Bordeaux 2010 - the latest

9 Oct 2010 by Jancis Robinson

Frédéric Engerer of first growth Ch Latour in Pauillac reported on Friday, '2010 is perfect so far. Delicious Merlots (great balance, less rich and sexy but fresher than last year). We're in the Cabs now'.

Meanwhile **Christian Seely**, in charge of AXA Millésimes, for whom the jewel in the crown is Ch Pichon Longueville (Baron), also in Pauillac, described the 2010 harvest to Julia last Wednesday as 'embarrassingly good' but different from 2009. He admitted that in some ways it would have been a lot easier to have had a slightly lesser vintage, more like 2004, to give everyone time to breathe after the highly praised, not to say highly priced, 2009s. This year, he said, the anthocyanins are at record levels, the berries are intensely flavoured with strong tannins and the alcohol levels are likely to be similar to last year, ie 13-14%. The embryonic wines are likely to be harder work for tasters next spring during the primeur campaign than the 2009s were at a similar stage, apparently. Julia asked about the acidity levels but Seely thought it was too soon to say.

Andrew Black of Premierepresse.com has been interviewing various other significant characters in Bordeaux about the harvest. The prominent oenologist **Gilles Pauquet**, interviewed last Thursday, was very enthusiastic about the potential of 2010, averring that some people may prefer it to 2009. For him, the wines will be extremely heterogeneous with the two decisive factors being how well the soils have withstood this season's extreme drought and the detail of how the wines were made. He maintains that some terroirs, commonly regarded as too cool and damp to produce good wine, have performed rather well in 2010. The vintage of which he is most reminded is 1990, although the quantity produced is much, much lower. Black also has interviews with the likes of Pierre Lurton, Stéphane Derenoncourt, Pauline Vauthier, Thomas Do-Chi-Nâm and Alexandre Thienpont but, interesting as they are, they tend to be a bit more speculative, having been made in the second half of September when the character of the vintage was less clear.

In Saturday's weekly bulletin from **Christophe Coupez** of the Pauillac oenology lab, who supplied the data in Pauillac 2010 update last Monday, is a report on the generally healthy state of the grapes. Apparently, 80% of growers in Pauillac had begun picking by Tuesday 5 Oct with the Cabernet harvest having begun last week in the earlier-maturing plots. Petit Verdot has ripened well and is already being fermented in many cases. Fermentations have been slow and regular, despite the high sugar levels of most Merlot grapes. There was rain last Monday but east winds have helped to dry out the grapes, which, as he also noted, are particularly high in anthocyanins and the tannins are already notable in musts. He finishes his report with the comment, 'Nature has truly decided to give us an exceptional vintage'.

Coupez supplied this image showing a temperature of 26 ºC in Bordeaux wine country last Friday.