013 the quality in the northern Rhone can vary quite a bit depending on the kind of viticulture achieved in the vines. Go for a low yield in 2013 was very important. We went for two green harvests in july and august and not a single bunch would touch another one. We removed some leaves and finally we had to be a little brave to wait for the right ripening of the Syrah. By looking at the vines this way, we could give a good image of the schistes and the granitic soils that we like so much. In this kind of classic vintage, the aromatic spectrum is the wines is extraordinary in the Côte-Rôtie : violet, ash, liquorish, smoked bacon, graphite.. This year the Crozes-Hermitage is really refined and complex, just like the Saint Joseph wines which we harvested at a great level of ripening. You'll taste as well very good whites in 2013. The weather was really well adapted for the Viognier grape, a bit like in 2012. The Viognier is magnificent when it doesn't get a strong influence from the sun. Do keep your northern Rhône 2013's for a while : they deserve it.



A quick view on vintage 2014

The way the vintages follow each other can be really strange. From 1991 to 1995, not a single vintage was an outstanding one. Then mother nature offered us four very good vintages in a row from 1998 to 2001, and again from 2004 to 2007 included. This time, we are being proposed a group of very diverse vintages. 2010 was a great vintage, then 2011 was a bit hot and probably too early in ripening, then 2012 was a fresh and late ripening vintage, then 2013 was the latest and the lowest yield since 1963, and 2014 was the biggest yield for a long time !.. I think we couldn't get more contrast. We just had, within five years, the widest possible range of what our climate can generate. This is quite rare and I deeply like this. Actually I would find very boring to look after a vineyard where the idea of vintage does not exist, or almost does not exist. Nowadays, a lot of vines have been planted in hot places where there is almost no vintage.

We had in 2014 a harvest with a great yield : we were not used to this any more ! When the vines grew at the beginning of spring time, we could immediately see a big amount of grapes. Then the flowering was optimal, especially on the Grenache vines : the exact opposite phenomenon of 2013. We did several green harvests to control the final yield. Despite these green harvests, 2014 remain a vintage of good yield : the vines did want to grow and give us some grapes. Thank you ! We had to remove quite a bit of leaves in order to push the ripening as far as possible : end of the harvest on the 12 of October at Saint Cosme. We rigorously sorted out on the sorting table, as usual. As you know, this is the base of a quality wine and there will be in 2014 a huge difference in quality between the growers who dedicated all the efforts (yield control, green harvest, leaves removal, severe sorting out) and those who did an approximate work. In such a vintage, Mother nature doesn't give you everything on an easy way. The winemaker needs to get the quality by himself. The Gigondas 2014 from Saint Cosme are black, round, smooth, balanced and expressive. They are « very Saint Cosme » if I can say so, and they remind me of the vintage 2000 which tasted really well all their life through ; and they still taste beautifully young.

In the northern Rhône, the long row of classical vintages keeps going with 2014: it gives the impression that it will never stop !.. This time, the quality of the Condrieu is absolutely exceptionnal.

Louis Barruol, 19th of december 2014