Loire 2008

29 Sep 2008 by Charles Sydney

Charles Sydney, optimistic wine broker pictured below enthusing over Touraine 2008 grapes, reports from the Loire.

I thought a quick update on the harvest might appeal... all the more so as things are looking remarkably good!

Early September, if you'd asked me (or any of the growers) how things were going, we'd likely have bitten your head off as things were looking desperate. A crummy summer followed by a cold, wet start to the month.

Since then, things have changed dramatically - bright sunshine and cool, strong east/northerly winds have dried out any rot and concentrated the grapes.

That is giving highish levels of sugar, while also concentrating acidity, but I'd expect this to balance out once tartrates have fallen out to give us a freshness equivalent to 2007 for the whites.

Muscadet is virtually all in - quality is good, but the April frost was pretty catastrophic, so yields are really low, between 10 and 30 hectolitres per hectare depending on the grower, averaging around 20, while the permitted yield is 55. There's work to be done to save markets here as 'base' non-*sur lie* Muscadets will be next to nonexistent, but domaine quality *sur lies* should be excellent.

Sauvignons - the Touraine and southern Loire is hard at it and the juice is tasting *typé* and fresh - should be lovely. Yields are low here too (this is the case across the Loire), I'd guess between 40 and 50 hl/ha overall. I expect Sancerre and Pouilly to start next week.

Reds - Gamays are coming in, looking good (the last three weeks has dried out any rot) and the Malbecs (Cot) look good. Yields are low. The Cabernets are looking good, but still need a week to 10 days to ripen fully, so fingers are still crossed (and getting arthritic)!

Chenins - They're just starting picking for dry wines in the Anjou, and Vouvray should start late next week. [Charles's picture top left is of Chenins 'concentrating nicely' - JR]

So there you are... as ever, if it's the last three weeks that count, sometimes it pays to have a late harvest!

More anon.