



GRAND CORBIN-DESPAGNE

Newsletter No. 11

Harvest 2023: Another very fine vintage

Dear friends,

It's a happy man writing to you today.

I'm almost embarrassed to say it, but 2023 ticks all the boxes of another great vintage. So let's enjoy the moment!



The vine cycle followed the usual climatic pattern of the Bordeaux region. With the arrival of spring came some fears of frost, which didn't materialise, while an even flowering of the vines took place on the 29th with a high degree of pollination, thus promising a bumper harvest.

A spell of heavy rain set in during June bringing the threat of downy mildew outbreaks. The Bordeaux climate is such that we have to live with downy mildew, and 2023 was simply a reminder of that, but we could have done without all the needless doom-mongering this year, but that's another story.

Very little rain fell in July, which this year wasn't subject to the excessive heat we had in the same month in 2022. The veraison went very smoothly in August in very hot conditions, and on 15th August the vineyard benefited from 25mm of very welcome rain. Exceptional conditions generally set in during September, the first week being very hot, which favoured the ripening of all the berries. The fine weather continued throughout the month, enabling us to harvest à la carte, the precise order of which depended on the multiple tastings of berries we performed in each plot of the vineyard.



We therefore began the harvest unhurriedly on 11th September, firstly bringing in the young Merlot. The picking of the rest of the Merlot was spread out over quite a long period and was finished on 27th September. This was followed by a break of five days, after which we harvested our Cabernet Franc. The fruit was in perfect health, and the crop was abundant, the grapes weighing in 15 to 20% heavier than usual.

Right now, we're in the middle of the maceration process, and the musts are revealing bright fruit character and displaying an attractive purple-red colour. On tasting, they show lovely balance and have a pH of around 3.6 with very high polyphenol content. Everything is on track to ensure another great vintage. Whether it's Merlot or Cabernet Franc, the balances are magnificent. We're doing long macerations in the smoothest, gentlest manner possible to ensure that the resulting wines display both freshness of fruit and lovely density.



Next door in Pomerol at my Château Le Chemin estate, we find the same profile of wine with a lovely, smooth velvety texture. In Castillon, at my Château Ampélia and Rochers de Joanin properties, the year proved tricky and produced very low yields due to material issues. I was unable to get a tractor into the waterlogged rows, and this prevented me from spraying the vines when I should have done. There, over half of the vineyard was affected by disease. Luckily, the parts which had been properly protected produced attractive wines, albeit in lower quantities. During September, in a part of the vineyard planted on limestone soils where the vines' roots are shallow, drought conditions made the low yields even lower.



In our other news...

As part of the first edition of the Fête des Vendanges des Grands Crus Classés de Saint-Emilion which will be held on the coming 14th and 15th of October, I am organising an exclusive workshop, which includes a tasting of vintages ending in the number 9, coming from no fewer than 4 decades. Registrations for this workshop can be made through the Saint-Emilion and Libourne tourist offices.

I'll also be on the road again of course with a three-way trip to Brussels, Lille and Amsterdam. I'll then be in London on 11th November for the Decanter Fine Wine Encounter, before coming to Paris on 13th November for Biodyvin, which will take place at the Hôtel Intercontinental. After that I'll make my way to Denmark and then Belgium. In January, as part of my annual tour, I'll be in the United States.



Finally, I'd like to thank you again for the wonderfully positive response you gave to our Heritage Vinum Clarum, our Clairet, the heritage of a long tradition inextricably linking my family to the history of Bordeaux. The small quantities of this first vintage (2022) haven't made it possible to reply favourably to all the demand, as I would have liked to do. This is why I'll be making sure that a larger quantity will be produced for the 2023 vintage. More news about this and the rest of my wines will be sent shortly.

As always, you are very welcome to come and see us in Saint-Emilion, and I look forward very much to seeing you again soon.

Very best wishes,

François Despagne

Famille Despagne

Ever-present in Saint-Emilion

Owners since 1812

Château Grand Corbin-Despagne

Grand Cru Classé

Organic since 2004, officially certified since 2013

2023 : the 211nd vintage of the Despagne family

in the Grand Corbin terroir

The 27th vintage of François Despagne

2023 Château Grand Corbin-Despagne