



2008 Vintage Report

General comments

2008 was a difficult year for agriculture in general, and viticulture in particular. Attacks of parasites, mainly downy mildew and oidium, created persistent problems that started in mid-May, continued through June and July and dragged on into August. The damage was considerable, but fortunately affected quantity rather than quality. The diligent work of viticulturists proved fundamental: formulating a defence, choosing the right product to use for treatments and the right time for application and deploying protective agronomical practices, as well as vigour control and land accessibility, all played a significant role.

Variability was the most striking feature of the 2008 vintage. Some vineyards suffered serious damage from hail and strong winds, and so differences in exposure and soil suitability will emerge more clearly than in other years.

Harvesting of Arneis and Favorita began in early September. Intermediate-ripening varieties such as Dolcetto were generally picked in the second half of September, while the harvest of late-ripening vines like Barbera and Nebbiolo was concentrated in the second and third week of October.

On the whole, grape quality can be classified between good and very good, while Nebbiolo could even reach excellent, as it was picked later and benefited from better weather conditions during ripening and harvest.

A positive element of 2008 was the marked upward trend for grape and wine prices, which unfortunately in the recent past had reached very low levels. Grape prices show a slight increase because of their limited quantity and the introduction of the new official tracing code to be applied to DOC bottles (with the exception of Dolcetto d'Alba and Nebbiolo d'Alba which will be included only in January), guaranteeing the grapes' journey from vineyard to consumer.

General weather conditions for the vintage

After extremely premature phenological phases in 2007, 2008 saw a return to considerably more normal rhythms. Budding was not particularly early, spring began regularly and all things considered the weather was average for the season, with good shoot growth and no late frosts.

However a month of exceptionally unstable weather began in mid-May, with heavy rains almost every day. This led to considerable worry over defence against disease and rot and difficulties in fruit setting, particularly for Barbera grapes.

The frequency and quantity of precipitation decreased in the second half of June, and the ensuing summer was quite wet and cool. The problems linked to downy mildew and oidium continued throughout July, leading to production losses that are hard to quantify. Taking into consideration fruit-set difficulties and the numerous hailstorms as well, average output was between 10% and 15% less than 2007, depending on zone and variety.



Ripening phases (veraison and increase in sugar content) began much later than in 2007 and developed much as they did in 2004. Luckily from the end of August there was a long period (over 50 days) of stable weather, often sunny and without significant rains. Temperatures were mild during the day and cool at night. This helped make up for much lost time, and good and very good results were achieved everywhere. The health of the grapes harvested in the Langa and Roero was excellent. The good weather allowed all the harvesting operations to be completed in good time, and it was possible to choose the best possible moment to pick each grape.

Grape quality for the main Langa and Roero varieties

The cool summer weather was good for Arneis grapes, which reached an excellent balance between sufficiently high sugar levels and acidity. In very hot years acidity can be too low, but this year produced a perfect equilibrium. As a result we can expect balanced Arneis wines, with a good alcohol level in addition to freshness and distinct floral notes. The final verdict is an enthusiastic excellent.

The weather in May and June put Barbera grapes at a serious disadvantage. Between late August and early September ripening proceeded slowly, but the stable weather and the considerable swing in temperature between the day and night in the second half of September and early October contributed to an increase in sugar concentration and acid degradation. When harvested, the Barbera grapes on average showed excellent sugar concentration, but rather high fixed acidity. Viticulturists who knew to push back the harvest date for a few weeks obtained very good results.

Dolcetto vines had some difficulties caused by the bad weather in spring and early summer, when their ripening was more advanced than other black grapes. Nonetheless, ripening data showed a slow but constant accumulation of sugars in the fruit, particularly between the first and second weeks of September, and particularly where thinning out is common practice. Upon harvest, the concentration of sugars was on average very good and the acid balance was ideal.

The providential weather conditions in September and October and viticulturists' admirable care for the vines allowed Nebbiolo grapes to reach ideal ripening levels for the harvest. The acid balance was very good, with a slightly higher fixed acidity compared to past years, at least for the first grapes to be picked. Sugar accumulation reached exceptional levels. This year's Nebbiolo-based wines are expected to be excellent.