

VSPT Wine Group 2018 Harvest Report

The 2018 season will be registered as one of the best in recent years. As a producing country, Chile has the advantage of great climatic consistency, allowing for our wines to demonstrate incredibly consistent quality across all segments. However, during the past three harvests we have been challenged by nature's turbulence.

Three seasons ago in 2015, it was one of the coolest in the past ten years. This gave for delayed harvests of up to 15 days. In turn, the wines were characterized by low alcohol content, intense aromatic profiles and a rich acidity on the palate.

Then came the 2016 harvest which surprised us with unexpected rainfall in April. Between 160-190mm fell in two days in Chile's central zone, where most of the country's viticulture is concentrated. This state of affairs resulted in huge challenges for the wineries, which had to harvest swiftly within the fastest possible time and use all the resources and technology available, in order to produce wines of the same quality. It was a year that shook us as an industry, but which also taught us a great deal about how complex and majestic nature is.

And 2017 was a warm year across the country, with maximum temperatures higher than usual –especially in January– as well as higher minimum temperatures. This meant the phenological and physiological ripening stages were concentrated within a shorter period. Harvests were brought forward by up to one month in some valleys, and the resulting wines were voluptuous and unctuous with good structure and possibly a slightly higher alcohol content.

This is what preceded the 2018 harvest, which was more or less perfect. The climate was outstanding in all valleys. Temperatures were cool and cloudy days prevailed during the summer season in the coastal valleys, and all the varieties ripened slowly, giving for excellent aromatic intensity in both whites and reds, as well as intense colors in varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Carmenère. There was low pH in all varieties, giving for intensity on the palate, juiciness and persistence. In general, yields conformed to what was expected, thanks to the absence of severe

frosts and good bud burst during the previous season. It is a year which will bring us wines of character, with good concentration and above all, fruit purity across all price segments.

Elqui Valley:

On the Elqui coast (Las Rojas vineyard), where we have Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Noir and Syrah, it was a year of average temperatures but with greater humidity than usual, increasing sensitivity to diseases, especially for the white wines. Despite this, the general quality of the wines was good, with plenty of fresh fruit, good acidity on the palate and a low pH.

Harvest began during the second week of February with the Pinot Noir, and finished during the second week of May with Syrah, which is a little earlier than usual.

Casablanca Valley

Casablanca had an excellent season. The months of grape ripening (January and February) were cloudy months with low temperatures, allowing for slow ripening of the grapes. Harvest was 10 days later than in normal years. Yields were among what was expected, as it was fortunately a frost-free spring. For this vintage, the Sauvignon Blanc should be noted especially for its intense aromas and excellent texture on the palate, but also its low pH and crisp acidity, prolonging the finish. The 2018 Sauvignon Blanc will have character and reflect its origin.

Leyda Valley

This vintage has made us very excited about its quality. Temperatures were normal for the Leyda Valley (cool climate). The majority of summer days were cloudy, which is normal for the valley and promotes slow ripening of the grapes. The harvest took place 10-12 days later than the historic average, though it was not quite as cold as the 2015 season. Compared with 2017, harvest took place almost 25 days later. The expected drop in temperatures in January allowed for slow ripening of the bunches and lower evapotranspiration, allowing for us to work with the plants without complications (controlled hydric state, but without stress).

Moreover, rain was concentrated over winter and the beginning of spring, which meant we could irrigate late in the season, maintaining balanced vigor and very good humidity in the soils until December (first irrigation of the season), leading to a very healthy year for the fruit.

Regarding yields, it was a very balanced year. There were many bunches, but lighter ones compared to the average year. This is because 2017 was a year of average

temperatures, giving for a very good bud burst (quantity of bunches per node) which combined well with winter rains, allowing us to begin the year with good humidity in the soils (key to good bunch development during peak of autumn and beginning of spring).

In summary, this year we have wines with excellent aromatic precursors, which will give for very aromatic 2018 white wines: citric, herbaceous, fresh, bright and juicy on the palate.

In addition to the above, we should note that our Leyda vineyards have reached greater maturity. The vineyards are now eight and ten years old (El Granito and El Maitén respectively). For this reason, the plants are more balanced, and this can be perceived especially in the Pinot Noir, where we have managed to bring out a broad aromatic spectrum, as well as tenser, deeper, more nervous palates –which is key for Pinots from cool coastal climates. Furthermore, as a result of lower temperatures, the Pinots reached the correct phenolic ripeness with a lower alcohol content, which promotes and accentuates the freshness. The wines have a sharp, red fruit profile, with earthy and herbaceous notes (typical of the valley), as well as creamy and above all, intense palates. The year could be noted as a cool one, with intense aromas and low alcohol, similar to 2015, but with an enhanced palate and creaminess which liken it to 2013. An excellent 2018 vintage is in store for the valley.

Maipo Valley

Climatic conditions for grape ripening during the 2018 season were excellent, with rather cool temperatures, giving for slow, controlled ripening, except for perhaps March which was slightly warmer than ideal. A frost-free spring and a total lack of rain during the grape ripening months allowed for balanced phenological and physiological maturity. Harvest dates were in line with historic averages in general for all varieties. The varieties which stand out from this vintage are Cabernet Sauvignon, Carmenère and Syrah. However, all varieties should be noted as having great aromatic and fruit intensity, as well as a juicy acidity on the palate. Other varieties which are noteworthy, especially on the El Rosario Estate, were the Malbec and Petit Verdot, giving for lively, fruity, juicy wines of great character. In general, yields in 2018 were slightly greater than normal years.

Colchagua Valley

In our San Fernando, El Huique and Chépica vineyards, we harvested a little earlier than average years, due to some early autumn rain alerts which, whilst causing no damage in the end, forced us to prepare. The previous season gave for excellent bud burst, which translated into a good quantity of fruit in 2018.

The quality of wines obtained this season was very good, especially with the Cabernet Sauvignon and Carmenère varieties. These varieties are characterized as having good structure on the palate, good concentration, unctuousness and volume, as well as excellent color.

Yields were slightly lower than predicted. It was certainly not the “huge harvest” that was announced by the market as a result of the very hot 2017 summer, during which bud burst had been very good.

Cachapoal – Andes Valley:

The budding period began normally in September, with even, uniform growth in VSP pruned varieties and a slower budding with guyot vines, however as the season advanced, growth became more uniform. Flowering occurred at similar dates to normal years: the last two weeks of November, and fruit setting took place 10 days earlier than the previous year. In this case, we found a larger quantity of grapes per bunch, and a greater quantity of bunches, especially in massal varieties.

Veraison began after the 15th January, a late date compared to normal years. With regards to sanitary conditions and the quality of harvested grapes, the season was free of disease-related problems. We expect very high-quality wines.

The harvested weights in the Cachapoal-Andes Valley were typical of a normal production year, reaching 7,500 kg/hectare. However, it was more than expected and greater than the year 2017. Among varieties which stand out in this vintage are Petit Verdot, Syrah and Carmenère.

Maule Valley:

In our Péncahue vineyard west of Talca city, where the main planted varieties are Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Carmenère, Syrah and Malbec, harvest dates were later than in 2017, since ripening was delayed a little.

Temperatures were significantly lower than in 2017, but greater than in 2016.

Grape yields were around 7% greater than expected, with very good quality especially in the Carmenère and Cabernet Sauvignon. There was excellent color, great fruit intensity on the nose and good structure and persistence on the palate.

Uco Valley:

During the period of grape development for the 2017-2018 season, average and maximum temperatures were observed to be similar to the region’s historic average for the past 19 years. However, minimum temperatures were slightly lower than

average, especially during spring when frosts made their mark, affecting quantities in the Paraje Altamira sector of the estate; phenology from that point onwards was set back. With regards to maximum temperatures, we had two heat waves (maximum temperatures over 33°C) during the months January and February. However, rational canopy management lent freshness to the wines.

As a result of this, ripening of the grapes took place considerably earlier: nine days at the sugar buildup date compared with the 2010-2018 period, and very similar to the previous season, two days behind.

We also witnessed a decrease in average rainfall. Millimeters of rain between October 2017 and April 2018 were 30% less than the 2008-2018 historic average, ensuring that the grapes were in perfect phytosanitary state.

The qualitative potential of our grapes, and therefore our wines, was similar to the previous 2016-2017 season, and better than earlier ones (2013-2017), basically because of increased levels of photosynthesis and with it, greater synthesis of components such as sugars, aromas and color.

Our records show that the concentration of tannins and anthocyanins was similar to the historic average in our estate. However, due to the heat waves there was a slight slowdown in ripening of the seed tannins, and for this reason, during vinification macerations were subject to less contact time.

For Malbec and Cabernet Franc it was an excellent year for harvests with both fresh and ripe profiles, with excellent polyphenols and a balanced acidity. Floral and red fruit notes in the La Consulta sector of our estate have been constant, and since Eugenio Bustos is graciously unctuous, Paraje Altamira lends elegance and firmness to the wines.

Since 2013 to date, there has been a turnaround in harvest dates, which have been brought forward compared to historic averages for the region; La Celia has not been unaffected. This has been reflected in the final result of our wines, which show their place of origin: greater freshness and authenticity extended aging using less intensely-toasted oaks, lower alcohol content and harvest of ripe fruit at fresher profiles, with lower tannin extraction.

NEWS ABOUT THE SEASON - THE MALLECO VALLEY'S FIRST HARVEST

An important milestone was the first harvest in the Malleco Valley, located in Purén, 30kms from the Pacific Ocean on the eastern foothills of the Nahuelbuta Mountain range, 600 kms south of Santiago. There, we began a joint project with the Buchahueico Community. This season we harvested the first 5 hectares planted with Pinot Noir, corresponding to two 2.5 hectare plots owned by two Mapuche families.

The harvest was spearheaded by families of the community as well as Viña San Pedro's agricultural team, after a Mapuche ceremony to thank the Ñukemapu (mother earth).

The 2018 in Malleco was cold, with a cool January and February as well as fog in March, giving for slow, delayed ripening; The Buchahueico area has interesting conditions, with two influencing cool climate factors: Its latitude (38°) and its distance from the sea. In comparison with other cool and coastal valleys in Chile, ripeness was reached 20 days later (compared with an equal clone selection planted in San Antonio), and in particular this 2018 achieving the accumulation of sugars or Brix was difficult. However, the wines obtained from this harvest are intense in color, very fresh and juicy, and with a low pH.

In general, Malleco is renowned for its herbal Pinot Noirs with a pronounced Boldo and Paico character, since these plants are native to the valley. Meanwhile, red granite soils with quartz crystals (since Buchahueico is located upon the coastal mountain range) allow for wines with a spectacular vibrancy and energy on the palate, characteristics which are fundamental for high-quality Pinot Noirs and which reflect the characteristics of the Malleco Valley.