

2014 Vintage

Despite its having been one of the most complex to manage in the vineyard in recent years, the favourable end to the 2014 vintage proved to be pleasantly surprising in terms of the quality of the grapes.

Observing the climatic pattern, it can be noted that the growing degree days were in line with the data recorded over the last few years. Furthermore, the days with temperatures considered positive for the physiology of the vine were distributed over the entire growth cycle, starting with the mild temperatures recorded as early as the beginning of the winter. Spring appeared gradually - but early - in the vineyards of the Langhe, meaning that growth also resumed earlier than in the previous year. A certain degree of graduality could already be seen in the physiological development of the wine from its early stages, with the differences due to the variability in the microclimates in our valleys appearing clearer than usual right from the outset.

The beginning of summer saw temperatures which were entirely in the norm, allowing for the slightly early growth that developed in spring to be maintained. Rainfall during the summer was above average, in terms not so much of the number of days as of its intensity. On a couple of occasions out-and-out “cloudbursts” - very localized and intense - were witnessed. Particularly significant were the rainfalls of 23 and 29 July, which had extremely different outcomes however: in some areas 63 mm of rain were recorded in a single day, while only 13 mm fell just 15 km away. Combined with average temperatures which were not low, the amount of rainfall created the ideal conditions for fungal attacks, and the attention of vinegrowers to this aspect had never before been so critical in managing to achieve the ripening of sound grapes. Deciding on the correct systems to use in managing the vineyards and when to intervene proved to be more important than ever for the health of the grapes. Many of the aggressive phenomena occurred prior to green harvesting operations, which meant that any problems relating to mould could be remedied at their inception through painstaking work in the vineyard. Clearly, however, this resulted in a further reduction in production, which was already lower than in recent vintages. September was unquestionably a positive month from a climatic point of view, with good day-night temperature variations which continued throughout October. This proved to be all-important for the ripening of the grapes and the composition of their phenolic profile.

The production of the area’s white grape-varieties was lower than last year, though with very similar sugar levels combined with an at times marked acidity that should ensure freshness in the aromas too.

Among the red grapes, dolcetto is maybe the variety in which the yield proved to be lower, but there were no problems of soundness where green harvesting and grape cleaning operations had been carried out correctly. The wines can be expected to be well-balanced, and though they may have less structure and alcohol they will certainly be blessed with a considerable quantity of aromas, together with a marked intensity of colour due to the anthocyanins which are particularly appreciated in the areas of Dogliani and Diano d’Alba. Barbera is grown over a much more extensive area, so making an average assessment is more difficult, and the situation at harvest time was more varied. With lower than usual maximum temperatures in August, the acidity which is already in itself a genetic property of this variety was particularly enhanced, though a reduction can be expected after fermentation. This will ensure greater balance and a longer cellar life, in view also of the massive contribution of phenolic substances. The Nebbiolo shows great potential, with its truly astonishing capacity to adapt. Well-worked vineyards with well-aired clusters showed no effects of mould attacks of any kind. In the Barolo growing area, the situation was very varied compared to recent years, due in part to the hailstorms which affected the area in patches. In general however, the best results can be said to have come from the vineyards which were tended most carefully and managed on the basis of the climate: the vineyards in the sunniest positions, with well-aired and

drained soil, protected using the correct treatments, and subjected to thinning of the bunches and stripping of the leaves at the right time. The Barbaresco growing area, on the other hand, is a completely different matter. A privileged situation was enjoyed here in terms of climate, with as much as three times less rainfall than the rest of Piedmont, and no hailstorms.

The nebbiolo-based wines are in general likely to be elegant and well-balanced with medium alcohol, and to have excellent noses packed with mineral notes, and good acidity making them long-lasting.

All-in-all, the 2014 vintage confirms how making early forecasts in the Langa can prove to be premature, and shows how fundamental the end of the season is for us in affecting the final quality of the grapes and wines.