Tuscany vintages

3 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

2012 was generally hot in Tuscany, with yields up to 30% below average thanks to uneven flowering caused by rain. A heatwave in August caused some vines to shut down, but nevertheless quality is looking very good in Chianti and Montalcino, with Bolgheri in the Maremma faring less well.

2011 Yields were 14% lower than 2010, but quality is very promising, with an early harvest brought on by a heatwave in August.

2010 Overall cooler than usual, although Montalcino looks to have had generally more favourable conditions. Modest in quality.

2009 Record rainfall at winter followed by lots of heat in the summer, with cool nights to retain aromatic qualities. Some producers suffered dehydration but most were delighted with the quality. Almost – but not quite – akin to the legendary 2004.

2008 Hail had a big impact on volumes in Montalcino, whilst elsewhere, Merlot suffered thanks to summer drought. Soft tannic structure seems a feature of this vintage.

2007 Tremendous: high alcohol and good acidity with consistent ripening, after a worryingly erratic budburst. Especially good for Chianti and Montalcino, and for Cabernet Sauvignon in Bolgheri.

2006 Very promising vintage with a steady, prolonged growing season and well balanced wines.

2005 Grapes had to be picked before the rain really set in if decent wine was to be made. A notable exception to my five year rule.

2004 Exceptionally good vintage, central Italy's equivalent of the perfect growing season that France experienced in 2005.

2003 Very difficult heatwave conditions were felt in all but the highest vineyards of Chianti Classico. Wines generally pretty unbalanced.

2002 Exceptionally wet summer resulted in rotten grapes, many of which failed to reach full ripeness. A real *annus horribilis.*

2001 Smallish crop thanks to April frosts. June and July were dry but August and especially September were quite wet with rain threatening vine health as harvest time approached.

2000 Easy, ripe wines from a very hot, dry vintage which, unless vineyards were extremely well-managed, resulted in wines with a certain hollowness, though no shortage of alcohol.

1999 Quite exceptionally good quality. A vintage not unlike 1997 but with arguably more finesse and less sheer mass. Warm summer led to an early harvest of healthy grapes.

1998 Irregular vintage after another hot summer which stressed the vines.

1997 Hot summer and very ripe grapes that produced wines that seemed unusually luscious at the time even if some could do with a little more freshness.

1996 Very varied year producing soft, early maturing wines that should have been drunk by now.

1995 Nail-bitingly late harvest saved by an unusually warm, dry October, although acids are still generally high.

1994 At last a dry but cool harvest: rich and structured and certainly the best since 1990.

1993 Survived the rains better than Piemonte, concentration held up, but some picked unripe fruit.

1992 A big crop of rather light wines to drink young.

1991 Endless harvest rains so the best were no more than pleasant.

1990 A hot year and low yields, the ingredients for really good wines, especially in Montalcino.

1989 Distinctly inferior to Piemonte. Light if not watery, so best to avoid.

1988 Delightfully smooth wines, balanced and ripe from low yields.

1985 Initially impressive, then worryingly irregular with some Supertuscans unbalanced.