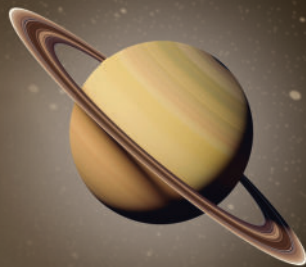


2020 HARVEST NOTEBOOK



2020 : THE GREAT CONJUNCTURE



300 ANS DE «BEAUX CAILLOUX» EN SAINT-JULIEN

2020

THE GREAT CONJUNCTURE

The 'Great Conjunction' is a very rare and significant astronomical event, when Jupiter and Saturn align with planet Earth. In fact, the last time these planets came into alignment was in 1623! At Ducru-Beaucaillou, as we celebrated our 300th anniversary, the 2020 vintage brought another great conjunction, a perfect convergence of the three key factors that define a vintage and its wines:

- Favourable **summer weather** that was hot and dry with just the right amount of rain, falling mostly at night, guaranteeing freshness.
- Ideal **conditions in September**, with clear days and cool nights and a heatwave in mid-September that concentrated the fruit and enabled full phenolic ripeness, giving very fine tannins.
- Motivated, skilled, and united **technical teams** who were relentless in their efforts to combat the challenges of the spring, and with the addition of the Quality / R&D department at the end of 2019, brought a new level of competency and excellence to the vineyards and the cellars.

Coincidentally, at winter solstice, December 21, 2020, on the very day of this monumental astrological event, the final blend for Ducru-Beaucaillou was decided with our consultant Oenologist Eric BOISSENOT and our team.

2020 is part of a glorious triptych, with 2018 and 2019. A series of three such vintages is a rare phenomenon in Bordeaux, and indeed occurred as we celebrated three centuries of Ducru-Beaucaillou. In fact, the last time we experienced a tryptic was with the 1988, 1989, 1990 vintages.

Finally, the warm and dry conditions of 2020 were very generous to the style of Ducru Beaucaillou, with a perfect convergence of **fruit concentration** giving great breadth, **tannins** endowing perfectly mastered power, and **acidity** providing exquisite freshness and balance.

300 YEARS OF INSPIRATION

2020 Ducru-Beaucaillou is the vintage of our 300 year anniversary. Since 1720, six families have nurtured an indelible bond with Ducru-Beaucaillou. They are forever captives of this prestigious estate, be they named Desjean, Bergeron, Ducru, Johnston, Desbarat de Burke, or Borie. These families were never short of praise for it. Over the decades, this devotion has managed to overcome all that is accidental or fleeting, as if passion perfected Nature's Opus.

SPRING

2020 was a year of good timing that proved to be ideal for ripening Cabernet Sauvignon. A mild winter (+2.4° C above the 30-year average) resulted in early budbreak, with the first buds emerging March 19-25. This led to early flowering in May, fortuitously between two rainy periods, and subsequently flowering and fruit set were fast, homogenous and 2 weeks early - ideal for thick-skinned Cabernet Sauvignon! However, the rest of spring kept our teams in action with frost, hail and cryptogamic attacks (specifically mildew). These events reduced yields but fortunately the potential for quality was preserved.

SUMMER

Summer was hot and dry, with just the right amount of rain falling late season. At Ducru, we recorded 28 days above 30°C and 6 days above 35°C. In terms of precipitation, there were 55 days with less than 10 mm of rain (June 19 - August 11). The rain fell at the ideal time, starting August 15, and was welcomed after a period of drought, enabling full ripeness. The fact that the rain fell at night kept temperatures cool, which was key to the freshness and to full flavour development in the final wines.

RIPENING

September saw another dry spell with no rain (August 30 - September 18). Cool nights and clear days were perfect for the final ripening phase and the first controls at the beginning of September were already very promising. A heatwave in mid-September (highest average temperature in 30 years) further concentrated the fruit and fully ripened the skins. The berries were small with rich skins, leaching beautiful colour and elegant, fine tannins, the pulps were rich with highly perfumed aromatics, and the pips were perfectly ripe with the tell-tale hazelnut taste. At harvest the berries were very concentrated and small (Merlots: 1.1-1.3g/berry and Cabernet Sauvignon: 0.9-1.1g/berry).

HARVEST

Harvest was ideally warm, dry, and early. In fact, it was one of the only vintages in the history of the property where the harvest did not extend into October. No fewer than 150 manual harvesters worked over 3 weeks to select and collect by hand the fruit for all four wines. Harvest started with the Merlots on September 11 and finished with the Cabernet Sauvignons on September 30th; the Cabernets Sauvignon grapes were picked average of 125 days after flowering to ensure perfect phenolic maturity, Merlots at an average of 113 to keep freshness. Yields were small with 25-30hl/ha in Saint Julien and 20-25hl/ha in Haut Medoc.

PRIVILEGE OF TERROIR

The 2020 season was not without its climatic challenges. Fortunately, due to our well-aerated slopes that rise from the Gironde, we averted the spring frosts of March 30. Our slopes of Günz gravel soils permitted adequate drainage during the heavy rains in late April, and the subsoil reserves provided needed water during the period of drought in July and August. Finally, proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and to the Gironde estuary moderated the temperatures with cool nights during the heat of summer.

FINE & RARE

After a rather difficult spring, the volume potential of 2020 was small. Then the hot, dry growing season yielded small berries with great concentration, further reducing production volumes. However, the resulting wines have great depth of flavours with a core structure of vibrant acidity and perfectly ripe, finely polished tannins, all of the elements required for an exceptional Grand Vin. In short, 2020 gave us wines that are distinguished, elegant, aristocratic and indeed rare!

COVID 19:

The Covid-19 brought its own challenges to the vintage, as the lockdown was imposed just as the growing season was getting underway. Starting March 20, our cellars were closed and were accessed only by the cellar master for quality controls. Fortunately, our vineyard management teams were able to continue their work, while new sanitary protocols and management procedures were quickly implemented. We are grateful for the swift reaction and full cooperation from the Ducru teams.

A new era for Ducru Beaucaillou

The highly experienced and effective management team, headed by Emmanuel Bonneau since 2016, clearly marks a new era for Ducru Beaucaillou, resulting in wines that affirm the refined style of Ducru Beaucaillou, yet with even greater purity, precision, breadth and depth.

At the end of 2019, the team was expanded with the creation of a new Quality / R&D department lead by two brilliant agronomy/oenology engineers, Cécile Dupuis and Anaïs Faucon, both alumni of top schools. This competent technical team works collaboratively, and totally aligned, to continually push the boundaries of quality and obtain the best expression, the sublime essence, of our blessed terroirs.

This 2020 is part of a triptych of excellence with 2018 & 2019 that clearly illustrates the new era for Ducru Beaucaillou. The warm climatic conditions during its 300th year suit Ducru very well, allowing it to assert with more depth than ever its aristocratic elegance. The style of 2020 is reminiscent of the academic 2010 but with higher concentration of flavours and greater density of anthocyanins and tannins, underlined with Ducru's trademark freshness, giving an exquisite, succulent texture.

— Tracey Dobbin MW
April 8th, 2021