

2010 - outstanding Riberas?

26 Oct 2010 by Jos□ Manuel Ortega

José Manuel Ortega of O Fournier sends the following upbeat report from his winery in Ribera del Duero - sister to others in Chile and Argentina.

The 2010 harvest in Ribera del Duero could be one of the greatest recorded in many years. We have been blessed with perfect conditions for exceptional grape quality. We are expecting great intensity, acidity and lower-than-average alcohol levels at around 14% depending on the age and yields of each of the blocks at the vineyard. Production per hectare is slightly lower than in an average year, thus increasing the structure of the wines but without losing elegance and finesse. All the conditions were perfect for Tempranillo grapes. We also produced a small amount of potentially exceptional Merlot.

Climate conditions were almost perfect except for some early frost in the spring. Temperature levels were lower than usual even in full summer. There was plenty of rain during spring so there was enough humidity for the plants to be balanced. Since our first vintage in Ribera del Duero until this year we had not had a season without any major climate accident: frost, hail, excess rainfall. The fact that we did not have to suffer either heatwaves or autumn frost meant that the plants had enough canopy to ripen perfectly. Maturity was spot on because late rainfall did not affect the quality and health of the grapes. Harvest occurred later than in recent years finishing just last Saturday due to cool weather in September and October.

We have harvested the best grapes from a 70-year-old vineyard (see picture) and put them in one of our small 870-litre small vats. We then produced a wine in the old-fashioned way: indigenous yeasts and foot-treading. This will be a special wine to honour all the generations of wine producers that through centuries have made wine, taking into consideration both wisdom and tradition.

The 2010 harvest has the potential to be an iconic one in the recent history of Ribera, as successful as the 2004.