

## *2009 Vintage*

The 2009 agricultural campaign began with a winter distinguished by heavy snowfalls and a rainy early spring, guaranteeing excellent soil water reserves.

These reserves proved to be of vital importance in the summer, averting any water stress-related problems which could have occurred due to the almost total lack of rain and the intense heat during the summer months, especially during the second half of August.

Several days of rain in April combined with mild temperatures to contribute to the appearance of slight symptoms of downy mildew, especially at low altitudes and in vineyards with lush vegetation. Fortunately, the fungal attack did not reach a scale which could have compromised the vintage, because the month of May was dry and ventilated. It can be noted in this regard that vineyards tended with a less meticulous management of the foliage were more subject to attack by fungal infections.

The phenological development of the vine began late, but it recovered immediately with respect to the average over the last few years, resulting almost everywhere in the harvest being brought forward. Picking began in the third week of August for the short-cycle aromatic varieties, such as Moscato and Brachetto, and for the grapes used for sparkling wine bases, such as Pinot and Chardonnay. For the white varieties like Arneis, the harvest began around 10 September, and lasted until around 20 September, when picking of the Dolcetto and Barbera commenced, followed by the Nebbiolo.

The two thousand and nine vintage will also be remembered for its irregular ripening pattern, resulting more from soil climate than from varietal characteristics: for example, in some areas the Barbera grapes ripened earlier than the Dolcetto.

In terms of technological maturation, the vintage can be placed between the 2003 and 2007, with plenty of sugars and an acidity that highlights the ripening process: on picking, the levels of malic acid in the grapes were below average everywhere, with low values underlining complete maturation. From a wine-making point of view, this situation certainly offered good potential for a vintage which could prove to be among the very best of recent years.

With regard to the phenolic maturation - in other words the development of the colouring pigments (anthocyanins) and tannic components - the data found in the grapes grown to produce wines intended for ageing, such as Nebbiolo, were comparable to the 2003. From the first samples taken, the colour tended to be light, and the data showed a certain stability, which is why in this vintage results were not always improved by delaying the harvest.

Overall it can be said that the grapes lend themselves to ageing, providing the appropriate measures are taken in the winery.

The general pattern seen in the 2009 vintage demands giving serious consideration to the vineyard, which remains fundamental. In fact, wherever vineyard management and planting decisions were shown to be correct, the quality of the product proved to be higher. This is supported by analytical data bearing out the fact that the use of appropriate, timely vineyard management techniques suited to the vineyard catered for higher quality production, underlining and increasing the difference compared to vineyard management plans which failed to take into consideration the influence of the climate and the development of the vine. Emphasis is therefore to be put increasingly on the need to interpret the vintage and the vineyard in relation to the wine-making goals it is intended to achieve.