

## 2010 vintage report - Châteauneuf

21 Mar 2011 by The local syndicates

*The official local verdict on the 2010 vintage in Châteauneuf-du-Pape is: 'low volumes but very high quality!' Certainly when I was there last October they were all quietly smug about the quality of last year's harvest, with gentler, riper tannins than is the norm in the 2009s. Here's what the Fédération des Syndicats de Producteurs de Châteauneuf-du-Pape has to say. Fortunately for us all, Michel Blanc of the organisation is, like Charles Sydney with yesterday's Loire 2010 report, a talented photographer and is responsible for these images. Left is how the vineyards looked in September 2010.*

Due to an average yield of 27 hl/ha (35 hl/ha being the maximum yield authorised by the appellation regulations) the vintage 2010 will be remembered as one of the lowest in terms of quantity, and one of the best in terms of quality (of harvest and wines).

A total of 84,777 hl of wine were produced in Châteauneuf-du-Pape in 2010, including 5,813 hl of white wine, 78,964 hl of red wine, for a production surface of 3 165 ha. Here's how the vineyards looked in April.

Although climate specialists described the climate of this vintage as cooler and wetter than usual, there was shatter (floral abortion) on Grenache grapes during springtime and hydric deficiency in July and August, explaining the low yield.

In 2010, there were 55 days during which temperatures were higher than 30 °C, and there were 46 days of frost (usually 31 days). During the first 20 days of May and the beginning of June, temperatures were low, whereas the first 10 days of July were rather warm. The total amount of days during which temperatures were over 10 °C before 30 June is a good indicator of early or late vine growth. This total was 629 °C in 2010, compared with 831 °C in 2003 and 785 °C in 2007.

From October 2009 to September 2010, rainfall was 23% higher than average, but lower than average in July and August. During the agricultural year, total rainfall was close to 800 mm (average is 642 mm) making this period one of the most outstanding in terms of rainfall over the past 139 years (less than in 2001 and more than in 2005, 2006 and 2007).

However, if one takes into consideration only July and August 2010, rainfall was higher than in 2007 but lower than in 2003, 2005 and 2009. Summer rainfall in 2010 was one of the lowest since 1871.

As in 2009, this vintage's quality and characteristics are due to the climatic conditions: a rainy springtime and a dry summer enabled the grapes to be healthy and have an interesting tannic structure. On the other hand, cool nights allowed the synthesis of anthocyanins and polyphenols but delayed the start of harvesting.

During harvesting, sorting was minimal and everything proceeded smoothly, apart from a storm at the beginning of September. Below is how the vineyards looked just after harvest. It's difficult to tell whether it's clouds or the Dentelles de Montmirail in the distance.

Fermentations went well and the last devattings were implemented at the beginning of November. Due to low temperatures in autumn, malolactic fermentations were a little slow.

According to the first tastings, the 2010 vintage seems to be one of the best in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, on a par with the 2001 and 2007 vintages.

The red wines have a deep, dark purple robe. The nose is intensely fruity with mineral notes. The most remarkable characteristic of the vintage is a very well balanced freshness, present in the red wines as well as in the whites. The mouth is beautifully rich and the tannins are structured and finely grained. Finally, there is no doubt that this vintage offers a very strong ageing potential.

See below for how the vineyards and village look in winter.