

Newsletter 4 - Grand Corbin-Despagne

A new vat room built for precision vinification

The accomplishment of a work begun 25 years ago

When I took over the reins of Grand Corbin Despagne, I immediately looked into the layout of the vineyard planted instinctively by previous generations of my family. Research carried out via the drilling of soil pits backed up their instinctive choices and revealed almost 52 individual parcels in the vineyard, each one with its own characteristics.

With this new information, it was now logical to adapt what we had learned in the vineyard to the way we work in the cellars and ensure that each of these parcels is vinified on an individual basis. In fact, even within each parcel, I had noticed that there were parts that deserved to be viewed separately, thus leading to management on an intra-plot basis.

From 2015, I had been considering how I could rethink the vat room to take into account the results of my trials of plot-by-plot vinification. The investment required for the creation of a new vat room could only be justified if real advances were made. In order to make great wines, it is essential to work with great precision throughout each stage of the process and to reach for perfection.

An increased proportion of Cabernet Franc

Within each of these plots, some vines have been replanted, such as these 2 hectares of Cabernet Franc which have replaced Merlot. While I remain an ardent defender of Merlot, the emblematic grape variety of Bordeaux's right bank, climate change has persuaded me to increase the proportion of Cabernet Franc so that eventually it makes up over a third of the blend.

The Cabernet Franc's pH enables the balance and style of our wines to be maintained while guaranteeing the original typicity of our terroirs, without us having to undertake research into possible varieties that are resistant to climate change. It is important for me to be able to adapt and at the same time remain faithful to our identity.

The new vat room, which will be completed shortly, will thus enable us, as from the 2021 harvest, to perform the vinifications of each of these grape varieties from their individual plots with enhanced precision.

A vat room made wholly of concrete.

After being slightly delayed because of the health crisis, the creation of this new vat room at Grand Corbin Despagne was envisaged as a return to our origins. The old stainless steel vats were replaced in their entirety by mobile concrete vats, custom-designed according to our needs and complementing the château's historical concrete vats. They have been built with 60, 70, 80 and 90-hectolitre capacities and will now enable each lot of wine to be vinified at its optimal level of ripeness.

This new tool will not only enable us to reach the same precision in the cellars as we do in the vineyard, but also to enhance the eco-friendly approach that we have undertaken at the estate. In the area of winemaking, for example, the fermentation and maceration processes will now be carried out at maintained, less energy-consuming temperatures, while the new concrete vat room will bring about more even conditions while reducing our environmental impact.

We'll discover the first results next spring during the 2021 primeurs tastings, when I'll be thrilled to see you once again.