

# Plumpton College Wine Department



**Autumn Newsletter 2011**

# The Vineyard



The grape harvest was set for an early start, with bud-burst two to three weeks ahead of a normal vintage. Unfortunately the weather in late June turned cool, wet and windy, compromising fruit set and halving the expected yield. The cool and wet summer period caused a high level of disease pressure, but along came an exceptionally dry and warm September-October period, which ensured that the crop ripened fully, with good sugars and balanced acidities. In summary, the crop was small but perfectly formed!



The College grape harvest began on September 26th with the Rondo, and finished on October 20th with the final loads of Seyval Blanc and Dornfelder. The fruit was in excellent condition throughout , with surprisingly good varietal flavours, considering the poor summer weather. Dave Perrin, the new Vineyard Instructor, did a great job getting the vintage in, and James and D'Arcy from Vine-Works will help him maintain the vineyards in the months to come.



The Plumpton College Estate vineyards (with 8.6 ha planted, 6.6 ha in production) yielded 12.5 tonnes this year, compared to 26.6 t in 2010 and 20.4 t in 2009. This, together with 7.4 tonnes of grapes contracted in, will make up to 15,000 bottles of wine.



The fruit from the aromatic white varieties (Ortega, Bacchus & Schonburger), was particularly good this year. As the vintage progressed, and the weather conditions remained warm, Muller-Thurgau yielded well and healthily. These varieties, along with an unusually small Seyval blanc crop, will form the basis of our 2011 Cloudy Ridge Dry White wine.



The red varieties yielded particularly well. Acolon was cropped for the second time, and was whole-bunch pressed, yielding a strawberry-pink rosé with soft, red-fruit flavours. The Pinot noir for red was successfully ripened and is now in American oak barrels. The fruit for sparkling production was clean and with good acidity, which will make excellent base wines for the medium to long-term.



**In the  
winery**

In the winery, the fruit was lightly pressed to optimise quality. 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 and Dornfelder) were given gentle pump-overs and short skin contact times during fermentation to optimise soft fruit character.



At the time of writing, most of the wines have been racked off their fermentation lees and are now undergoing a natural clarification, by settling, before blending and stabilising. The red wines have been inoculated to initiate the malolactic fermentation, which will reduce their acidity and increase their complexity.



As in the past, we fermented the Ortega in American oak barrels; the Plumpton College winery hopes to reproduce the excellent 2009 and 2010 vintage 'Fumé', which now sells exclusively in Yauatcha's Michelin-starred Dimsum restaurant. We are also giving the Bacchus a short period on the Ortega lees in the same American oak, intending to enhance its flavour and improve the 'mid palate'. This will help add an aromatic quality to the Cloudy Ridge dry white blend (2500 bottles).



The college is now using the Kreyer *Vininfo* system, which monitors carbon dioxide evolution and then controls fermentation rate by varying the temperature. It also provides us with an electronic winery records management system.

## Wine sales



Plumpton wines showed very well at the UKVA Wine of the Year competition, with the Dean NV winning a gold medal (and the President's Cup for the Best Small Producer), the Dean Blush a silver, and our red, white and fumé wines making bronze.



Wine sales are progressing very well, spurred on by our presence at both the Glynde and the Hurstpierpoint Festivals of Food and Wine. Plumpton Wine Department was also represented at Fruit Focus and at the Tesco Wine Show. The Fumé is now sold out and the Pinot noir is not far behind, but there are healthy stocks of the others if people are looking for Christmas gifts.



All our wines are now sold under their new labels, designed by Ian Bray, second year Production student and partner at Onetwone Design Partnership.

## Curriculum developments



The IOC (Institute of Oenology in Champagne) tasting room now has all its 33 custom-designed tasting booths, complete with back-lit glass for the improved evaluation of wine. All of them have named sponsors – thank you to all those who contributed.



The student intake for this 2011/2012 academic year was just as high as 2010/2011, with a growing Wine Business stream. The Wine Business Team is now offering the first year of the 'Wine and its Markets' course, combining WSET Diploma and business modules, and is busy preparing for the validation of the Foundation Diploma in Wine Business and the BA (Hons) Wine Business top-up .



We're now collaborating with the Institute of Masters of Wine; with some of their students participating in the harvest in exchange for a day's training on their tasting technique at Plumpton.

Congratulations go to Matthew Hudson, awarded Top Champagne Educator by the Champagne Bureau at the Dorchester Hotel in London!

## Research



Wine research at Plumpton is developing strongly, with the arrival of Richard Marchal from Reims University, who is leading several projects, including a repeat of last year's press fractionation experiment. Plumpton College is also working with Marks & Spencer on wine research, and with a French/Italian/Bulgarian group on the challenges of climate change to European viticulture.



Tony Milanowski and Richard Marchal organised the first Plumpton College team to participate in the prestigious Effervescents du Monde competition in Dijon in November, where they judged some of the top sparkling wines in the world.



Congratulations go to Belinda Kemp for being invited to deliver a lecture on English Viticulture at Kew Gardens in London! The fund-raising initiative for the Wine Research Centre is still active; aiming to establish a world-class facility in the UK. See the Wine page on [www.plumpton.ac.uk](http://www.plumpton.ac.uk) for further details.

## WineSkills



The WineSkills project team has been particularly busy over the summer, with Masterclasses from Mike Trought (Blenheim Research Centre, NZ), Chris Steele (Charles Sturt University, Australia) and Trevor Wicks (Adelaide University, Aus). Jo Cowderoy also organised a very successful series of industry workshops on vine trunk diseases, conducted by Richard Smart, the 'Flying Vine Doctor'.

## WINE SKILLS

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To get full access to the site, please login with your username and password.

## LATEST NEWS

The new WineSkills website is now live! We've rebuilt the site to provide additional resources for the UK wine production industry.  
5 days ago

## FORTHCOMING TRAINING

Tue, 29/11/2011 - Advanced Wine Faults with Geoff Taylor

Tue, 06/12/2011 - MASTERCLASS - Terroir, Climate and their Expression in Wine

## WINEMAKING

The winemaking knowledge base details the processes of wine production from harvest to bottling, and includes the different vinification techniques for red, white & sparkling wine.

[e-enter the site](#)



## VINEGROWING

The vinegrowing knowledge base is a growing set of resources covering all aspects of viticulture, from vineyard establishment to canopy management.

[e-enter the site](#)



## BUSINESS &amp; MARKETING

Access trade news, consumer reports and specialist on-line resources to support your business & marketing activities.

[e-enter the site](#)



## SUSTAINABILITY

WineSkills supports sustainable wine production in the UK. Find out more about the sustainability initiative, read the guidelines, and see what you could do to better manage your trip bottom line.

[e-enter the site](#)



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The WineSkills website ([www.wineskills.co.uk](http://www.wineskills.co.uk)) has been re-launched, and now contains the sustainability guidelines and loads of information on vinegrowing, winemaking and wine business.



**Looking forward**

We are all looking forward to the Montpellier trip at the end of November; a presentation from Alain Carbonneau in December; to the first delivery of the Intensive Principles of Vinegrowing abroad (Turkey!) and to the establishment of the UK's first Wine Research Centre at Plumpton in September 2012!

Photos by  
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To find out more about the Wine courses at Plumpton College:  
[www.plumpton.ac.uk](http://www.plumpton.ac.uk) , email: [enquiries@plumpton.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@plumpton.ac.uk) Tel: + 44 (0) 1273 890454.  
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