



2022-back to the future

«Unlike 2021, which reminded us of some of the vintages of old, 2022 heralded the arrival of the future and showed how much climatic variations impact our work as wine growers. It was a year of contrasts and excesses, but the vintage, in the end, was a success.»

Philippe Delfaut – General Manager

Extreme figures across the board

The preceding **winter was the coldest in 10 years**. A period of heavy rain in late 2021 gave way to drought, which began in January and intensified until the end of May. The vines budded at their normal dates (late March for the Merlot and early April for the Cabernet), and then **2 frosty nights on 3rd and 4th April** caused concern for the new vine shoots. **2 plots outside the Cantenac plateau were at risk**, and we successfully protected them with the **warm glow of lanterns** which we placed in the rows.

In early May, temperatures soared and were well above average by around 2 to 3°C. The shoots now grew quickly, and the cycle surged ahead, so much so that **the flowering process took place in late May, instead of the normal time in June. A very early harvest was predicted.**

In June, a spell of rain, which occurred to varying degrees depending on sector, brought some welcome relief for the vines. 50% less rain fell in Margaux, however, than in Pessac and Saint-Julien. Drought conditions resumed in July during an exceptionally early veraison. **Temperatures meanwhile soared in July and August with highs of over 30°C recorded on 30 days.** Usually during the whole of summer, highs of only 25°C are recorded on 30 days!

What was beneficial for the grapes' phenolic components however proved detrimental for the size of the berries, which remained small. The sweltering summer heat caused defoliation among the young vines, which had suffered badly from the lack of water. **We observed that vines planted on soils containing clay performed better than soils made up of loose, sandy gravel, since clay maintained moisture better and dried out less.**

The earliest-ever harvest

Berries sampled from the vines revealed very aromatic skins with tannins that showed no vegetal character. The pips had quickly turned brown and on crunching showed roasted flavours. On squeezing the skins between the fingers, colour came easily. **On each day of the last week of August the temperature rose to above 30°C, while berries were beginning to dehydrate.** Given the context, on 31st August, it was decided to **bring forward the start of the harvest to 5th September. We had never set such an early date to begin the picking.**

The harvest finished on 22nd September. In 2021, we were only beginning the harvest on 23rd September.

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2022 vintage assessment: little volume, but superb concentration!

The 2022 crop produced **small-sized berries of particularly low weight**. We had realised that **yields would be very low**. But whereas we lacked volume, we didn't lack concentration. By **harvesting a week earlier than we had initially planned, we were able to preserve freshness of fruit and good acidity, while at the same time keeping sugar richness down to an acceptable level**.

The vintage's precocity and the excellent ripeness levels in the grapes enabled **smooth vinifications**. No need for pump-overs, just a few "bubblings" with the Rpulse were sufficient. **By mid-October, all the lots had been racked into barrel and the malo-lactic was already done. This was a first!**

The wine matured 20 months in the calm of our air-conditioned barrel cellar. Each racking is carried out with the utmost care, without pumping, to preserve all the qualities of the wine, until bottling at the end of June 2024.

2022 will figure among the great long-ageing vintages.

As a year, 2022 will be remembered in our region for drought, heat-waves and fires. **The vines nevertheless showed great resilience**. By remaining attentive to their needs, we succeeded in producing a great, well-balanced wine. What a wonderful reward for our painstaking efforts!

TASTING NOTES

Château Kirwan 2022 has a beautiful deep red colour. The wine is as dense as the red tears that slowly run down the sides of the glass. The nose displays red and black fruits. The attack is fresh, evolving rapidly into a soft, creamy palate that is also dense and with great sapidity. The wood is very discreet and integrated, adding notes of cinnamon and sweet pepper. The tannins are tight but not aggressive. They contribute to the wine's great length and ageing potential.

Philippe DELFAUT

In figures...

Harvest: from **5th to 22nd September**

Yield: **27hl/ha**

Blend: **55 % Cabernet Sauvignon**

32 % Merlot

7 % Cabernet franc

6 % Petit Verdot

Alcoholic degree: 14

pH: 3.55

IPT: 77

12 days of harvesting

21 days of vatting

Ageing: **20 months, 50% new barrels**

Bottling date: June 25, 2024