

September 4 2010 wine

This month the wine makers of the traditional countries of Europe begin to harvest their crops. It is the time to assess if the weather pattern of the summer has produced a good vintage. The ninety days from flowering to fully ripened grapes are crucial for the grower, and even at the late stage something can alter the quality.

Many areas of the new wine world have very dependable weather patterns and irrigation can closely control the harvest. But in France for example the weather patterns can be very fickle. Grapes now glistening on the vines in Provence are those that survived the violent storms of June which devastated the vineyards in many areas.

The character of the vintage comes from the weather pattern and of course from the terroir. Last year was hailed as the greatest for many decades, and the wines now coming onto the market show this. The young wines from the Rhone Valley and Burgundy are quite stunning with distinctive character. The wines from Bordeaux and the Cote D'Or are exceptional and well worth the investment purchased 'en primeur'. This way you buy stock that will be shipped in about two years when the wines have been matured in cask then bottled.

Bordeaux wine merchants and growers sell much of the vintage 'en primeur' as it brings much needed cash flow into their business. There are some very sound wines that can be bought for about £80 a case, then shipping and duty will add on another £25 and for £100 you have a lovely case to enjoy in future years. It's worth consulting a good wine merchant such as Tanners of Shrewsbury or Terry Platt of Llandudno for advice. The top wines can cost thousands a case so it's wise to be careful which box is ticked.

Those who bought a few cases of the wonderful millennium vintage, 2003, 2005 and 2009 will be very happy in a few years time when these wines are coming into their own. Then the cork is pulled and it's fun to think back all those years and remember harvest time in September.