Douro harvest 2007

13 Sep 2007 by JR

Charles Symington, who oversees the vineyards and winemaking for the Symington Family Estates (which includes Graham's, Dow's and Warre's), sent this report on how the harvest is progressing in the Douro. As in so many parts of Europe, particularly this year, it seems that the quality of the harvest will depend on these last few crucial weeks. Picking is just getting underway in the earlier sites.

Pinhão, 10 Sep 2007
Maturations are developing very favourably with Baumés [sugar levels] increasing steadily and acidity at very balanced levels; analytically we are a week behind average dates. Physiologically we are however more advanced than usual for this time of year; colour development being very advanced for this stage due to good humidity in the early summer and moderate temperatures in August. This means we may well have a vintage with lower Baumés than we have had in recent vintages, higher acidity levels, good colour and low yields. We will however need dry conditions for the rest of the ripening period and during the vintage as any further rain will most likely damage what otherwise could potentially be a really exceptional vintage. As in most years, the quality of this vintage will be largely decided by the weather this month, the main difference being that the outcome of this vintage could swing to either extreme depending if the weather goes in our favour or not.

The perfect weather of the last 10 days with dry east winds and daytime temperatures in the low 30s has been excellent in bringing on the maturations and the grapes today are looking really good. The current 5-day forecast remains very good indeed with clear skies for the region.

We started picking the Tinta Barroca at our most eastern vineyards – Quinta do Vesuvio and Warre's Quinta da Telhada – this morning, Monday 10 Sep.

Graham's Tua will start on Thursday 13th and Malvedos should start on the 17th, although this might be bought forward to Thursday if the current warm dry weather continues. Warre's Retiro in the Rio Torto will probably start on the 17th, Bomfim and Cavadinha should start around the 24th, again depending on the weather over the next few days.