

CHÂTEAU DES CHARMES 2005 HARVEST REPORT

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 19, 2005

Grape Variety: Chardonnay

Vineyard Block: St. David's Bench Vineyard, block adjacent to York Rd, east of Château

Sub-appellation: St. David's Bench

Weather Conditions: Sunny then clouding over, 26°C

Yield: 2.2 tonnes per acre

Brix: 23°

ph: 3.13

Total Acidity: 7.95

Field Notes:

Today we went back to the Chardonnay block east of the Château to pick the remainder of the crop. One of the challenges during any harvest is trying to predict the weather and time the picking of a particular varietal on a particular vineyard block to maximize quality. The longer you can leave grapes hanging on the vine the better "physiological ripening" you achieve. By this we mean not only high brix levels in the grapes but also flavours, colouring matter and acid levels. Sugar (brix) often comes first and some producers pick based only on this parameter. At Château des Charmes we are looking for physiological ripeness, not just a brix level. As a result, it's a balancing act; waiting for a desired physiological ripeness before the birds eat your crop and the weather turns bad before you can get your crew out there to pick.

The Chardonnay in this particular block is ready to pick but we are expecting a lot of rain this evening. We needed to get the entire block picked today before the rain. This would have been impossible with a crew hand-picking the bunches. So far this year we have been able to hand pick everything. Today, because of the time crunch, we have had to turn to mechanical harvesting. Generally speaking hand harvesting is reserved for your best wines because it is considered gentler on the grapes. Innovations in technology have lead to great improvements in mechanical harvesting. The machine pictured below is one of these 21st century harvesters. When we feel we need to move quickly in the vineyard we call in the services of a local grape grower who owns this machine. The way it works is the machine travels over each row and gently shakes the bunches so individual grapes fall into a hopper. The grapes then travel via a conveyor belt to one of two collecting hoppers on either side of the machine. When the hoppers are full, the grapes are then transferred to one-ton bins and driven to the winery for processing the same as any hand picked bunches (see image #4 below). This new generation harvester has virtually the same impact on the grapes as would hand harvesting.



I. Mechanical harvesting on the St. David's Bench Vineyard.



2. Mechanical harvester surrounding each row.



3. Mechanical harvester up close. This gentle giant is the most popular mechanical harvester used in France.



4. Transferring grapes from the harvester to bins for the 2-minute drive to the winery.

As always, please feel free to email me directly if you have any suggestions or questions. Watch for many more postings as the harvest continues.

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