

Press release dated 15th October 2018

Loire Valley Harvest Report Outstanding Results for 2018

What a year! Even the oldest winegrowers can scarcely remember a better Loire Valley harvest, both in **quality and yield**; 2018 will be etched on our memories as a **historic vintage**. From Nantes to Sancerre we're seeing highly aromatic, flavourful wines across all three colours. Interloire and BIVC predict that overall volumes for Loire Valley AOCs and IGPs may be as high as 2.9 million hectolitres – up considerably on last year's 2.2 million hl – with plenty available to **supply the market** and replenish stocks.

Spring weather was very favourable, promoting remarkably **early flowering and excellent fruit set**. Unhampered by hail or frost, the vines continued to develop normally with no major problems - until June. June brought bouts of heavy rain, followed by serious attacks of mildew. On the whole, however, these were skilfully managed by the winegrowers. Summer **temperatures then reached an all-time high**; grapes continued to grow well and remained in robust health, with harvests throughout the vineyards being almost as early as those of 2017. Conditions were excellent throughout, from the end of August right through to October; growers **harvested their fruit with total peace of mind**, knowing **the grapes had reached full maturity**.

WHITES AND ROSÉS WITH GOOD AROMATIC COMPLEXITY

In the Nantais, the first Melon grapes were picked in mid-August. Balance was excellent, with acidity lower than average. The **grapes are rich, with good aromatic complexity**.

Chenins and Chardonnays destined for dry whites and sparkling wine bases were picked between the end of August and 20th September, and show similar results. This has been a good year for sparkling wines, and balance is admirable. Stocks are set to be replenished with a very high-quality product indeed.

In Touraine, the first Sauvignons show thiol-based flavours of citrus and pineapple while those picked later are full of peach and apricot, giving plenty of scope for some **superb blends**.

Cabernets to be used for rosés feature a wealth of deliciously fruity flavours, particularly cherries and redcurrants, while rosés made from Grolleau, Côt and Gamay also promise excellence.

Turning to sweet wines, this year's hot weather caused a certain amount of *passerillage*, a natural drying-out of the grapes while still on the vine; this is different to botrytisation, where grapes are affected by a microfungus which slowly reduces moisture content. Again, the grapes are in robust health, and should produce an **outstanding crop of sweet wines this year**.

SMOOTH, WELL-ROUNDED REDS

Harvesting finished around 10th October for Cabernet Franc and Côt, while Cabernet Sauvignons will finish picking at the end of this week. **The future looks as bright for reds as it does for whites and rosés**, in yield as well as quality. The hot weather has led to higher potential alcohol levels even than last year, and as we speak our winemakers are hard at work in the winery, keeping a watchful eye on fermentation and preparing to put together some amazing blends. This year the Cabernets grown in sandy terroirs show thiol-based flavours, along with red fruit and florals, notably violet. Tuffeau wines are fruitier and more concentrated, with morello cherry and raspberry jam flavours. Colours are deep and intense, almost black. The first wines are well-rounded and velvety-smooth; the Côts are magnificent, their profiles quite unlike what we're used to. We're looking forward to seeing some good *vins de garde* this year, wines that will age for 10 or even 15 years.

Jean-Martin Dutour, President of InterLoire, sums up the vintage thus: 'Throughout September and October, harvesting conditions were perfect, and we managed our harvests calmly and confidently. 2018 has been an outstanding year, the best in living memory: rich in quality and generous in quantity. A great year for the Loire Valley, putting us in a tremendous position to fulfil market requirements.'

ABOUT INTERLOIRE: InterLoire is the joint professional association for Loire Valley wines, drawing together 3,000 winegrowers, négociants and cooperatives who collectively produce an average of 2 million hectolitres per year - equivalent to 270 million bottles. It encompasses 50 appellations, denominations and PGIs across 43,000 hectares, covering 14 départements from the Vendée to Puy-de-Dôme, and accounting for some 80% of the Loire Basin's wine production volume.

InterLoire plays an integral role in the Loire Valley, France's 3rd largest producer of appellation wines; its missions include economic governance, research and development, and the safeguarding and promotion of Loire Valley wines.

InterLoire

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