

Saint-Emilion, 28th September 2020

AB We're only in September, and yet it looks as though your harvest is already done...

Anabelle Bardinet Yes, this is the earliest I've ever harvested. It's a record for me.

AB When did the picking start?

Anabelle Bardinet 8th September.



AB And by what date was all the Merlot in?

Anabelle Bardinet 18th September. Right now, I've just got a small plot of Cabernet Franc to harvest, which is scheduled for the day after tomorrow.

AB What are your first impressions of the quality of your Corbin 2020?

Anabelle Bardinet This is an outstanding vintage for us. I've got no doubt about that.

AB Some growers are being more nuanced, saying that the climatic extremes of heavy rain and then drought may have produced a less outstanding vintage than last year...

Anabelle Bardinet Frankly, I'm in wonder at how my vines coped with these extremes and adapted. We first had frost at the end of April, then as you mentioned a massive spell of rain, resulting in some fruit set problems, and finally 2 months without a drop of rain. And yet, the vines produced absolutely magnificent grapes in 2020.

AB 2020 was another hot, sunny vintage, "une année solaire", as you call it. Is this reflected in the alcoholic degrees?

Anabelle Bardinet Not as much as you might expect. The degrees range from 13.5 to 14.5. And what's more, the acidities are really good. I'm sure that these balances are the result of our early picking dates. If we'd waited a week more, those balances would have changed.

AB For you, there was absolutely no reason to delay the picking...

Anabelle Bardinet It was a careful, deliberate choice; firstly because the grapes were ripe, and secondly I wanted to preserve fresh red berry fruit character and avoid any cooked or jammy notes.

AB Since you've been vinifying in your new vat cellar, the Corbin style appears to have evolved towards more elegance and freshness, such as in your 2019. Is this trend continuing with the 2020?

Anabelle Bardinet Yes, I believe that 2020 follows along the same lines as the 2019, but the 2020 is superior in quality.

AB But what about the tannins in the 2020? Would you agree that they could be an issue?

Anabelle Bardinet When we tasted the grapes, it was clear that this vintage was packed with tannins. The skins were thick. Yes, the tannic potential was high. But our job is to vinify accordingly and make sure that they don't overpower the wine.

AB How did you go about that?

Anabelle Bardinet We were very careful in the way we extracted. These were ultra-light vinifications. In fact, we couldn't call them extractions, but rather "infusions". We just left the skins in contact with the juices. The subsequent macerations were short, so much so that I'm already running the wine off the skins. That's just two weeks total in vat.

AB The vinifications will play an important role this year, don't you think?

Anabelle Bardinet Yes, the winemaking strategy needed to ensure that those tannins were kept under control. My aim was to bring out ripe, fresh red berry fruit flavours without letting them be invaded by the tannins.

AB Would you say that this winemaking approach represents a radical change at Corbin?

Anabelle Bardinet It's a consequence of what you just alluded to -our new vat room. I can now work plot by plot and get to know each plot individually and really get the best out of each one. I think the turning point was 2017 when we lost the crop to frost. I had an opportunity to rethink everything, including the ageing process. And I began a new chapter. Since then I've adapted the vinification and the ageing to favour fruit expression and finesse. This is the true identity of Corbin.

AB What has been the feedback about this new Corbin in the market?

Anabelle Bardinet Very positive. My clients want this type of Corbin with fruit, elegance and finesse. And when I tasted our grapes at the end of August and saw the tannic potential in them, I knew that we had to be very careful in the way we go about vinifying this vintage.

AB But however you vinify it, Corbin 2020 is likely to be less sexy than the 2019, don't you think? 2020 has a different character...

Anabelle Bardinet Yes because it's richer. It's more powerful. But its power is not tannic power. It may not turn out to be as sexy as the 2019, but we're working on bringing out its sexier side!

AB Let's talk about the 2019 primeurs campaign. I remember coming to Corbin a couple of days after lockdown had ended in May, and I was one of the first to taste your 2019. You were so keen for négociants and journalists to come and taste your 2019, but had no idea if a campaign would ever get off the ground. Of course, it did so. How relieved were you about that?

Anabelle Bardinet In fact, I was quite amazed that with all that was going on in the world a primeurs campaign actually took place. It was a success, but quite an unexpected one. I took part and sent out samples of course, but I really missed tasting with people face to face and sharing views. It just wasn't the same doing a tasting on Zoom!

AB The success was down to substantial reductions in the release prices. How comfortable were you about those decreases, given that Corbin is not at all a speculative brand?

Anabelle Bardinet There was pressure on every brand to decrease by a substantial amount, and we followed suit.

AB The trend was around 30% lower than the 2018...

Anabelle Bardinet We came down by about 20%. But we already knew before Covid that for the primeurs campaign to succeed prices would have to drop quite a bit.

AB Since your devastating frost of 2017, things haven't gone so badly for you, even if Covid has pushed down your 2019 release price quite a bit...

Anabelle Bardinet When Covid struck, we didn't know where we were heading, what impact it would have on working conditions in the vineyard and during the harvest, and of course on the market. On the whole, things have worked out smoothly for us, and most of all we have an exciting 2020 vintage in prospect. So yes, I'm counting my blessings.