

# 2016

Vintage Report



CHAMPAGNE  
**TAITTINGER**  
*Reims*

## Wellingtons in Champagne ...

2016 will not be forgotten lightly by Champagne's vine growers.

It was not easy, nor typical.

The wet soils in the early season made work in the vineyards difficult, but the vineyard team still managed to remove the weeds without the use of herbicides, which was quite an achievement in the context of the awful spring.

By June, normal service was resumed, and the vineyards were restored to their usual well-being, and under control.

The budburst happened during wet, cold weather, and this proved fatal to the vineyards of the Côte des Bars in the department of the Aube. Two successive frost periods on April 18th and 19th, and then again on the 27th, led to the almost total destruction of the young buds. Total estimated losses after the frost are close to 80% in this region. For the whole of Champagne, the destruction represents 15% of the potential harvest.

The following two months were characterized by excessive rains which encouraged the unprecedented development of mildew, which began in mid-May and ended in August. The mildew develops on the leaves first, then rapidly infiltrated the clusters of grapes, which is much rarer. This year, rarer still, the petioles were also affected.

The Taittinger staff were all hands on deck, sometimes having to intervene during the night. For the whole of Champagne, crop loss from mildew is estimated at a further 15%, the same as for the frost. Our vineyards were unfortunately not spared!

An unprecedented consequence of these two occurrences is that our press house at Loches-sur-Ource in the Aube will not open this year; and some growers will not even spend money and labour on organizing the harvest of their vineyards! The harvest, for some, has been that bad.



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After a depressingly grey spring, the good weather arrived in early July, and the particularly warm and sunny summer offered the vines an exceptional end to their journey. Clusters of grapes affected by the mildew were destroyed, the remaining bunches matured very quickly using the water reserves accumulated in the soil. And a short spell of very hot weather late August 'scalded' and destroyed even more of the harvest, representing a further 5% loss.

So frost, mildew and scalding have seen 35% of the potential harvest gone before the harvest even starts. This has a major impact on the economy of the Champagne region. Indeed, the production costs incurred to maintain this low harvest are more important than years past. Some growers' economies may become very fragile. Furthermore, this increase in the costs of production will generate a significant strain on the supply of grapes.

However, behind these small grape volumes is apparently hiding the potential for real quality from the 2016 harvest. The crop in September is healthy, the weather announced for late September and early October is very fine with cool nights and sunny days - without reaching extreme temperatures.

So, after a tiring year in the vineyards, the potential high quality of the harvest is a just reward for the work done in the field; and it gladdens the heart of all those who have tilled the soil.



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