



THE VINTAGE 2004



Key dates:

Budbreak: 25 April
Flowering: 10 June
Cluster thinning: Late July
Veraison: 06 August
Harvesting: 24 September

Overview

While 2003 was a heatwave year, 2004 was especially poor on the weather front, marked by relatively high rainfall and little sunshine. Luckily, September's summery conditions meant that the viticultural year ended with a flourish.

Dormancy:

The records show no seriously cold snaps: January and February were very warm for the time of year.

Growing season:

March began with cold weather and temperatures were well below the average, accompanied by frequent frosts. **April's** temperatures were close to normal.

In May, temperatures varied considerably and summery conditions alternated with almost wintry spells.

There was a lack of rainfall throughout the region. At the beginning and end of **June**, temperatures were close to

30°C. The lack of water continued with a monthly shortfall of 10 to 30 mm. Although June held promise for a good summer, July then quenched our enthusiasm. The first fortnight in **July** was cool, with minimum temperatures never managing to rise above 9°C. During the same period, frequent storms caused serious damage in some places. The sun shone only timidly throughout the month. **August** was especially poor, with relatively low temperatures and rainfall higher than the norm – levels were 2 to three times higher than the seasonal averages. Sunshine was largely lacking. In early **September**, temperatures rose to summer levels at almost 30°C. There was a good deal of sunshine, with a surplus of 40 hours. *Taken from the bulletin of the plant protection service.*

The harvest:

Following painstaking efforts throughout the summer (including leaf removal in July and cluster thinning at the end of July - to reduce the number of bunches and allow air to circulate around the vines - and in September - to

remove grapes already showing signs of grey rot), picking began on 24 September. The grapes were carefully sorted, with the result that about 10% of the harvest was rejected. Once the healthy grapes were in vats, vinification went ahead without any particular difficulty, although this is always a time for close daily monitoring and irrevocable strategic decision-making and of intense stress.

Assessment of quality:

After two somewhat atypical vintages, 2004 marks a return to Pinot Noir typicity; the colour is strong and deep without being intense. This vintage is exactly how we all love them to be for this grape variety - highly aromatic with a range of red fruits, and even black fruits in certain appellations, and the presence of marked, but elegant, tannins. I recommend you make the most of this typicity by serving these 2004 wines at around 3 to 5 years old for the Villages and Premier Cru appellations and 5 to 8 years old for the Grands Crus.