

Domaine Alice Hartmann

Wormeldange

Wormeldange, 6th December 2022

CHRONICLES 2022

The one good thing about 2021 was that it taught us to put everything in perspective. Due to incredibly wet weather, we had to keep a close eye on things every day and work hard. While some years, the vines can be left to produce wine by themselves, nature gave nothing away freely in 2021. However, we were ultimately able to bring back some excellent juice to our cellar, for which we have our entire team to thank.

At the end of this exhausting season, we were quite reasonably concerned about what 2022 would bring. Would it be a gruelling repeat performance of the year that had just ended, or would it be plain sailing this time?

On the whole, the winter was mild but damp, with temperatures even exceeding 10°C around New Year. In the early months of the year, frost cloaked the Moselle Valley in white for just a few days and was never very severe. March was marked by very large temperature ranges. In the first week of the month, conditions were icy nearly every day at sunrise, although temperatures often rose above 10°C in the daytime. Snow never came, as it was neither sufficiently cold nor damp. Concerns over a drought were already beginning to surface. Although winter normally gives the soil a chance to replenish its water reserves, the land was dry as spring approached.

While it was very pleasant to work in this sunny and unusually mild March (which was warmer than 2018) as we pruned and bound the vines, it was far from ideal for the vines themselves. With 219 hours of sunshine, this would prove to be the sunniest March since records began in 1947. The previous record dates back to 1949 (212 hours).

This early spring then truly took hold. After a few cold and wet days (with minimum temperatures of 0°C and 25mm of rainfall on 8th April), things really started to warm up. By 13th April, it was already above 21°C! This would prove a very dry month, with only light showers on the 16th and 17th (13mm and 15mm) to water the vines.

The first buds emerged early on 20th April, which was a mixed blessing. While the grapes had longer to ripen, there was a prolonged risk of losing all or part of the harvest to late frosts. After all, the Ice Saint days (St. Mamertus, St. Pancras and St. Servatius) fall in mid-May (between the 11th and 13th of the month).

Fortunately, nearly every day saw temperatures of 20°C. With the risk of frost quickly ruled out, we breathed a sigh of relief. On 19th May, temperatures even hit 30°C. Towards the end of the month, a number of storms broke out without bringing much rain. For the moment though, the vines did not appear to be suffering from the extremely dry soil conditions. The high levels of rainfall in 2021 had come to our aid, since the vines were able to access water deep in the ground due to their long roots. In early June, the first flowers began to bloom, spreading virtually everywhere by the 10th of the month.

June, July and August continued in the same vein. The weather was hot, with showers seeming to avoid the Moselle, as if taunting us. 18th June was the first very hot day (37°C). A second heatwave hit the vineyards between 18th and 20th July. Temperatures even peaked at 39°C on the 19th. Vines planted on the most exposed slopes started to wilt under the sun.

This was only to be expected, since July 2022 was the sunniest on record with 377 hours of sunshine, even overtaking 2018 (348 hours). It was also the third driest July ever recorded (with just 7.5mm of rainfall in Wormeldange).

While the old vines were able to cope relatively well, younger plants, whose roots were not yet long enough to draw water deep in the ground, began to suffer. We had no choice but to water our most recently planted vines (in Grevenmacher and on the Mohrberg near Wormeldange) from 10th July. We trimmed grape clusters and even branches from the worst affected vine stocks to give them some relief. The priority was to keep these plants alive, with any prospects of harvesting given secondary importance.



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Although the vines had reached the same stage of growth as they had in 2018, there had been much heavier rainfall in January, May and June that year. Moreover, the storms forecast between 20th and 29th July bypassed the vineyards once again. Our Pinot Noir began to darken from 26 July.

August was the hottest since 1838. All the young vines were now suffering from severe water stress. Once again, we were forced to carry out green harvesting. The rain finally came in the last week of the month. Although late to arrive, the 20 litres that fell did a lot of good.

Climatically, the summer of 2022 set a number of records. In terms of temperature, it was beaten only by the summer of 2003 (with average temperatures of 20.1°C versus 20.5°C). It was also the sunniest summer since 1949 (with 30% more sunshine than the average for 1991-2020) and the driest since 1976 (74mm versus 100mm).

We started harvesting on 5th September, starting with the grapes used for our crémants. We were amazed to discover that, although smaller than usual, these berries yielded a good amount of juice.

Although very clement in the first days of harvesting, the weather turned sour with heavy, stormy rain. Temperatures fell and several outbreaks of botrytis were seen. The influx of water caused the grapes to swell, weakening their skins. Extra care was needed to prevent the rot from spreading.

We harvested our Chardonnay in the week of 20th September. Although yields were low, the quality was excellent. Our Pinot Noir grapes, earmarked for red wine, were harvested on 22nd and 23rd September. They emerged perfectly healthy and ripe, unscathed by the rain.

We decided to leave our Rieslings to reach optimal ripeness before harvesting them, crossing our fingers for drier weather. We started picking on 26th September in Wormeldange. Yields were low at just 40 hectolitres per hectare. Although rain was forecast, we took the risk of holding back a few parcels again. However, heavy showers struck on 1st and 2nd October. Fortunately, it was too cold for botrytis to develop and we harvested some very fine grapes. The risk of biding our time had paid off!

Our Rieslings from the Palmberg (near Ahn) at the foot of the dolomite cliff, were harvested on 4th October. While the grapes were very ripe, yields were low. The next day we brought our Rieslings from the Felsberg (near Wintrange) back to the cellar. They too were of a high standard. On 6th October, we harvested the first parcel of La Chapelle on the Koeppchen. These grapes were magnificent although not very juicy. The weather then turned dry and sunny again (although cooler at under 10°C), so we decided to leave our terraced vines a few extra days. They were picked on 10th October, completing the harvest. Although delighted with their quality, we were a little frustrated not to have produced more...

To round off, 2022 has been the antithesis of 2021. While one year was extremely wet and overcast, the next was exceptionally dry and sunny. Although both were stressful, we are particularly pleased with 2022, as it has the potential to be a great year, probably even a very great year. Our Rieslings were magnificent and we have high hopes of our Pinots Noirs, which are possibly the finest we've ever picked. Although we decided not to produce red wine in 2021 as the quality was not up to standard, we were overjoyed to fill our barriques with some magnificent juice this year.