

SICHEL & Cie
Chai de Bacalan, 19
BORDEAUX

1 9 6 5 VINTAGE

Once again Spring was late and in the Medoc it was rare to find vines in flower before the 12th. June. The weather during the next fortnight was however ideal, the flowering took place under excellent conditions and by the end of the month was virtually over. We therefore started the summer, as in 1962, with optimism only tempered by the realisation that in view of the late flowering we were certainly going to have to endure the hazards of an October vintage. July was on the whole cloudy and cold but there were some fine hot days in the middle of the month and little rain. August started cloudy and though warmer than July also failed to produce more than a few days of real heat. Rainfall was again well below average in spite of some heavy local storms. By the time people started returning from holiday at the beginning of September we realised that the summer had slipped by without ever having been very evident. The grapes which by the end of August should have finished changing colour, were still often hard and green. It was clear that the year would be light and the vintage very late but there was a good sized crop and still hope of producing something useful. Dispair set in with the month of September which quite easily beat all records of rainfall for that month since records began in 1924. Instead of the average of 68,5 mm there was a total fall of 212,8 mm. It rained on 21 of the 30 days and the average temperature was over 2° C below normal. This enormous quantity of rain (which was over twice as much as fell during the whole summer - June to September - of 1961) swelled the unripe grapes to bursting point and, with the memory of the disastrous rot of 1963 all too fresh in their mind, many growers started picking in the last days of September. They picked in the rain and the grapes weren't ripe but they felt this was better than loosing the crop to the rot that was spreading rapidly. At this stage it looked as though the quality would be even worse than 1963 - if such a thing was possible. As promptly as the rain had started on 1st. September, it stopped on 1st. October. Great damage was already done and the rot was extensive amongst the Merlot and becoming apparent in the Cabernet Franc. Those who had not already started began picking now under a warm sun. Remembering again the disaster of 1963 many growers either abandoned the rotten grapes or made a first picking of them alone so that they could be fermented together and made into an inferior wine, rather than being allowed to contaminate each vat. Those that were not rotting were nevertheless still not ripe and the musts produced have been low in sugar and high in acidity.

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Certainly the fine weather we have enjoyed during the whole of October saved a complete disaster, but how much further one can go will be difficult to judge before the wines can be tasted with some accuracy at the end of the year. The general feeling is that they will certainly be better than 1963 and if anybody produces a wine of similar quality to 1960 it will be a triumph. There is some optimism with regards to Sauternes where it is felt that those growers who managed to delay picking until the middle of October might produce a small quantity of wine better than either 1963 or 1964 - both of which were disastrous for them.

The effect of this second poor vintage in three years will certainly be to harden prices of 1964's, which now begin to justify the high prices originally asked for them. Looking forward we must fear an early rush on 1966's and a continued shortage of good wine. Since 1959 we have needed two consecutive years of good quantity and reasonable quality to bring prices to more stable level. After 1962 we were let down by 1963 and now again 1965 has failed after 1964.