



EN PRIMEURS: 2020, A VINTAGE OF GREAT EXPECTATIONS

The 2020 vine cycle was marked by heavy winter rainfall, followed by alternating spells of fine sunny weather and periods of rain in spring, before very hot weather set in over the summer. This 2020 vintage, the 209th made by my family at Grand Corbin, and the 25th that I've had the privilege of producing at Grand Corbin-Despagne, bears all the hallmarks, in its richness, balance, structure and elegance, of a great, indeed an outstanding year.

Dear friends,

Dedicating this newsletter to such a gruelling year as 2020 could almost be construed as an act of provocation. And yet, there is indeed something to be cherished about that year -and that is the amazing quality of the 2020 vintage.

Allow me to sketch an outline of this vintage and pay tribute to a year that not only brought us a wine of huge potential but also brought the smiles back to our faces, together with new energy and enhanced ambition!



[Watch the video](#)

A rainy start to the growing season...

Between October and March, multiple spells of rainy weather led to a cumulative rainfall of more than 500mm. That's nearly 20 inches -almost a record! Winter had been quite mild with a few days of healthy low temperatures. Spring then arrived with sunshine, promising brighter days, while France went into its first lockdown, which of course the vines blissfully ignored. Mother Nature waits for no man, and the vineyard tasks had to go ahead regardless. The soils hadn't yet soaked up all of the previous rain when a further spell arrived, making vineyard work especially tricky, indeed impossible.

At the same time, the milder weather brought with it the danger of outbreaks of downy mildew. As I have said on past occasions, to have made the choice, almost 17 years ago now, to manage the vineyard according to organic farming methods requires anticipation and optimal risk evaluation, since once downy mildew sets in, it's impossible to control it.



Our teams rally round during French lockdown

I look back on last year with emotion and gratitude to everyone working at Grand Corbin-Despagne. Their solidarity was just amazing. They had no hesitation in helping me out in the vineyard when, for the first time in 25 years, I carried out the spraying (on four consecutive occasions) using a manual back sprayer. Their motivation to help me to get the job done was admirable. Without the readiness and commitment of our teams, we wouldn't have enjoyed the success that we had, or achieved the high quality that this vintage so clearly has. And that would have been a real shame.

The flowering came early around 20th May, two weeks ahead of normal schedule, which gave us estimated harvesting dates starting at the beginning of September. A hot, dry summer set in with stable conditions and especially high temperatures at the end of June, along with some short welcome spells of rain during August. With these high temperatures, the challenge was to maintain the necessary acidity with a low pH, and thereby ensure good balance.



Harvesting time and a pleasant surprise

As forecast, the harvesting began at the beginning of September. Very hot weather concentrated the juices in the berries, which led to a loss of 10% of volume in the space of ten days. This intense concentration triggered predictions that the 2020 may well resemble the 2010. And it was at the end of the vinifications that the profile of the wine, with its high levels of IPT (Total Polyphenols Index), among other factors, confirmed this promise.



Dark, dense and very deep in colour, Grand Corbin-Despagne 2020 reveals vibrant, fresh, black fruit aromas on the nose with freshness coming to the fore on the palate. The entry displays power with ripe fruit flavours, together with superb fleshy tannins.

Thanks to the quality of the 2020 vintage, we will be able to put the less pleasant moments of 2020 behind us.

Grand Corbin-Despagne 2020 is a wine that can be enjoyed young for its vibrant fresh fruit character or cellared and savoured over many years.

Looking forward to better times when hopefully I will have the pleasure of presenting this wine to you in person,

Best wishes,

François Despagne

[Check the technical sheet](#)

Famille Despagne

Ever-present in Saint-Emilion
Owners since 1812

Château Grand Corbin-Despagne

Grand Cru Classé
Organic since 2004, officially certified since 2013

2020 : the 209th vintage of the Despagne family
in the Grand Corbin terroir.
The 25th vintage of François Despagne