

Plumpton College Wine Department Newsletter

Spring 2011

- **Vintage report**
- **Vineyard, winery and wine centre developments**
- **New courses**
- **New members of staff**
- **WineSkills**
- **Alumni update**

The **2010 English grape harvest** was set for an early start, with bud-burst in April roughly two weeks ahead of a normal vintage. Those who escaped a sharp frost on the 12th May had a large potential crop, the result of optimum flowering conditions in late June. However, an extended cool and wet summer period followed by a very cool September affected ripening and introduced heavy disease pressure. Berry sugar levels struggled to rise while acids remained high.

Those who were assiduous in the vineyard, with good canopy and pest management, resisted the disease pressure, producing record harvests of excellent quality.



Pickers at Ditchling Vineyard

The **College grape harvest** began on September 28th, with the Regner and Ortega varieties, and finished on October 27th with the final loads of Seyval Blanc and Pinot Noir.

Despite the wet and cool autumn harvest period, most of the fruit remained in good condition. Particularly good this year were the aromatic white varieties: Ortega, Bacchus & Schonburger. Although the weather conditions remained cool and damp throughout the vintage, the Reichensteiner still yielded well and healthily. These varieties, along with the reliable Seyval blanc, form the basis of our 2010 Cloudy Ridge Dry White wine.

Rondo, Triomphe and Dornfelder all yielded well again too, but the Pinot noir for red was not as amazingly ripe as last year's award-winning wine (13.5% potential alcohol!).

The fruit for sparkling production was clean, and its refreshing acidity will make good base wines for ageing.

Our new plantings of Acolon were cropped for the first time, yielding wine with exciting fresh red-fruit flavours.



Overall, the Plumpton College Estate vineyards (now with 8.6 ha planted - 6.6 in production) yielded 26.6 tonnes (compared to 20.4 t in 2009 and 8.0 t in 2008). This, together with 12.4 tonnes of contracted winemaking, will make up to 30,000 bottles of wine (cf. 18,000 in 2009).

In the winery, the fruit was lightly pressed to optimise quality and yielded 23,000 litres of must for fermentation. Particular care was taken when processing the varieties destined for sparkling wine (Pinot noir, Pinot meunier and Chardonnay), which were pressed uncrushed. The red wine varieties (Early pinot, Rondo, Dornfelder and Acolon) were given gentle pump-overs and short skin contact times during fermentation to optimise their fruit character.



We fermented the Ortega in American-oak barrels this year as the Plumpton College winery hopes to reproduce the excellent 2008 and 2009 vintage 'Fumé', which now sells exclusively in Yauatcha's Michelin-starred restaurant.

Laura Riding and David Blake, Year 2 Wine Production students

The Bacchus was given a short period on the Ortega lees in the same American oak to enhance its flavour and improve the wine's mid-palate. This helps to add an aromatic quality to the Cloudy Ridge dry white blend (6000 bottles). Additionally, we produced 4000 bottles of our award-winning rosé.



Our premium range will centre around 3500 bottles of our Pinot/Chardonnay (white and blush) sparkling wines and 600 bottles of oak-aged Pinot noir.

This year we will expand production of our soft and fruity Cloudy Ridge red with around 5000 bottles being made.

Antonio Rizzo, Year 2 Wine Production student

This year's investment in the winery focussed on provisions for the expanding harvest tonnage and wine volumes. The college is now the proud owner of a 2-tonne Willmes Merlin pneumatic press and 14 000 litres of additional tank space (including a new 5000L Spiedel blending tank and 3000L specialised red wine fermenter). Peter Morgan also completed the final full implementation of the winery chilling system and thermal control for our larger fermentation tanks.



Edward Templeman, Year 2 BSc V & O student



Peter Morgan, Winemaker at Plumpton College, says: "It is thanks to College student vinegrowers and winemakers that Plumpton College Estate wines have become, and continue to be, extremely popular in the local area, appearing as house wines in at least two of Brighton's top restaurants (Due South & Riddle & Fin). We hope that the good volumes of 2010 wines will allow many more of you to enjoy 'Cloudy Ridge' wines wherever you are."

Matthew Hudson, Wine
Business Lecturer



The **Wine Centre** benefitted from the addition of 6 new booths to the IOC (Institut d'Oenologie de Champagne) wine tasting room, all of which have found sponsors. Just as well, as the student intake for this 2010/2011 academic year is even higher than last year, with a considerable increase in the FdA Wine Business cohort.

This Wine Business area is going from strength to strength under Matthew Hudson's leadership, and Paul Harley has been promoted to Lecturer status in order to cope with the increased activity.

Paul Harley, Wine
Business Lecturer



A new course, entitled 'The Wine Trade in Britain' has been launched, in association with the Royal Agricultural College (Cirencester). This consists of modules from the first semester of the FdA, principally designed for students from outside the UK who wish to spend four months in Sussex learning about the wine trade and improving their English. We hope to launch another Wine Business course next year, entitled 'Wine and its Markets', which will be a part-time course encompassing the WSET Diploma and other relevant modules.



Martin Krajewski (Chateau de Sours), Belinda & Chris Foss, Head of Department

The Wine Department Team was further enhanced in October by the arrival of **Dr Belinda Kemp**, an appointment sponsored by the Chateau de Sours in Bordeaux. Belinda (BSc V & O 2006), completed a vintage at Nyetimber, and then took a PhD at Lincoln University (NZ). Belinda's job is to get the wine research organised at Plumpton, and she has already initiated projects on light brown apple moth, vine wrapping, bottle closures, wine tourism and climate change effects on Viticulture.

Dr Richard Marchal, from Reims University, spent a week with us over harvest, which has resulted in some fascinating research on grape pressing for sparkling wine, to be presented at the Oeno 2011 conference in Bordeaux in June. He plans to spend a whole year with us, starting in September 2011.



Richard and his two research assistants, Danielle and Claire Whitehead, both Year 2 Wine Production students.

The **WineSkills** project, which delivers industry training throughout the UK, was launched in February 2010. Under Jo Cowderoy's management, it delivered over 1000 student training days, which included xxx workshops, xxx masterclasses and xxx mentoring days.



Chris Foss, Alistair Nesbitt, Jo Cowderoy & Andrew Atkinson

Jo has been joined by Alistair Nesbitt (BSc V & O in 2009) who is responsible for developing the WineSkills Sustainability Initiative, which is designed to provide guidance to those in the UK industry who wish to produce wine in a more sustainably from an environmental, economic and social point of view. His first job was to appoint Dr Richard Smart as the UK Sustainability Mentor! He has also set up Technical Committees of experienced and qualified UK wine producers to recommend sustainability guidelines and has organised sustainability forums at which recommendations from other sustainability schemes can be discussed.

These guidelines will then be made available via the WineSkills website, which is being developed by Andrew Atkinson (FdSc WP 2010), who joined the Team in January. Andrew's job is to produce a relevant, reliable and interactive web-based information resource for the UK wine industry. We look forward to the launch this summer!

One of the most successful WineSkills events of the year was a masterclass on sustainable wine production, delivered by Patty Skinkis of Oregon State University, Chris Serra of LIVE and Jean-Francois Pellet of Pepper Bridge Winery, Washington State, USA.



Jean-Francois, Patty & Chris at Plumpton

Some recent news from other Plumpton alumni (and pictures of current staff & students):

- **Richard Case** is working with a Californian company and now runs 100 hectares in Maury (France) with a state-of-the-art winery, as well as his own domaine
- **James Malone** and **David Timmons** have set up wine schools in Sussex
- **Mike Jones** is now Winemaker at Gentilini (Greece)
- **Chris Carter** is establishing a big vineyard in Hampshire
- **Vicky Garnett** is Assistant Winemaker at Hush Heath Vineyard
- **Kyri Christodolou** is a Sommelier in a top Melbourne restaurant
- **Jon Walkden** has joined **Jon Coulthard** in Cotes de Duras (Bordeaux)
- **Simon Woodhead** has released his first vintage at Stopham Vineyards
- **Charlie Holland** is Assistant Winemaker at Ridgeview
- **John Seccombe** is Winemaker at Iona Vineyards (SA)
- **Xenofon Panayiotou** is Inspector of Vineyards and Wineries in Cyprus
- **Natalia Kozlowska** is Head Sommelier at the Cocksford Club in London
- **Josh Donaghay-Spire** is Assistant Winemaker at Chapel Down
- **Peter Wallbridge** is a Buyer with Alliance Wines
- **David Zyw** is a Sommelier at Le Gavroche



Tony Milanowski (Lecturer in Oenology) with Stephen Gillham (BSc V & O 2)



The Wine Department Team wishes all the Wine course graduates the best of luck as they pursue careers throughout the wine world.

Find out more about all full time or part time and bespoke courses, including wine courses, at Plumpton College by visiting the website: www.plumpton.ac.uk , telephoning + 44 (0) 1273 890454 or emailing: enquiries@plumpton.ac.uk

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