



Alsace Wines 2006 : A vintage of contrasts

2006 will go down in history as a vintage which produced good quality wines thanks to masterly wine making skills and in spite of a difficult year.

Despite late budbreak (25 April), fine sunny weather in June allowed flowering to take place at the usual time (around 19 June), while a hot July even resulted in a slight advance. Thanks to a cool August with favourable rainfall, and to the weather in the first fortnight of September, excellent ripeness levels could be forecast for the 2006 vintage.

The starting dates for the harvest were 11 September for all AOC Crémant d'Alsace except Riesling (18 September), and 25 September for all still wines except Riesling and Gewurztraminer (27 September). Picking of the late-harvest Vendanges Tardives and Sélections de Grains Nobles wines began on 11 October.

Rain with intermittent storms started on 24 September and lasted into early October. This caused damage in those vineyards which had not been picked before it began. The potential quality of the vintage was preserved thanks to the vigilance of oenologists and winemakers, who reacted with great skill and efficiency not only when sorting the harvest, but also with the clarification of the must.

As a result, the Crémants d'Alsace, produced mainly from the Pinot varieties and picked as usual at the start of the harvest before the rain began, promise to be elegant, well-structured wines. Overall, the dry white wines are very fresh with good aromatic intensity; smooth and easy to enjoy, they will be suitable for early drinking. The Pinot Noir wines are fruity and light in colour.

Due to the challenging climatic conditions, only a few late harvest wines were made, but these are particularly successful, notably those made from Gewurztraminer, which ripens later and which therefore benefited from the fine October weather.

Quantity-wise, production totalled 1 081 000 hl, 8% less than the five-year average (857 748 hl of AOC Alsace and AOC Alsace Grand Cru plus 223 942 hl for Crémant d'Alsace). Sales of Alsace wines increased by 2.3% in 2006, compared to 2005 (+ 1% in value for the home market and + 6% for exports), figures which confirm the current trend of recovery, on the export markets in particular.

Conseil Interprofessionnel des Vins d'Alsace
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