Bordeaux 2012 - early pickings

1 Sep 2012 by Martin Krajewski

Martin Krajewski of Ch de Sours in the far north of Bordeaux wine country sent this report on Friday night:

We commenced the 2012 harvest here at 7am this morning with the temperature at just 9ºC but under clearing, if chilly blue skies. The first fruit to come in was Merlot at about 9.5% which is for the base wine for our Reserve de Sours Sparkling Rosé and as we continued to pick throughout the day the temperature slowly rose to about 21ºC by 4pm, just as we completed the first day's picking and with 20 tonnes of fruit safely in the press.

The quality is significantly superior to that of 2011 and the early signs are for quite reasonable yields, perhaps slightly down on last year, but not excessively so. With the forecast for the next ten days looking very positive, with predicted low night temperatures and daily highs of 23/24ºC forecast through to next week, it looks like we are not going to need be in a hurry at all. We now plan to take the weekend off and then resume harvest again on Monday (and Tuesday) for the sparkling rosé, picking more Merlot and then some Cabernet. Then towards the end of next week, we'll start on the young Sauvignon Blanc and probably get to the Semillon just before or over the weekend.

So, it already looks like being a long drawn out campaign this year as we don't expect to pick for the still rosé now until around 12 Sep and then for the reds, probably not until 24 Sep. With good conditions continuing, harvest could well go on well into the second or even third week of October.

At Clos Cantenac in St-Émilion, the current forecast also points to the picking of the younger Merlot plants around 25/26 Sep with the Cabernet Sauvignon and Franc a week or so later. Yields are looking really quite good.

I'll be writing a short harvest report every week and will also keep you up to date with any unexpected or interesting periodic developments, but I think it is already fair to say that this will not be so much a winemaker's vintage 'made in the cellar' as some have been predicting, but a vintage that will be remembered for those who worked well in the vines throughout the year and were rewarded by their diligence, great efforts and good decision-making at critical times during the difficult middle part of the growing year.