

THE 2003 VINTAGE

GENERAL CONDITIONS OF THE VINTAGE 2003 IN CHILE

The vintage 2003 will surely be recorded as an excellent vintage, reinforcing again this natural tendency in Chile to have wonderful vintages on uneven years.

The winter 2002 was very cold and rainy. Spring came with cold temperatures, low sunlight and scarce brightness, which resulted in a rather late budding and shooting.

Of the last three seasons, November 2002-March 2003 had the fewest number of hours with temperatures above 30°C. On the other hand, it counted on the highest number of hours with temperatures below 12°C in the same period, which probably explained the very high level of “coulture” observed this year on Carmenere.

In spite of the above, the highest accumulation of hours above 30°C in the last three seasons, occurred in the month of January 2003.

Then, the temperatures decreased at the end of February and beginning of March, with cooler nights and a few cloudy days, which slowed down the ripening process. However, the last week of March and first two weeks of April were exceptionally warm and sunny, which generated a positive change in the ripening process of later varieties like Cabernet sauvignon and Carmenere, mainly harvested between mid-April and mid-May.

Globally, the grape maturity was reached later than usual on most of the varieties, confirming the first delay early observed in Spring at budding.

In terms of quantities, 2003 showed normal to lower yields than usual, especially on Carmenere and Merlot, that registered high levels of “coulture”.

With such good and dry weather conditions, 2003 is a very healthy vintage free of any fungus on both whites and reds, and in all Chilean wine regions.

Combined to the viticultural efforts carried out on the Chilean vineyards these last few years, these great climatic conditions generated a great and exceptional vintage 2003, with an outstanding level of quality in most of the situations.

THE VINTAGE 2003 AT CASA LAPOSTOLLE :

The 2003 Vintage in Requinoa (Cachapoal Valley)

We probably produced our best red wines from our 10-11 years plantations since they started producing. Very low yields (20-30 hl/ha) and optimal weather conditions resulted in deep colored, great varietal characters and complex Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, with lots of berries and mineral characters.

Our third crop of Syrah confirmed the high potential for this variety under our Requinoa vineyard conditions. With only 3.000 kilos/ha (20hl/ha), the wines are incredibly and deeply colored, they have their own typicity and character of fruit, and their velvety and smooth tannins make our Syrah Cuvee Alexandre very attractive and superb.

Very similar in style and quality to the previous vintages, our 2003 Sauvignon Blanc shows great levels of freshness, aromatic intensity and crispiness. This constancy in quality is the result of a very strict canopy management and an adequate irrigation policy.

The 2003 Vintage in Apalta (Colchagua Valley)

Under exceptional climatic conditions, Apalta could fully express its high quality potential.

Our old vines of Bordeaux varieties were crushed all over April, yielding from 28 to 42 hl/ha. The dry climate enabled us to wait safely for the bunches to ripe completely, and give what should be one of our best vintage of Clos Apalta and Cuvee Alexandre Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. The old vines produced intense, rich and concentrated reds, of great complexity, length and spicy character, surely with a long aging potential.

With productions of 25 hl/ha, our 5-6 years plantations of Merlot and Carmenere gained in complexity and volume compared to previous years, with more fruit and elegance in Merlot, and more color, volume, and smoothness of tannins in Carmenere.

On the hills, the Petit Verdot we planted in 2000 gave its first fruit (7 hl/ha). The first result is very promising with a deep-colored and powerful wine.

The 2003 Vintage in Casablanca

With a general cold season and a very hot month of January, and without any rain during vegetative season and harvest, Casablanca showed the same climatic pattern observed in most of the Chilean vineyards in 2003.

In spite of the hot summer that led to predict an early harvest, the temperatures decrease at the end of February and beginning of March to create ideal ripening conditions, that enabled a slow maturation of healthy grapes.

Our 5-6 years plantations were therefore harvested at the beginning of April, one week later than in 2002, with low yields ranging from 20 to 45 hl/ha. The wines made with the grapes produced on the hills show exceptional fruitiness, character and concentration, and will be the heart of our Chardonnay Cuvee Alexandre 2003.

A very good year for Casablanca, with fresh fruit aromas and excellent acidity.

The 2003 Innovations at Casa Lapostolle

In order to maintain and increase our wine quality level by taking care of every single detail of the reception and vinification process, we kept on innovating in 2003 at Casa Lapostolle.

First we repeated on a bigger scale our trials of manual destemming, from 20 tons in 2002 to 40 tons in 2003. The process consists in separating by hand all the berries from their stems, selecting them one by one to put in the wooden tanks only the good, ripe and healthy berries, without any green part of stem. We confirmed in 2003 the first positive and promising results we got in 2002, with again an incredible quality of tannins, a smoothness and an harmony superiors to those we get with the mechanical process.

To go even further in the innovation, we fermented for the first time some red grapes into new french oak barrels. The process consists, after destemming manually the berries, in filling the barrels with slightly crushed berries through the small bund hole, and in fermenting the grapes in the barrels, rolling the barrels a few times a day to replace the traditional pumping over.

We made this experiment on both Cabernet Sauvignon and Carmenere, and got amazing and promising results. Both free wine and press wine are showing well, with a wonderful smooth texture of tannins, a velvety and a really attractive balance. Although fermented in new oak, the wine shows an early and perfect integration of the oak, that respects completely the fruit flavors.