Harvest 2026 - Domaine Bader, Epfig, Alsace

Harvests started on August 18 and ended on September 6th. They have never been so early nor so quick. In order, the first harvest was of the Chardonnay grapes intended for Crémant, followed by the Pinot Gris, then the Pinot Noir (which were racked on 10 September), Muscat, Riesling, and finally the Gewürztraminer to round things off.

Overall, qualities are beautiful, aromatics too, no signs or hints of any cooked or jammy flavors.

Previous fall and winter were very humid, allowing the water reserve in the soils to replenish. But Spring was so dry that this water reserve had been used very rapidly and by the end of April, there remained no more humidity in the soils. Luckily two rainfalls saved the vineyard, with 60 mm in May. Then, it hardly rained apart 16 mm in June. Pierre Scharsch, who never works the soil, decided for once to do a very light tiling at the surface on the first 5 cm to make sure this water enters the soil and stays there.

His two main objectives since he settled on his own estate are:

1) To have a vast organic component of quality in the soil, one that allows to store 10 times its volume and one that can produce humus
2) To have a rich and active microbial life in the soil

Those two axes are solutions to help the vines to develop its resiliency and ability to adapt to climate change. The work Pierre has been doing in this regard since he took over is paying off, as during this year—which was particularly extreme in terms of heat and drought—his vineyard showed no signs of major stress: no leaf drop or scorching, and growth remained active throughout the growing season. He pruned quite heavily to reduce leaf area and limit evapotranspiration. Since yields are very reasonable, he does not need a large leaf area to reach maturity – this is a curious statement to me? What about reaching phenolic ripeness – does he not need leaves for this? Pruning leaves will significantly reduce production?

Budbreak was early, like the flowering (end of May), but without reaching records. This precocity has cumulated all along the season until the very early harvest, setting a new record here! The cycle of the vines has been shorter than usual.

The harvest went by very quickly because everything ripened rapidly, one grape variety after another.

The first musts and wines taste excellent; the fruit flavors are pure.

Stay tuned for when the vintage is fully developed so we can taste 2026 together…