

THE SOURCE
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WRITTEN BY TED VANCE



Stéphane Rousset's Crozes-Hermitage "Les Picaudières"

Tariffs have slowed purchasing since mid-summer, and we're having a bit of a lull as we wait for our late November and early December containers. The tariff bills, due upon arrival at the port, are deducted immediately from our bank account, often without prior notice. It's made staying on top of our cash flow difficult because we need to ensure there's enough to cover the government's confiscation at a level we've never experienced before—and these duties have now been ruled illegal, to boot. (Funny, but not so funny, how the “less-government” right-wing has stepped aside for the government to rule everything.)

Coming from France in the coming months, we expect the 2023s from **DAVID DUBAND**, **LES INFILTRÉS** third vintage, **CHRISTOPHE'S** 2023 1er Crus, a pile of **LAMBERT**, and a new grower for our California team, the “natural” wine world's legendary low-alcohol, Languedoc grower, Thierry Forestier, and his Domaine **MONT DE MARIE**. Landing in New York from Portugal is a touch more of the immediately legendary (as of last month's California tastings and the inaugural release of the wines) **SAN MICHEL** and its Colares and Sintra-based wines, **MENINA D'UVA'S** fluttering and charming Trás-os-Montes wines, and **CONSTANTINO RAMOS'S** Lima Valley Loureiro (already in massive demand for the temporarily short supply). From Spain, the **AUGALEVADA** 2023s, **MANUEL MOLDES**, **PABLO SOLDAVINI**, **ASEGINOLAZA & LEUNDA**, **MICHELINI Y MUFFATO** Bierzos, **MIXTURA'S** 2021 reds and whites (wait till you get a load of these!). Also en route is **PRÁDIO'S** game-changing vintage and name-changing project for their Mencía and Pacio red, now called Familia Seoane Novelle—slightly more challenging name than Prádio; he had to change the name legally. (Otherwise, face a lawsuit!) Then comes the new organic Atlantic Mencía from Ribeira Sacra's historic **PONTE DA BOGA**. In Italy, more of the highly requested **MANETERRA** 2024 Vermentino, the extraordinary **CASTELLO DI CASTELLENGO** and their deal-of-the-decade Alto Piemonte Nebbiolo range grown on Lessona-like volcanic marine sand, **BRANDINI'S** gorgeous 2019 and 2020 Barolos (just tasted all over California this last week), **PAGLINETTO'S** salty, beautiful Verdicchio di Matelica, **SERGIO ARCURI'S** Olympic-level Ciró wines (2019 Più Vite & 2021 Aris), and **DAVE FLETCHER'S** fresh-take takedown and remodeled Langhe Dolcetto, Barbera and Chardonnay, among others!

It's a massive load all at once that we'll have to spread over some months. And even though many will arrive at the beginning of November, we always maintain a minimum month-long rest for all new release wines before we begin to sample and sell them. We implemented this company policy when we opened, since wines need to rest after traveling. We don't want to waste our money and everyone's time showing wines that are truck and boat-lagged.

Since there've been no new arrivals this month or the last, I came up with at least something to send out, lest anyone think that my newsletter run that started in March 2021 has died on the vine—quite the opposite. I deeply enjoy writing our newsletter, and as long as I can still see, type and think, I will continue this welcome and fulfilling task until the first of those faculties begins to fail. So in an effort to keep things going, I sent out inquiries to our growers across Europe for a preview of their experiences this harvest. From what I gather, 2025 seems to have been wildly successful all over the territories we work. A unique year with a balance of hot and dry weather in some places, like Galicia, and a slow and steady pace on the east side in Austria and everywhere in between. The common thread? Abundance for many, and quality for all. Lucky us!

MICHIGAN, FINALLY!

Before we dig into the vintage report, a big shout-out to our new Michigan team at Huron River Wine Co. Doug, Kayleigh, and their driven leader, Chad LeMieux delivered a fabulous and diverse group of wine professionals to keep me extra chatty and on the move during two organized tastings. They're entirely on board with our entire national portfolio of growers (a true rarity in the distribution world), and all styles of wine seem to fly there.

My grandfather was from Ann Arbor, which added a bit of a mystique to the place for me. My recent trip was my first time in the state, and we had to just pass through Ann Arbor on our way from Detroit to Grand Rapids so we could keep charging Chad's electric truck (Ford). The tasting in Detroit and the smaller but equally interested group in Grand Rapids the next day were well-attended, with a diverse gathering of open and seasoned wine pros and younger buyers. I was encouraged by what seemed to be a solid connection and openness between the younger buyers and those with a lot more experience. There's a dearth of mentorship in today's wine culture, but among the attendees of the two Michigan tastings, I sensed a distinct connection between the different generations.

Our growers, a collection that includes many progressives among the classicists, are often eccentric, sometimes a little off the beaten path, but these Midwesterners responded with enthusiasm. Even some wines that I thought might back me into a corner as I tried to explain my reasons for bringing in 10.5-11% alcohol, high desert, hot-climate, pale-colored, 40-varietal-blend (both red and white grapes), Iberian reds poured right next to supercharged, multi-varietal, sub-3.0 pH reds (blacks!) with the same low alcohol. They didn't blink. Despite it being my maiden voyage to Michigan, it felt like I'd met these people before—maybe it was my inner Montanan and my parents' connection to Iowa in the 1940s.

I enjoyed tasting our wines at the events, Stateside. Strangely, I don't get to do that much. When I lived in California, I could taste them anytime to observe their evolution and behavior and compare them to how they were when I first tasted them in Europe, out of barrel, and then in their infantile stage shortly after bottling. At home in Iberia, I'm out of reach from the stock that made the refrigerated trans-Atlantic journey in California, New York, or our distribution partners' stock in other states. Even if the wines are the same bottlings as those I may have at home, every batch, every case, every bottle, and every taste is different—especially when you work with “living” wines vibrating with active microbial life.

We poured the same wines at both tastings and, as expected, they were slightly different from one day to the next. Detroit was sunny and pristine. The next day in Grand Rapids put on a climate-change show in rapid succession—four seasons in two hours with sideways rain, followed by a hard hailstorm, sun, rain, wind, sun, rain, wind, then a cool calm for the drive back to Detroit with the sun at our backs driving through the kaleidoscope of deciduous trees flaunting their fiery fall garments.

The travel shock in the Grand Rapids set was notable. Three days removed from Chad's warehouse to get ahead of the agenda and a three-hour drive between Detroit and Grand Rapids, they came out jittery, clammed up and a little pissed at first before they opened up and smiled for the crowd. The bottles for both tastings came from the same boxes, but different bottles. With a quarter of each

bottle poured, they found their harmony but were still more tightly structured with a little less fruit and flower compared to their generous showing the day before, when they had only been out of the warehouse for 36 hours. After years of filling my trunk with the same sample set to show three or four days in San Francisco up from my former home in Santa Barbara, I am well beyond convincing that wines will probably show well in their first and second day of jostling. But on day three and four, their brows furrow and arms cross, like they're disappointed with the mistreatment. I subscribe to this and recommend that everyone avoid drinking wines that have been moved for three to seven (or ten) days afterward.

Sometimes I wonder what we're all doing, trying to make decisions about purchasing wines on a single taste from a single bottle at all. Rarely do any buyers ask what the wines they're tasting in that moment tasted like other times I've tasted them. One taste? There is a lot to learn from a taste; otherwise, few would blind-taste well. But wines change like the weather on an October day in Michigan, especially the living ones; one day they're fire, the next they're ice. The wines did indeed find their footing in Grand Rapids, but the first hour was tight. Generally, they were a little harder, leading with structure, following with nuance—a very different experience than usual.

The greatest variability between bottles (outside of the cork influence) is how we treat them. Wines like ours, temperature-controlled from the producers' cellar doors to our customers' cellars, even though a highly charged bunch with acidity, are most compelling because of their nuances and finer details, not because of their structure. The structure is there every day, and it's probably more about whether the nuances strut their stuff (gently) and bring balance to the structure; they should be well rested in our wine temples—undisturbed for weeks, if not months, (years!) to get them to deliver the pinnacle of their expression. Our team of 38 wines spanning six European countries showed up in Michigan, but man, I wish the Grand Rapids crew had tasted the same wines the day before in sunny Detroit. What a difference they were.

Now for a download on the year and some impressions from a handful of our growers in all six European countries...

2025 VINTAGE REPORT

(Sorry for the lack of pictures!)

SPAIN

CUME DO AVIA, RIBEIRO

“The vintage throughout Galicia in general, but particularly in O Ribeiro was extraordinarily warm and dry, reaching average records unseen since data has been kept. There have been years with higher peak temperatures or more intense heat waves, but never such consistent heat combined with so little rainfall from late spring through harvest, which is the period that most influences the characteristics of the grapes. Similar patterns were seen in 2020 and perhaps in 2013, but this has truly been something new. This has meant several things: first, we had an excellent harvest from the “fungus paradise,” and we had access to fantastic raw material. We didn't vinify a large quantity, since our winery is small compared to our vineyard area, but it was a harvest I truly enjoyed—one of

the most enjoyable I've ever had—making wines that, while respecting the context of the vintage, still preserve our identity as a winery.” - *Diego Collarte*, owner and winegrower

MANUEL MOLDES, RÍAS BAIXAS

“Vintage 2025 was a very rainy winter and spring, and among the rainiest in recent years. The summer was warm and dry, with many days above 30°C (unusual for the area). Because of the wet spring followed by a dry summer, vineyard management was easier than in previous, more humid years. In fact, while many regions in Spain struggled with severe mildew problems, in Rías Baixas, it was a plentiful harvest thanks to the absence of losses from mildew. It was an abundant vintage (unlike much of Spain), and we believe it will also be a high-quality one, as the grapes were very well balanced. Ripening was steady, producing very flavorful grapes. Fermentations are now coming to an end, and the wines are looking very promising.” - *Manuel Moldes*

PABLO SOLDAVINI, RIBEIRA SACRA

“In my area, it was a dry, very dry vintage. This resulted in a very uneven harvest across the different plots. In those with shallow soils, the grapes did not develop properly, remaining tiny and resulting in extremely low yields. We also had to adjust the harvest dates for each plot accordingly. On the other hand, the lack of moisture throughout almost the entire growing season meant that the pressure from fungal diseases was very low, leading to a very healthy harvest with only two treatments. There was a very early onset of Black Rot, which we managed to stop with the first treatment, and about ten days later, another treatment was necessary for mildew, which was also quickly brought under control. Once again, the unusual has become the norm.” - *Pablo Soldavini*

BIEN DE ALTURA, GRAN CANARIA

“The 2025 vintage was marked by a warm, dry winter, similar to the rest of the Canary Islands. We had some beneficial rainfall in spring, but also strong powdery mildew pressure throughout the plant's vegetative cycle. In addition, two pre-harvest heat waves accelerated ripening, and September rains forced us to harvest some plots earlier than expected. Despite these challenges, we observed a higher pulp-to-skin-and-stem ratio compared to the 2024 vintage. This allowed us to work within our preferred winemaking style, carrying out longer macerations that result in finer tannins and deeper wines. Although it's still early for a definitive statement, we believe that the 2025 vintage will be an excellent one for Bien de Altura.” - *Carmelo Peña Santana*, owner and winegrower

PORTUGAL

QUINTA DA CAROLINA

“Harvest 2025 was one of the smallest ever. We had lots of rain at the end of winter and beginning of spring, but it was never cold, mild cold, and a wet spring started late, towards the beginning of April, as bud burst as well. A very difficult beginning of the season we had to use copper, the pressure of disease was too high this year (following 2 years without any copper in the vineyard) and even with it the flowers couldn't resist an intense attack of mildew in the end of May, and I believe we (organic farmed grape growers of Douro) lost 30-50% of the grapes here. Then the rest of spring

and beginning of summer was quite nice, dry and not so warm, but in the end of July hell arrived - we had 37 consecutive days with temperatures above 40°C, acids dropped, ripening stopped, vines started drinking from the berries and chaos was installed, lucky in the beginning of september we had a bit of rain that was gold for us, but even with this, was a very difficult year. Everything is still fermenting, and the grape must taste good, but let's see! We definitely will have concentration of flavours and low alcohol, but also lower acidity than usual.” - *Luis Candido da Silva*, owner and winegrower

CONSTANTINO RAMOS, VINHO VERDE

“2025 vintage was very wet and cold during spring. But from the 15th of June on, it was dry and hot until the end of the harvest. This means that in terms of sanitary conditions, the grapes are amazing. Also, a balanced ripening of the grapes was achieved since there was a lot of water resources underground, which allowed the plant to maintain a steady pace for photosynthesis. The dry weather and no concerns with rain also mean that we could pick the grapes at the right moment without pressure in terms of picking to avoid rains, which would bring rotten and other issues. So, even though the wines are still fermenting, I predict wines more full-bodied than usual and less acidic.” - *Constantino Ramos*

QUINTA DA SAN MICHEL, COLARES & SINTRA

“The winter of 2025 was exceptionally rainy, replenishing the soils and setting up the vineyards for a dry, mild summer. In May and June, strong mildew pressure from high humidity demanded intensive vineyard work—green pruning and leaf thinning to improve airflow. which proved crucial. The grapes achieved optimum ripeness, healthy and well-balanced. After the rainy, foggy summer of 2024 that brought 30–40% losses (Due to mildew) and highly acidic wines with a sharp, citric profile, the 2025 wines show remarkable potential, with greater body and structure.” - *Alexandre Guedes*

ARRIBAS WINE COMPANY, TRÁS-OS-MONTES

“We compare 2025 to 2019 as we had lots of rain in autumn and winter, but a hot and dry spring and summer. Many producers have complained about loss of yield, but in our case, it was the opposite. Most of the complaints came from producers with new vineyards planted with non-traditional varieties and not with a Goblet style of conduction. For us, a great year. We just hope we can dignify the amazing grapes we got.” - *Frederico Machado & Riccardo Alves*, owners and winegrowers

GERMANY

WECHSLER, RHEINHESSEN

“We are looking back, a little breathless but deeply grateful, on this year’s harvest. Vintage 2025 was the earliest and fastest we have ever experienced—in just 18 days, we brought everything in. The yields may be small, but the grapes we picked make us truly happy: excellent quality, vibrant acidity, and plenty of potential for powerful wines. Alongside Riesling, our passion beats strongly for Pinot Noir, and every detail mattered. The fruit showed a beautiful balance of ripeness, aroma, and

tension. Every row, every bunch was carefully checked. Berries damaged by the July hail were removed. After Pinot Noir came golden Scheurebe and beautiful Pinot Blanc & Pinot Gris, before we finally turned our full attention to Riesling. The first pick was at Benn – a site that surprises us every year with its distinctive character. Next came Steingrube for estate Riesling and then our Morstein, before moving on to Kirchspiel. The fruit there ripened early, with lower yields, but remarkable concentration and radiance.

“Each day was a careful weighing of options: harvest or wait? Rain and sun alternated, and each hour demanded new decisions about the perfect moment. This constant tension made the harvest a balance between risk and patience. But in the end, we were rewarded: Benn, Kirchspiel, Morstein – each site delivered fruit that showed its full class despite all challenges. The qualities now resting in our cellar fill us with joy and pride. These are wines that bear the signature of an unusual vintage – full of energy, freshness, and character, with the potential to tell their story for many years to come. Thanks to meticulous and highly selective harvesting, we are delighted to announce that with the 2025 vintage – after 10 years – we will once again be producing an "Auslese" from our Kirchspiel and Morstein sites.” - *Katharina Wechsler & Manuel Maier*

AUSTRIA

MALAT, KREMSTAL

“The 2025 vintage with very good elegance and finesse and vibrance. It’s on the leaner side only because the alcohol is not high, which is what many of us want. Most of the harvest was completed at the end of the 3rd of October. It was such a promising harvest all season, with rain when it was needed during the hot July, and August was warm, with nice weather. The diurnal shift was perfect this year, with very cool nights and warm to hot days, which not only preserves the great acidity but also the finer aromatics.

Harvest started in September with the sparkling wine base. The beginning of September was perfect and dry, then in the middle of September, it began to sporadically rain and cool down. It wasn’t as much rain as last year, when we had severe flooding after five days with 400 liters per square meter. In 2025, there were two heavy rains of about 40–50 liters each. After the first rain, and with the second big rain looming, we decided to prioritize all the top cru Rieslings because the thick skins of Grüner Veltliner can handle more rainfall. I would’ve liked to have more time on the vine, but I’d rather have healthier grapes than riper ones with more challenges.

After the second rain, the remaining grapes in the vineyards began to fill with water and burst. An interesting difference between the rains in 2025 and 2024 is that the former was a flood, while the latter had steady rainfall, and the ground absorbed the water well after the dry summer. After the flood in 2024, we went back into the vineyards, and the grapes weren’t very damaged. In 2025, the rainfall was so hard that it actually hurt some of the grape skins. In 2024, there was a late frost that destroyed most of the flatter vineyards with Grüner and eliminated almost all the yield. In 2025, we have good quantity and quality. I could say that the season would’ve been a match in quality for 2021 up until the September rains. But we are still very happy with the results.” - *Michael Malat*

WESZELI, KAMPTAL

This is a paraphrased version of the exhaustive 4-page essay written by Weszeli's head winegrower, Thomas Ganser.

"2025 is a year of balance and restraint. Not a loud vintage, but one distinguished by precision, clarity, and natural elegance. After a year full of weather extremes, 2025 began on a more forgiving note. The winter was mild, and thanks to the previous year's rainfall, the soils were well supplied with water. Flowering in mid-June went smoothly – an ideal starting point for a vintage that would soon reveal itself as exceptionally balanced. July brought roughly 130 liters of rain per square meter, providing extra water for our soils and a noticeable cooling period, unusual for our region. This slowed vegetative growth: the berries remained small, and the canopy developed in a looser structure – aided by our careful handwork."

"The first harvest began on September 3rd (roughly ten days later than the previous year) with Zweigelt and Müller-Thurgau. For Riesling, this period became a real test. The skins began to show signs of pressure and splitting, and in some vineyards, botrytis developed strongly. We reacted quickly, with selective harvesting, small quantities, and absolute focus on healthy grapes. The reward was that grapes from our best Riesling vineyards, Steinmassl, Seeberg, and Heiligenstein, arrived at the cellar remarkably clean and aromatic, despite the wet conditions. This vineyard, Schenkenbichl, one of our top vineyards, delivered an outstanding lot this year with absolutely healthy Grüner Veltliner grapes—concentrated, with superb texture and that characteristic saline note that makes Schenkenbichl so unmistakable.

"Harvest concluded on October 10th in the vineyards at Hasel. The last Grüner Veltliner from our hand-tended minimal-pruning vineyard showed its best side once more: aromatic, dense, and precise. Yield-wise, the vintage is approximately one third higher than 2024 – a very satisfying result after the frost-related losses of the previous year."

"2025 is a year of balance and restraint. It tells a story of attentiveness in the vineyard, timely action, and the ability to listen to nature. Many correct decisions allow us to look back on a harmonious harvest, with a few hectic yet intense moments, ensuring this vintage will be remembered fondly. With gratitude, we look back on a harvest that challenged us yet generously rewarded us – with wines that carry both strength and serenity in equal measure." - *Thomas Ganser*

VEYDER-MALBERG, WACHAU

"I'm only talking about the Wachau, where the weather was at times very different compared to other regions. We were quite fortunate with the weather. Later bud break reduced the risk of late frost. This was very important considering the frost we had the previous year. Consequently, flowering was also later. A pretty perfect growing season followed: balanced precipitation, low mildew pressure, never too hot, and consistently cool nights. Moderate rain in August and cooler weather stimulated shoot growth again, which delayed ripening of the grapes somewhat. Nevertheless, the conditions were good for a very good vintage.

Ripening took place in cool weather and cold nights. I then began the harvest on September 8th. The first two weeks were wonderful harvest weather, allowing the grapes to reach the cellar cool.

Then came a period of repeated rain every two or three days, which made work and decision-making more difficult. Also, picking became more difficult due to the cleaning of botrytis. The result – until the end of the harvest – was very low pH values (which I greatly appreciate) and low sugar, resulting in light-alcohol wines with ripe acidity. I finished the harvest on October 13th.

Many of the wines are still fermenting, and it's difficult to assess their quality. But given the growth cycle, these should be great wines. At the moment, however, I'm still impressed by the 2024 wines, some of which were bottled shortly before the harvest in August and September. These are now in my focus and are receiving good feedback at tastings. In my opinion, this is an ideal style for Grüner Veltliner, with a crisp structure and an almost Chenin Blanc-like appearance.” - *Peter Veyder-Malberg*

MARTIN MUTHENTHALER, WACHAU

At Muthenthaler, harvest is a family affair with most of Martin's immediate and extended family and a few pickers from other countries. After 21 days, everything was in at the end of October. The weather seemed clearly more autumn than late summer, and ripening slowed down. “It was a very balanced year with enough rainfall and a lot of grapes. There were really many grapes this year compared to 2024, when we lost 75% of the crop to frost. The vines had time to recover and could produce many healthy grapes this year.” At the end of September, the weather changed from a beautiful summer to cooler conditions with periodic rain and big swings in temperature. “That meant the harvest had to start very quickly, so we began on September 23rd. We started with the Rieslings, which is not very usual.” - *Melanie Muthenthaler*

TEGERNSEERHOF, WACHAU

“The 2025 vintage was markedly different from the previous years. A comparatively late budbreak followed by well-distributed rainfall laid the foundation for an ideal flowering period. Both Grüner Veltliner and Riesling flowered almost simultaneously, ensuring excellent fruit set. However, a severe hailstorm caused significant losses in some vineyards. By late June and early July, the first spell of heat and dryness accelerated vine growth considerably. During the ripening phase, another hot and dry period set in, leading to a slightly earlier harvest than in an average year.

The grapes reached full physiological ripeness, and thanks to our ripening-delay measures, we were able to harvest a little later under moderately cool conditions, which is always a great advantage in terms of aromatic precision and balance.

Grüner Veltliner shows bright, fresh, and remarkably diverse musts with vibrant energy. Riesling, on the other hand, suffered from the rainfall during the final ripening stage. Through patience and meticulous selection, we brought in only a small quantity of grapes with impressive expression and vitality. In summary, the excellent acidity levels promise a wonderfully defined aromatic profile for the 2025 vintage. As I write this on October 29, 2025, the wines are now fermenting gently in the cellar, and we follow their evolution with great care and anticipation.” - *Martin Mittelbach*, owner and winegrower

HAZJAN NEUMANN, VIENNA (A NEW GROWER FOR US STARTING IN 2026!)

“In Vienna, 2025 was pretty challenging but overall very good. A very hot June and July, followed by a cooler August and September with cold nighttime temperatures, resulted in wines that seem to be from a much cooler climate than the last years. It seems to me very mature from the phenolic ripeness but not the sugar ripeness, so there’s a much lower alcohol content and high complexity. The high-end wines are below 13% alcohol. It was a little like the old days: very intense, very aromatic, spicy Grüners, moderate alcohols between 11.5 and 13%. Riesling is slightly more concentrated with some botrytis. Reds are surprisingly dark and intense. Overall, it’s a very interesting vintage with very good drinkability, straightforward acidity and fruit. - *Fritz Wiener*, owner and winegrower

FRANCE

ARNAUD LAMBERT, BRÉZÉ & SAUMUR-CHAMPIGNY

From our conversation with Arnaud Lambert, we learned that the 2025 vintage in the vineyard held a perfect equilibrium between warmth and rainfall. There was no water stress and no heat spikes, and the grape ripeness and quality were remarkably even. Harvest began early, on August 25. Yields were fairly low, a result of poor flowering in spring 2024 and a bit of hail in Brézé at the end of July. Arnaud described the vinifications as pure pleasure. Both the white and red fermentations were easy to follow, and the malolactic fermentation occurred during the alcoholic phase without any rise in volatile acidity. The wines should be well balanced, with alcohol levels of 13.5 to 14%, matched by strong acidity (5.5 g/L TA, pH 3.1–3.2). The reds are fleshy and structured. Overall, the season had an impressive harmony between the climate, the vines, and the limestone subsoil that helped preserve the freshness. 2025 is a vintage to accompany rather than to shape.

FABRICE ESNAULT (DOMAINE DE LA GUIRAUDIÈRE), BRÉZÉ & SAUMUR-CHAMPIGNY

Fabrice Esnault describes the 2025 harvest as “a fairly traditional start to the year,” though the early heat and dry air triggered rapid flowering and hinted at an early harvest. “The sunshine was abundant and with low humidity through the summer.”

Yields were down about 25% from a full vintage but the quality is excellent. The harvest unfolded under ideal conditions with sun throughout and no rain. Toward the end of the Chenin harvest, all of which comes from Brézé, he brought in very healthy fruit for his two sweet Coteaux de Saumur cuvées: *L'Aube de Brézé* (17.5% potential alcohol) and *Le Lingot de Brézé* (21% potential alcohol).

“Thanks to the weather during harvest,” Fabrice said, “the Cabernet Franc grapes [all from Turquant and Montsoreau on sandier soils] were extremely healthy too, and the macerations and fermentations went smoothly. The wines already show deep color with round, silky tannins.” Some cuvées are now finishing alcoholic fermentation, with malolactic fermentations already underway for the reds. This vintage will also allow him to rebuild stocks of his core cuvées after several short years. It appears to be a rich and promising year marked by purity, depth, and balance, with the quiet confidence of a classic Brézé and Saumur-Champigny harvest.

CAROLE KOHLER (JARDINS DE FLEURY), ANJOU

“At Jardins de Fleury, pruning stretched across three long months—a demanding and solitary task, but one that deepened the bond with the vines. The horses grazed every parcel throughout the winter, and the gentle spring required almost no treatments. The harvest was exceptional, with stunning fruit and a wildly enthusiastic team that brought unforgettable energy to the picking days. In the cellar, juice of remarkable purity and precision unfolded through effortless fermentations and perfect balance. 2025 was a vintage shaped by mastery and perseverance, brimming with promise. We can’t wait to see how it unfolds.” - *Carole Kohler*

LA LANDE, BOURGUEIL

François Delaunay explained that after a wet winter, Bourgueil experienced a near-perfect year. A warm spring brought an early start to the vines, and unlike previous years, there was no frost risk—no need even to bring out the frost-protection gear. The modest budding and cluster counts foretold balanced yields that were later confirmed at harvest. Flowering occurred quickly, and with clean canopies and little disease pressure, the season advanced under ideal conditions. A hot summer followed by well-timed rain in July and early September kept the vines in good health, maintaining their early pace and leading to a record-early harvest starting on September 15—the earliest in the domaine’s history.

The grapes were flawless, ripened evenly, and required almost no sorting. Fermentations ran smoothly, though a few tanks moved through alcoholic fermentation quickly when the fruit arrived warm. Malolactic fermentations followed shortly thereafter due to a naturally low acidity. The wines now rest complete and serene—rich, round, and supple, with remarkable balance and depth. For François, 2025 stands as a generous and composed year, a welcome return to ease and abundance after several challenging seasons.

VINCENT BERGERON, MONTLOUIS-SUR-LOIRE

Vincent Bergeron described 2025 as “a piece of cake.” The season unfolded smoothly from bud break onward, followed by clean flowering under beautiful weather and, most importantly, no disease. The work focused mainly on cover crop management, alternating between passes with Estelle’s horses and time on the rotary tiller. Despite a few small scares—a tank tipping over with Gauthier Mazet inside, and a burst of rain—the vintage remained steady and calm.

The grapes arrived in perfect condition, and the juice from the press was consistent and pure, with no deviations. Red fermentations sped through both the alcoholic and malolactic phases, while the whites were slower, with some minor fermentation issues that are now resolved. Vincent expects the wines to be rich and perhaps soft, as the summer heat likely burned off a bit of acidity—but it’s still too early to tell. After the disasters of 2023 and 2024, he admitted that 2025 might have been his last vintage, but as he put it, “Mother Earth gave me another chance... so let’s go.”

JEAN COLLET, CHABLIS

Romain Collet described 2025 as a season of contrast that ultimately worked in the grower’s favor. Winter was mild and steady, with no frost or cold events, and the vines awoke in excellent condition.

Budbreak came early after a calm, balanced spring followed by warm and dry conditions through summer. This advanced ripening and brought some local water stress, reducing yields but concentrating the fruit. Rain returned at the end of August divided the harvest into two profiles: fruit picked before the rain shows greater precision and energy, while later-picked parcels express softer, rounder textures.

Harvest began August 26 with the Crémants de Bourgogne, followed by Chablis on the 29th. Around 70 millimeters of rain fell during week 34, increasing the risk of grey rot, so they prioritized the most sensitive parcels before the next storms. The last fruit came in on November 10 and 11 with the reds from Irancy.

In the cellar, the musts were clean and pressed easily. Settling took longer than usual (a typical trait of warm years) and fermentations unfolded gradually and without issue.

Romain said the results show the resilience of the vines and the steadiness of the cellar. The wines are complete and balanced, already open and expressive but with the structure to age gracefully.

RODOLPHE DEMOUGEOT, CÔTE DE BEAUNE

Rodolphe explained that 2025 was a steady, healthy growing season from start to finish. June was warm and sunny, July turned cooler and wetter, and August brought intense heat and even a brief heatwave until the 25th, before a return to stormier conditions. The vines remained balanced and strong through it all.

Harvest ran from August 29 to September 6 under excellent conditions, producing clean, healthy fruit. The red wines already show beautiful color, expressive fruit, and generous texture. The Pinot Noir looks particularly promising, carrying both elegance and depth. The whites are still fermenting, revealing lovely aromas at this early stage, but not yet settled enough to assess completely. Given the natural balance of the fruit, Rodolphe is confident that 2025 will yield outstanding reds and whites alike with harmony and poise.

CARTAUX-BOUGAUD, JURA

Sandrine and Sébastien Cartaux-Bougaud described 2025 as harmonious from vineyard to cellar. The vegetative cycle unfolded under steady conditions, aside from a touch of coulure on the Savagnin during flowering that slightly reduced yields. Disease pressure remained moderate throughout the season—only nine tractor passes were needed to protect the vines from mildew, an excellent result given the shifting weather.

Harvest stretched from August 26 to September 16, longer than usual, which allowed each parcel to reach full maturity. The grapes were of impressive quality, yielding around 30 hL/ha. The atmosphere was warm and lively: a team of 18 pickers filled the vineyards with laughter and camaraderie, highlighted by the celebration of Jacqueline's 80th birthday—a loyal picker since the beginning of the domaine and a symbol of its continuity.

In the cellar, fermentations began quickly and progressed smoothly. Most wines are now dry, and malolactic fermentation is finishing gently in the calm of the cellar. Everything points toward wines that are balanced, expressive, and pure. The Cartaux-Bougauds believe 2025 will offer both beauty

and longevity—a complete, harmonious vintage full of promise for those who follow their work closely.

DUTRAIVE, BEAUJOLAIS

From Ophélie and Lucas Dutraive, we heard that 2025 was an intense and demanding year in the vines. Frequent rain required nearly as many spray treatments as in 2024, but flowering went well, and hail never appeared. The vines suffered mild drought stress in mid-August before a timely rain arrived as harvest began, helping the berries regain balance and volume.

Harvest took place from August 28 to September 4. Despite the season's challenges, the fruit was exceptionally healthy, and no sorting was needed. Average potential alcohols ranged between 12–12.5°, matched by beautiful natural acidity, promising a lively and fresh profile. Thanks to the good acidity levels and sufficient nitrogen in the musts from the rainy season, fermentations started quickly and ran smoothly. Macerations lasted about 15 days, resulting in wines with fine structure, brightness, and energy. The Dutraives expect the wines to show finesse and delicate fruit—a year that was difficult in the vineyard but effortless in the cellar, yielding wines full of freshness and balance.

ROUSSET, CROZES-HERMITAGE & SAINT-JOSEPH

For Stéphane and Isabelle Rousset, the 2025 season began with a cold, rainy spring that made flowering difficult. By late June, temperatures rose sharply, bringing brief heat spikes. Disease pressure stayed moderate thanks to careful vineyard work. July was stable, followed by an extremely hot August when the vines stayed strong despite the stress. Some berry dehydration occurred, but the team managed it by maintaining a generous canopy to shield the clusters.

Harvest began on August 25 with the whites and continued with the reds on August 27, running three weeks ahead of the 2024 season, and picking wrapped up by September 4. The fruit was exceptionally clean and concentrated, but yields were slightly reduced from smaller clusters and lower juice volumes. Ripeness was excellent, and fermentations proceeded smoothly, aided by the quality of the fruit. The team carried out two pump-overs daily during fermentation, later reduced to one, with gentle punch-downs to release sugars from slightly candied berries. Macerations lasted around 25 days, resulting in deeply colored wines with fine texture and structure.

The Roussets expect 2025 to be a vintage of finesse and concentration, with firm and refined tannins and wines showing both density and balance—an expression of precision and restraint. The year's shifting weather—heat peaks in late June and mid-August, alternating with brief storms—compressed the season and shortened harvest to just seven days instead of eleven, as ripeness arrived rapidly. Though yields were down, the resulting wines promise freshness, generosity, and fine definition. 2025 will deliver elegant, vibrant whites and structured, refined reds that reflect the year's challenges and rewards.

SADON HUGUET, BORDEAUX

Mathieu described 2025 as a year that began with intense pressure and constant vigilance. The early months demanded daily attention, but by May conditions shifted and the season turned dry and

stable. “The precocity was unprecedented,” he said. The white grapes were harvested at the end of August, followed by Merlot and Cabernet Franc on September 13–14.

The drought and heat brought concern in the cellar, as fermentations had been difficult under similar conditions in 2022. This time, however, balance prevailed. Mathieu credits biodynamic farming for the resilience of the vines and the natural equilibrium of the juices and called 2025 a vintage of extremes, yet one of remarkable harmony—a year that captured both concentration and freshness. His use of plant-based preparations proved essential in helping the vines adapt to the season’s stress. The result is a set of wines he describes as juicy, poised, and deeply expressive of their terroir.

ITALY

SETTE, NIZZA MONFERRATO

“We will remember the harvest 2025 as one of the hardest and most dramatic ever! Average production for all growers in the southern Piedmont is down 30% from last year’s average. At Sette, we had flowering that came two weeks early last spring, due to an abnormally hot winter. This type of event has become more common over the last 15 years, and it increases the risk of losing part of the fruit if rain falls during the flowering, but we didn’t have this problem last Spring. Everywhere in the southern Piedmont, we had a lot of rain at the end of May/beginning of June, with hard attacks of downy mildew in vineyards, with no exception in our vineyards in Nizza Monferrato. The main problem for us was that we hadn’t had any kind of alert, because we had the downy mildew attacks directly on the clusters, while normally this kind of problem starts on the leaves. All the treatments we did after discovering the problem only helped us to limit the damage, but we lost between 50 and 70 percent, depending on the various grape varieties. We had the greatest losses on the Barbera grape, universally considered a rustic grape that loves a hot, dry climate; it seems to suffer greatly from the heat waves of recent years. The quality of the wines in the cellar is incredibly high; this increases the regret for the beautiful harvest that has been largely lost.” - *Gino Della Porto*, owner and winegrower

LUIGI SPERTINO, NIZZA MONFERRATO

“The vintage 2025 is the best since 2005, 2012, 2019, 2021, but I lost between 30 and 50 percent of production! Until August 5, it was probably the best vintage ever, but 10 days with extremely high temperatures, from August 6 to 15, have created great problems for the vines, with many grapes completely dried out. In the cellar, I have an incredible sparkling wine base 2025, an outstanding Grignolino 2025, and a (only) good Barbera 2025. My Barbera vineyards suffered so much from the high temperatures in August.” - *Mauro Spertino*

SOFIA, ETNA

“The vintage 2025 is characterized by good climate conditions, with abundant rain in Winter that helped make up for the water deficit after a very dry 2024. The water in the soil allowed the vines to sprout and develop vegetation quickly. On the other hand, it made it difficult for us to manage the leaf wall, and consequently, it has made it more difficult to give copper and sulfur treatments to

prevent downy mildew. For this reason, downy mildew has spread, damaging clusters in pre-closure and causing the loss of 30% of red grapes. No problem for Carricante, for which we were able to increase production, thanks to the young vines planted in recent years. Due to the low production of red grapes, we decided to make only around 3000 bottles OF Gioacchino Rosso from the grapes of our old bush vineyard and from the grapes of our vineyard “Contrada Torreguarino” on soil very rich in clay.” - *Carmelo Sofia*

MANATERRA, LIGURIA

“The last harvest is the second in a row, characterized by very strong thunderstorms at the end of August and September. I remember we used to pray for rain in summertime to break the Summer drought. Now we pray that the rain will not turn into hail or that it will not be so violent as to ruin the grapes or cause landslides. Climate change is presenting us with the bill! Despite everything, I’m really satisfied with the high-quality grapes and the quantity I brought to the cellar. What about the wine?...everything looks like it’s going in the right direction, but I always prefer to wait for winter to understand the real quality of the wine, because wines are more complex than a sum of chemical parameters.” - *Claudio Felisso*, owner and winegrower.

CASTELLO DI CASTELLENGO, ALTO PIEMONTE

“It’s very hard to define the last vintage. Everything looked great in spring, even though the weather was rainy, we had a lot of good grapes, but due to a hailstorm at the beginning of Summer, we lost around 30% of our bunches. The Summer continued with great climatic instability, two weeks of extreme heat in June and August, strong thunderstorms, and low temperatures with snow above 2500 meters! Last September was the worst in four years, and we had uneven maturation. Despite everything, the musts look good with a nice aromaticity and a low alcohol content, around 12,8%.” - *Magda Zago*, owner and winegrower

FABIO ZAMBOLIN, ALTO PIEMONTE

“As far as I’m concerned, the 2025 vintage initially looked to be free of any risk of damaging frost, compared to the previous two years. However, the season subsequently continued with frequent and heavy rainfall, which jeopardized production. The work in the vineyard was therefore particularly demanding, but after the experiences of 2023 and 2024, I managed to get to the second half of June with excellent results. Unfortunately, however, on June 21st, a tornado with a hailstorm severely damaged a promising 2025 harvest. To date, I feel like saying that the small quantity of Nebbiolo harvested thanks to the continuous and determined work carried out in the vineyard has led, in my opinion, to an interesting vinification also due to a notable lowering of nighttime temperatures in the week preceding the harvest. For the rest, we just have to wait. The Nebbiolo is still macerating today, and while it won’t be a vintage with high alcohol content, we certainly expect great aromas.” - *Fabio Zambolin*

MAURO MARENGO, BAROLO

“After we wrapped up the 2025 harvest, we can already say that the vintage shows excellent quality—especially for the Nebbiolo-based wines. It was an early year: we found ourselves rushing to grab the shears and crates to pick the Nascetta as early as August 26th, about two weeks ahead of

schedule. The other varieties soon followed, confirming that the entire season was roughly ten days early. Fortunately, the weather in the second half of September and early October was ideal, with clear days and significant temperature swings between day and night. This allowed us to calmly choose the perfect harvest day for each Nebbiolo plot, achieving excellent tannin and aromatic ripeness in the grapes—very similar to the 2021 vintage.” - *Daniele Marengo*

BRANDINI, BAROLO

“I think 2025 was a great vintage. What I mean by ‘great’ is that it was very balanced. We had a mild winter with a lot of rain, which granted good water reserves for the beginning of the season. Compared to previous years, June was very good, with balanced temperatures and sunny weather, which helped quality cluster formation.

Summer was definitely on the warmer side, and that brought us to a pretty early harvest starting on August 21st, with everything in the cellar by October 2nd. So far, the wines are generous in aromatics and balance, and the quality of tannins for Nebbiolo was perfect, given that the yield wasn’t so high. Regardless, we will always prefer quality over quantity, so I think it’s been very good—especially with the extremely clean fruit through a sunny September. As far as vintage similarities go, it’s closest to me to 2023, but we have to wait and see.” - *Giovanna Bagnasco*, owner and winegrower

GIACOMO BARALDO, TUSCANY

“2025 was a classical year for the Baraldo area, much like 2018. The pattern holds that evens and odds split the same way: the even years are rainy and wet with mild summers, the odd years of ’19, ’21, and ’23 show more body, more structure, and less rain overall. Their zone always receives more precipitation than the rest of Chianti Classico, averaging about 950 mm compared to 700. There’s been no snow in winter for the past two years.

2025 was a rollercoaster. Spring was rainy, with a dry June but wet April and May. July remained mild with the nights cooling to 17–18°C. August and September heated up. Grapes started coming in early—Chardonnay always first—harvest began on August 18. There were hailstorms in il Pozzone, and September ran hot, with warmer nights than usual—normally 8–10°C, this year higher. Everything was in by September 20.

The wines are vibrant, marked by good acidity. The top crus reach 13%, lower in Pozzone, which was harvested immediately after rain, before the berries swelled. The profile is classical with red fruits, flowers, and that familiar red-orange lift in the higher-altitude wines.” - *Giacomo Baraldo*