



## 2003 Vintage

### General climatic and meteorological pattern

The 2003 vintage was distinguished by stable sunny conditions and the almost complete absence of rainfall, in a combination that had temperatures rising to historic maximums for the area, and their being maintained at these levels over a long period of time.

The data in our possession show that the sum-total of active temperatures of higher than 10°C between January and the end of August 2003 reached an aggregate of 1740°C, compared with 1392°C over the same period in 2002. This can also be compared with what was considered to be one of the hottest vintages of the last century, 1997, when the aggregate had reached 1600°C by the end of August. In practice, the total heat benefiting the vine had reached a similar level by the end of August in 2003 as it had by the end of September in 1997, and by the end of October in 2002.

From a physiological point of view, the vintage started out later than average, with the opening of the buds delayed by around two weeks. Within a short time, however, rising temperatures stimulated the flowering to take place at the end of May, which was in line with previous hot years. Further confirmation of an anticipation of approximately 2 weeks in the vegetative state of the vines arrived with the beginning of the veraison, which showed in the early-ripeners - such as Dolcetto - in the first half of July, and in the later-ripening varieties - like Nebbiolo - at the end of July, a shorter spread than usual.

As regards rainfall, the vintage was very miserly: as little as 265 mm of rain by the end of August, compared with 830 mm in 2002, and 290 mm by the same date in 1997.

### Comments on the harvest

The first few days of September saw a change in the weather: though it was still fine, there was a generalized sharp drop in temperatures, and this continued interspersed with some timely, though limited rainfall.

The harvesting of the white varieties (Arneis) was practically completed during the first ten days of September. The general situation was very good, with high average alcohol contents, well-balanced acids, and promising aromas.

The Dolcetto vintage was also over by the middle of September, and early winery data were showing wines of great potential, with excellent levels of alcohol, balanced acidity, and very intense color.

Fine weather and very sound grapes also meant anxiety-free harvesting of the Barbera grapes, and in the Nebbiolo vineyards where the grapes had ripened to perfection.

The level of quality was high, with wines showing plenty of alcohol, the right acidity, and extraordinarily intense coloring for the Barbera, and more than usual for the Nebbiolo.

We can now look back on it as an extremely tranquil vintage. The climatic conditions allowed the harvest to follow its normal course, in keeping with the ripening times of the single varieties and single vineyards.

### General comments

Compared with the rest of Italy, in Piedmont the 2003 vintage could well be said to have been the most "fortunate". Elsewhere considerably below average yields and drying out could be attributed to the scanty rainfall combined with the intense heat brought by the desert "foen" wind.

In Piedmont on the other hand, although it was certainly not a cool year, the vineyards were protected from the hot southern winds that caused drying and over-ripening elsewhere by its fortunate hydrographic structure, surrounded as it is for 270° by the Alps.

Consequently, average temperatures were lower in the Langa than generally in Italy and in the best growing areas in Europe, Bordeaux and Burgundy.

The 2003 vintage will therefore be remembered as having produced one of the lowest yields, but to have been among the best of recent years in terms of quality.