



2018: an extreme vintage CHALLENGING BUT EXCITING!

Winter and spring saw record-breaking rains, with 600 mm of precipitation falling between January and June. Waterlogged soil and exceptionally aggressive mildew made working in the vines a challenge. A high volume of grapes heralded an abundant harvest, presuming the mildew could be brought under control. **July 5 marked the true start of summer with extremely hot and dry weather: the second-highest temperatures ever recorded, just behind 2003.**

As August rolled around, the young vines started to suffer, and the others were not far behind.

Water stress can be highly beneficial for grape quality, and 2018 was no exception. On our finest plots of clayey gravel soil, everything came together to ensure slow, perfect maturation. On the less clayey plots, the drought was such that the vines struggled to nourish the fruit. As a result, the berries grew in concentration rather than in size.

As the weeks went on, we realized that the grapes were much lower weight than in a regular year: the yield was withering away.

The fruit approached maturity with a pleasant, fruity bouquet, an intense color and potent tannins. The richness of the skins equaled that of the juice, which boasted **extremely high sugar content. Concentration was the key word for all the varieties.**

The **harvest took place** earlier than planned – **from September 19 to October 10** – as the young vines were suffering dramatically from the heat and drought. It took **three weeks to pick and sort the grapes, eliminating berries that had been dried out by either the mildew or the hot, dry weather.**

The berries were so concentrated that we had to adjust the vinification process. A few light pumping-over procedures to ensure uniformity were quite enough; the color and tannins came out immediately, making further interventions superfluous.

Designing the blend was easy, and the result is well worth all the work that went into the season. The wine is exuberant but not opulent, rich yet light, fresh without being overbearing: in a word, perfectly balanced. This vintage 2018 will remain etched in our memories for years to come.

How does it compare to other years? **2018 combines the qualities of two great vintages: 2009 and 2010.** Sunny and ripe like 2009, dense and structured like 2010.

Harvest dates: September 19 to October 10

Yield: 25 Hl/Ha (1.3 tons/acre)

Blend:

■ 43% Cabernet Sauvignon ■ 29% Merlot ■ 15% Cabernet Franc ■ 13% Petit Verdot

Maturing: 19 months in casks, 65% new

Alcohol content: 14.5%

Date of bottling: 6/2/2020

TASTING NOTES

2018 is a surprising wine: despite devastating mildew, it stands out as one of Château Kirwan's all-time greatest wines.

The color is dark, the nose rich, with notes of ripe black fruit such as black cherry and blackberry, made more complex by spicy aromas of sweet pepper and cinnamon. The concentration comes out immediately in the nose. The attack, fresh and intriguing, evolves into a smooth, creamy and supple texture that fills the palate.

In addition to the early aromas, subtle notes of vanilla emerge thanks to the long aging period. This wine offers a broad mid-palate leading to a long, aromatic finale impelled by soft yet surging tannins.

2018 embodies the spirit we strive to achieve: elegant and rich, but never ostentatious.

A vintage to be enjoyed today or savored in 25 years!

Ph. Delfaut, General Manager. August 28, 2020