

Harvest Report 2010

Introduction

Now that the last of the 2010 batches have fermented, I can take a moment to begin to draw some conclusions, though I can say right now that this will be an unforgettable vintage...

This was the bicentennial harvest, my first crush as head of the Viu Manent winemaking team, and only three weeks after arriving I had a very “moving” welcome: the enormous 8.8 magnitude earthquake that battered us on that memorable February 27th, making us think the earth would swallow us up... (at least that’s how it felt to me!!!).

It wasn’t easy to go back to the winery and see all the wine on the floor, hear the sound of wine leaking from the tanks, and see the barrels strewn around and a tank crushed like an accordion on the ground. As you can imagine, I had to settle in to my new job at Viu Manent rather quickly...

Finally, after a Herculean effort by the entire Viu Manent team, we were able to begin harvesting on Monday, March 8, just 9 days after the earthquake.

2009–2010 Growing Season

Before reporting on a harvest, we must first consider what occurred in the winter and spring before the harvest.

In this case, winter 2009 was relatively normal, allowing the accumulation of enough cold hours to enable the vines to bud. This occurred a little later than normal, though, due to colder temperatures in September and cold temperatures in October that, coupled with high humidity in the soil from the late rains, led to “spring fever” potassium deficiency in many varieties. The lowest temperature of $-3.6^{\circ}\text{C}/26.6^{\circ}\text{F}$ was recorded at the La Capilla estate on June 23rd. Meanwhile, precipitation amounted to approximately 480 mm (19 in), somewhat lower than in a normal year but spread throughout the season, from early May until late November.

The first cottony buds that would later turn into shoots appeared on the Petit Verdot and Malbec in the El Olivar estate on August 30th and September 3rd, respectively, while the Chardonnay, Malbec, and Viognier at the San Carlos estate followed shortly thereafter (September 3, 6, and 8, respectively). Budbreak was an average of 7 to 10 days later than in a normal year, but was also much slower.

While August displayed relatively high temperatures compared to the past three years, September saw temperatures drop sharply, with the lowest averages in recent years. This, coupled with the large amount of precipitation that fell in August and the first week of September (approximately 40% of the total), kept the soil colder for longer and led to delays in the onset of phenological stages.

Temperatures remained low throughout the spring and into December, except for the last 4 days of October, when mean temperatures approached 20°C/68°F. This produced further overall delays in the phenological stages and interfered with flowering and fruit set, which explains the low yields that were ultimately obtained from some varieties, particularly Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah. This drop in yields enhanced the final quality of the wines, though, as the clusters had fewer and smaller berries (with seeds), which heightened the concentration of flavors and aromas.

Once veraison was complete (late January–early February), temperatures began to drop once again. February and March were 1–2°C (1.8–3.6°F) lower than the average monthly temperatures in a normal year. This explains the slow ripening, the more concentrated sugars, and the higher acidity in the grapes at harvest time, which in turn led to balanced, crisp wines with less alcohol than we normally see in Chile, particularly in the Colchagua Valley.

In summary, the beginning of the season was relatively complicated due to the late rains and low temperatures we saw throughout the spring. This situation was balanced out by lower yields and the favorable climate during the remaining months of the ripening period, especially as virtually no rain fell in autumn (the first and only rainfall occurred on May 5, and amounted to 20 mm/0.8 inches, which allowed us to wait patiently for the tannins in the seeds and skins to reach their peak of ripeness before harvesting. This year, there was practically no dehydration.

Whites

Among the white varieties, the first to be harvested was the queen of whites and my personal favorite. Sauvignon Blanc.

Everything was ready for harvest to begin on Friday, February 26, but the day before I decided to wait until Monday to let the ripening continue to evolve (it had been delayed by more than two weeks), hoping to obtain a crisp wine while avoiding overly herbaceous notes. My decision must have been divinely inspired, because if we had begun harvesting on Friday our winemaking team would have been in the winery when the earthquake occurred at dawn on Saturday... Well, they were there later, but helping

to prevent the loss of more wine. After this setback, we finally began harvesting our varietal Sauvignon Blanc on Monday, March 8th. These grapes are grown in the block beside our San Carlos winery, located in the heart of Colchagua Valley.

Let me take this opportunity to comment that this year we purchased a new, state-of-the-art vertical press, which allowed us to work with a very gentle pressing schedule that, when added to the effects of the cool climate, has enabled us to produce a very fruity wine that is very crisp and lush, a very inviting wine to drink...

The grapes destined for the Secreto Sauvignon Blanc once again came from the Casablanca Valley, especially its colder zones. This year we even incorporated a new vineyard in the Las Dichas sector, located less than 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) from the ocean, as the crow flies.

The Casablanca Valley had one of its coldest springs in the past 5 years, with frost causing damage in some cases. The low temperatures lasted into early December and overlapped with flowering, which caused poor fruit set and later led to smaller than estimated yields. Sauvignon Blanc, for example, was as much as 40% lower in the most affected zones.

Although the yields were lower, the quality of the grapes was extremely high. In my view, the grapes that escaped the frost achieved excellent aromatic concentration and their acidity remained high until the moment we harvested them. I think we were also one of the first in the zone to harvest our grapes, which we did on March 24 in Casablanca and March 30 in Las Dichas.

This year, the Secreto line's Sauvignon Blanc is an elegant wine with personality, extremely crisp and with notes of saline, lychee and grapefruit that lead to an intense, mineral finish.

Vinification very similar for both Sauvignons, with the single difference that the grapes grown for the Secreto line were harvested in small 10-kg boxes and hand-selected before processing.

The Viognier we vinified for the Secreto line was harvested in late March this year (10 to 14 days before its normal harvest date, even considering seasonal delays), in order to obtain a crisper wine and prevent the typical dehydration that afflicts this variety at the end of its ripening period. For this reason, and with the help of our extremely long, gentle pressing schedules (approximately 6 hours each), we were able to almost completely eliminate those phenols that could later lead to bitter flavors. I will dare to

say that this harvest was also much better than the two previous ones, and perhaps one of the best for this wine, given the absence of high peak temperatures, which generally translates into more phenols and finer wines.

The Chardonnay from San Carlos used for the varietal line was picked in the third week of March. The cool weather during ripening led to good natural acidity at harvest time, as well as fruit that was fresher than it was tropical. This, again with the help of our gentle pressing program, allowed us to obtain a crisp Chardonnay with a very lush palate and rich acidity. We used no oak with this wine.

For the Chardonnay Reserva, once again we used grapes from Casablanca. As in 2009, most of these were sourced from our producer located in the warmest sector of the valley and harvested on April 14–15. Again this year we used grapes from an additional grower, located in a colder zone close to Casablanca, which we felt would add more crispness to the wine. These grapes were harvested on April 22. As in previous years, 70% of the wine was fermented in French oak barrels, 10% first use. The remaining 30% was fermented in stainless steel tanks, which added freshness and fruitiness to the final blend.

Approximately 15% of the wine was fermented with native yeasts, and around 8% was inoculated with selected bacteria for malolactic fermentation. Both were intended to enhance complexity and volume on the palate. We are currently stirring the lees (battonage) approximately every 10 days to increase creaminess and integrate the oak.

The final white variety—and the last to be harvested this season at Viu—was the Semillon, from the noble vines at our San Carlos estate that are more than 50 years old. As I mentioned before, the first rain fell on May 5, and as you will understand that meant that the botrytis level did not even reach 10%; in fact, I thought we would not reach a good rate of infection before the harvest, but the later rains on May 14, 22 and 29, coupled with the spring-like afternoon temperatures and the early morning fog we experienced, led to an “explosion” of noble rot, and we were finally able to harvest on June 7 and 8, with approximately 97% of the grapes displaying botrytis. Infection in this block was generally quite clean, without the presence of secondary fungus. This wine has just finished fermenting and is being prepared to be racked into used barrels to enhance its evolution and complexity.

Reds

It was not only the white varieties that enjoyed the cooler weather during ripening; in fact, I believe that the reds were the happiest varieties, especially in the Colchagua Valley

and in supposedly warmer zones. While the excess cold hindered fruit set at first, leading to a general drop in yields, ultimately it improved the quality of the wines, giving loose, well ventilated, healthy clusters and grapes that were smaller, more concentrated and fruity.

The assistance of winegrower Miguel Mujica, who was directly responsible for managing the vineyards, was crucial at harvest time. I rode around the estate every week with Miguel, who knows every square inch of the vineyard, trying to get a feel for the harvest, drawing conclusions that would help to choose the best picking dates according to taste, also examining vigor photos, and even making distinctions among individual plants. I think this is crucial when you want your vineyards to express their greatest potential.

Vinification this year was very gentle to prevent over-extraction, to produce wines that are more elegant, approachable, and balanced and avoid very muscular wines that offer somewhat dry tannins that can become both tiresome and boring.

In terms of individual varieties, climatic conditions for the 2010 harvest were spectacular for Malbec, mainly in San Carlos. It was not only the hundred year old vines located beside the winery (in blocks 4, 5 and 6) that offered outstanding quality this year. Others have emerged, such as blocks 7, 8 and 9 (planted in 1997), which up to last year had been used for the reserve line. Today, these blocks are achieving their point of balance, and have been tentatively classified as Single Vineyard.

The 4 components that were previously earmarked for Viu 1 are from blocks 4 (3 lots) and 5 (1 lot). They are now cellaring in new French oak barrels and are already displaying their elegance, lush acidity, nice crispness, round tannins, and standout black fruit on the nose. The rest of block 5 also yielded outstanding quality and has been classified for now as Single Vineyard. The surprise this year was block 6. A couple of years ago this block had a large percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon plants, which were grafted with Malbec, from our own massal selection to take advantage of their old, deep roots to accelerate balance and quality in the fruit. This was the first year that the grafted vines were harvested along with the older plants, and the quality we have obtained so far is unquestionably Single Vineyard.

It is worth mentioning that, unlike the past two years, there was practically no dehydration this harvest time, which also implies better balance in the vines and better potential quality from the roots up. The low temperatures also decreased the need for watering, which led to more concentrated clusters. For its part, the El Olivar Malbec, while very fruity, lacks the concentration and balance of the San Carlos Malbec in my

opinion. Clearly we have to wait while the plants ripen and develop balance, as these vineyards were planted in 2000 on less fertile, very stony soils, in which the root systems and balance in the vines will take longer to take hold. Because of this, I think a couple of years down the road they will achieve their balance point, and will then give us their best quality. Still, one of these lots was classified as Single Vineyard quality and the rest as Secreto quality.

The Syrah also had a very good year, in my opinion, especially the grapes from El Olivar. This hillside Syrah is planted practically on bedrock (with approximately 1 meter of soil over the rock) and was harvested from April 12-15, delivering great color and greater crispness, without the overripe notes that can make wine heavy and tiresome. As I mentioned above, the harvest was quite differentiated, with some sectors left until their slightly under-ripe tannins matured according to taste and to coincide with the vigor photos of each block.

The rest of the El Olivar Syrah was harvested the week before for the Secreto line. The wine displays very nice color, rich acidity, and good volume, once again with silky tannins, which I think will make this Syrah a very good member of the line.

Also promising among this year's wines is the Pinot Noir from Casablanca, which is part of the Secreto line. Both vineyards are planted just outside of the town of Casablanca, though one is planted on a hillside facing northeast, while the other is on a gentle rise. In truth, these 2 components complement each other perfectly. One of them has a pinkish fruit, with good volume and crispness. In contrast, the other displays tart red fruit and floral notes on the nose, and like the first offers a very captivating crispness. Right now, part of the wine is being aged in used barrels and part is in stainless steel tanks, as the idea is to make a blend that showcases fruitiness and crispness more than toasted notes from the wood.

Ripening was delayed for the Cabernet Sauvignon from La Capilla that we used for our Single Vineyard line, but we were able to harvest when the tannins were ripe, 2 weeks later than in the past two years and 1 week later than in 2007 (which was equally cold). While this vintage will not be remembered for the quality of the Cabernets, I am satisfied with the quality we did obtain. The wines were lush with fresh fruit, with marked cassis notes, richness and robust tannins.

So far, 2010 also seems to have been a very good year for Carmenera. According to our preliminary classification, more than 80% has been earmarked for Reserva and higher grade wines. The remaining 20% is planted in a zone that experienced early frost twice in late April, which affected most of the leaves and interfered with the end of the

ripening period. In general, our preliminary assessment is very promising, with crisp, lively wines with abundant red fruit and extremely silky tannins.

For our newly launched Premium Carmenere, once again the La Capilla Block 20 was outstanding, as was the selection we made from blocks 11, 12 and 13 of the same estate, which so far has been an excellent complement to block 20. Though time and evolution in the barrel will determine the final verdict, for the moment I am very pleased with the quality obtained from these blocks and with the Carmenere in general.

To conclude, I want to inform you that at Viu we are launching a study to help us better understand our terroir, which will assist us in analyzing the differences in the quality of our vineyards and guide us towards better vineyard management to instill the highest quality in our wines.

Next year, in my next harvest report, I will tell you all about our latest advances and upcoming projects, but for now I invite you all to enjoy a glass of Viu Manent. Cheers!!!