

Pomerol, October 5<sup>th</sup> 2021

### **CHÂTEAU LA CONSEILLANTE 2021**

Harvesting dates: 28<sup>th</sup> September to 15<sup>th</sup> October

**AB 2021 has been a challenging year for most, if not all, Bordeaux wine estates, resulting in reduced crop loads. How did you go about managing the vines?**

**Marielle Cazaux It was a complicated year. There were different factors, beginning with spring frosts, followed by disease and then leaf hopper pest attacks. Each producer had their challenges. It didn't matter if you were organic or conventional, it was hard-going for everyone. It was a massive help though, if your estate had the personnel to react quickly and the equipment to limit the effects. If you were unlucky enough to have a tractor broken down for just a day, you ran the risk of being much worse off. Having the ability to sort the fruit was also crucial.**



**AB Did luck also play a part?**

**Marielle Cazaux Sometimes. Storms, for example; some vineyards got heavy downpours, while others just down the road from them escaped them.**

**AB What size crop did you get in the end?**

**Marielle Cazaux You know, everyone seemed to have written off a normal-size crop before summer started. But, just before the harvest at La Conseillante, we realised that there were actually a good number of bunches. On the face of it, it even looked like a larger production than last year. In the end, we have roughly the same quantity as last year, because despite having more bunches, there were actually fewer berries on them.**

**AB In an average year, you produce around 38 to 39 hectolitres per hectare. Once you've brought in the rest of the 2021 crop, the Cabernet Franc in particular, is that the yield you expect to achieve?**

**Marielle Cazaux Yes, I'm confident of that.**

**AB Why do you think you had a smaller number of berries per bunch. Was it because of flowering problems leading to poor fruit set, as other Right Bank growers have reported?**

**Marielle Cazaux Yes we had a bit of coulure -and millerandage too.**

AB **At least that helps to stave off any threats of botrytis, the bunches are looser and better ventilated as a result...**

Marielle Cazaux **Well, actually the berries are bigger this year. But, in any case, we don't have any problems of botrytis.**

AB **How ripe were those berries?**

Marielle Cazaux **The ripeness leading up to the harvest was uneven. We were originally looking at harvesting dates of around 15<sup>th</sup> September. It then became clear that more time was needed, and that's why we pushed back the dates to beyond 27<sup>th</sup> September. This gave us the levels of ripeness we were looking for.**

AB **With the unevenness in the ripening, was there any risk of over-ripening some of the berries, if you waited?**

Marielle Cazaux **Not this year, no. And as I said, no botrytis either. But we did bring in the Merlot quickly, because it was nicely ripe, 13° on the plateau, which is excellent for this vintage. There were no vegetal notes, and the fruit character was very attractive. The aromatics are most certainly the feature of the 2021.**

AB **But it's definitely not a powerful year?**

Marielle Cazaux **The profile of the 2021 is one of tenderness, rather than structure.**

AB **And balance too perhaps?**

Marielle Cazaux **Yes. There are tannins, and these are very extractible. And the pips were ripe. It's going to turn out to be a really nice vintage, one we describe in French as 'gourmand' –a wine with succulent fruit character. But it's not a powerhouse.**

AB **Tough in the vineyard, clearly. But was it relatively easy to vinify, bearing in mind that this kind of vintage doesn't need a big extraction?**

Marielle Cazaux **That's not the way I see it. Tough in the vineyard, yes; but also challenging in the cellar. Different vats have different profiles. We're having to approach each of them as a separate lot.**

AB **You mentioned that the alcohol levels were lower than what you've been used to in recent years. Is 2021 more like the vintages of old?**

Marielle Cazaux **I think you're forgetting 2012, 2013 and 2014. We've got used to vintages with higher levels of alcohol since 2015. I remember years like 2006 and 2007 which were more moderate in alcohol. That wasn't so long ago either.**

AB **And all very drinkable vintages...**

Marielle Cazaux **A lower alcohol vintage will be appreciated by many consumers.**

AB **Which of those vintages do you think 2021 resembles most?**

Marielle Cazaux **2014.**

AB **In what way specifically?**

Marielle Cazaux **Aromatically, and the parameters are very similar: high acidity, good tannins, and... more moderate alcohol.**

AB **Maybe we shouldn't be speaking too soon. The Cabernet Franc is yet to come in...**

Marielle Cazaux **I'm very confident about what's left to come in. Despite having had plenty of rain, the grapes still hanging on the vines are in really good health. We expect a shower or two the day after tomorrow, but the forecast after that is anti-cyclonic conditions with very cool nights, which will ensure the fruit stays healthy. We're in absolutely no hurry, so we can afford to let those grapes ripen even more.**

AB **It's weird this year. One or two of your neighbours who traditionally pick later than La Conseillante, started their harvest before you...**

Marielle Cazaux **I know. It's one of those years in which you need to ignore what's going on around you and focus on your own grapes. If our neighbours picked earlier than us they must have had good reasons. It's like the question of whether organic or conventional farming was more successful this year: there was no one strategy that was right or wrong. It was a case by case situation.**