



TENUTA
DELLE
TERRE NERE

The 2018 vintage

Analysis: the vintage was characterized by a very mild winter, with temperatures that have almost never fallen below zero. Even in the colder period, i.e. between the end of December and the beginning of February, the situation remained the same. Unlike 2017, very little snow was consequently seen and even rainfall was rather limited.

In fact, apart from some rainfall between November and December, the pluviometric level remained low with a water deficit that dragged on until the end of March - beginning of April. So, in the drought summer, a dry winter followed. There was a return of cold weather in the second half of March, which did not cause problems for the plants. The budding occurred slightly later than in 2017, although at the beginning of April a sudden increase in temperatures contributed to aligning the phenological phases.

Between the end of April and the beginning of May an Atlantic perturbation brought abundant precipitations pushed by strong winds of Scirocco and Levante, which caused some damage from breakage to the shoots of the vines in the young plants. However, the rain brought great benefit to the young vines, in particular those planted during last winter. After the first half of May the temperatures progressively increased, but without ever experiencing sharp rises. Unfortunately, the temperature rise was accompanied by the total absence of rainfall for over 1 month, which led to the first cases of water stress of the year, especially in the young vines in thin soils such as those of Calderara and San Lorenzo. During the first half of June the drought was aggravated by a further rise in temperature, which brought the maximum abundantly above 30 ° C. Fortunately, in the middle of the month a disturbance from Eastern Europe brought some rain and a sharp drop in temperatures, which partly caused the drought alarm to cease. It lasted about ten days and brought about 60 mm of rainfall which allowed a complete rehydration of the soils. The availability of water together with the considerable lowering of the temperature has allowed the plants, especially the young ones, to resume their vegetative growth by overcoming the water stress that characterized the period between late May and early June.

At the beginning of July, temperatures rose again sharply, with highs reaching 35 ° C. From the phenological point of view the slight advance that characterized the allegation phase was reabsorbed by this unstable and fresh weather phase; in fact, at the end of June, from this point of view, an alignment was observed with respect to the average of the last few years.

C/da Calderara s.n. - 95036 Randazzo (CT)

P. Iva: 04170830873

e-mail Pec: legalmail@tenutaterrenere.it

tel. 095/924002 – fax 095/924051



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The phytosanitary management was not complicated by the rains of June as the water arrived at a time when the plant had already left the critical period for peronosporic attacks and had yet to enter the most delicate phase with respect to the risk of attack by mildew. Nevertheless, at the end of June another treatment was carried out based on sulfur and copper to protect young vegetation.

At the beginning of July, the maximum temperatures began to rise, reaching values that in any case fall within the average of the period. Maximum temperatures throughout the month remained below 35 ° C. The water shortage has begun to be felt especially in the young plants. However, the stress situation was managed efficiently as this year it was possible to irrigate the young vines in a timely and effective manner where necessary. This was possible thanks to an important investment by the company aimed at creating boreholes, from which to draw water, and to equip the young vines with efficient and modern drip irrigation systems.

The beginning of August was characterized by the arrival of some bad weather which, starting from the second week of the month, brought abundant rainfall and a consequent lowering of the temperatures, especially during the night. A slight hailstorm hit the vineyards in the San Lorenzo district, which however suffered limited damage (5-10%). The extraordinary abundance of rainfall in this period is demonstrated by two simple data: compared to an average annual rainfall of 500-600 mm, only during the month of August over 250 mm of rain fell! An extraordinary event that, while on the one hand contributed to the further growth of the plants, on the other hand on the adult plants led to a phenological slowing and a swelling of the bunches, which in the most fertile soils led to small outbreaks of rot. However, the thinning out of the bunches, usually carried out at the end of August, has made it possible to limit the damage and eliminate the compromised bunches early, avoiding the spread of the problem and limiting the phenomenon with overall negligible damage.

The month of September began with a high-pressure meteorological phase, which brought clear and dry days and higher temperatures than at the end of the previous month. On a thermal level, there were very hot days with temperatures above 30 ° C in the first decade of the month. However, the temperatures gradually dropped with the minimum temperatures below 15 ° C and the highs below 30 ° C. In the last decade of the month, rainfall also appeared as usual, with rainy events that nevertheless fall within the average of the period. This climatic situation has resumed the maturation in a constant and gradual way; from the data around mid-September, there was a delay of around 6-8 days compared to 2017; however, considering that 2017 was an early vintage, we can say that the maturation trend in the 2018 vintage was in line with the average of the other years.

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The month of October was characterized by an extreme climatic trend, which put a strain on the grapes and on the same Etna winemakers, who after a year of work in some cases were seen taking production away in a few hours; in particular a devastating hailstones hit the south-west slope of the volcano. Our side was spared from hailstorms but not from rainfall. The rains in October reached the record level of 450 mm !! Considering the accumulation of rainfall in the August-October quarter, we reach the impressive figure of almost 750 mm !! This means that in three months the rain that normally falls in 1 year and a half has fallen. The grape harvest took place in this extreme climatic context.

This peculiar environmental situation led to difficulties in the ripening of the grapes, especially in the vineyards located on the most fertile and deep soils. Maturation proceeded very slowly, with a dilution effect due to the rains which led to low sugar gradations and low acidity in some particularly fertile vineyards. On average, however, the acidity remained high due to a low organic acid respiration coefficient due to low temperatures and a high degree of hydration of the berries. An important contribution to the total acidity level of the grapes was given by the high content of malic acid, which in some cases indicated a not perfect degree of ripeness of the grapes. The excessive hydration of the berries has also caused the thinning of the skins, which in some cases have cracked, giving free access to rots and botrytis in particular.

The harvest started 8 days later than in 2017; the white grapes were perfect from the sanitary point of view and with a degree of maturation from medium to good considering the vintage. The harvest of Nerello mascalese was much more demanding, as the generalized non homogeneity of maturation forced a strong selection in the vineyards, with gradual harvests in the same “contrada” or even in the same vineyard. Moreover, the sudden deterioration of the sanitary conditions of the grapes, especially in fresh and fertile areas, has led to a direct loss of production, as a part of the grapes has not been harvested. The selection of grapes in the vineyards this year was certainly the element that made the difference on the final quality of the wine.

In such a year, perhaps as never before, the difficult choices and the sacrifices of all have finally led to a great result in terms of the quality of the wines. In general, the wines have a lower alcohol content and a higher acidity than the average of the last years. The color is very vivid, due to low pH levels, the nose is fragrant and delicate; structurally they are rather elegant wines with great balance, pleasantness and drinkability.