R DE RIEUSSEC 2021

VINEYARD ATTRIBUTES

Appellation : AOC Bordeaux, France
The Sauternes appellation stretches on the left bank of the Garonne, about 50km South of Bordeaux. The natural humidity arising from the Ciron river provides the ideal conditions for the development of Bortrytis Cinerea, also known as noble rot.

Terroir : Château Rieussec sits on the border of Fargues and Sauternes, bordered by Château d'Yquem to the West. Rieussec is one of the largest properties in Sauternes and Barsac, covering 85 hectares of gravel sitting on sandy-clay soils.

VINTAGE SUMMARY

Another one that will be remembered. Another year when people said "I've never seen anything like it", and those who can remember have to go back 20 or 30 years to recall a vintage when such efforts had to be made to protect our vines. Never before has frost affected the whole of France so severely. It came without warning, with an insolent air, like an unwanted guest who would not leave and did not abide by any rules. In Rieussec, where we were hit the worst, we had to accept that, with temperatures around -9°C, countermeasures were of little use.
Spring took its time to arrive, almost seeming late after the early years we have experienced recently. The start of the vines' growth went smoothly, with flowering taking place at the end of May in good conditions.
However, this was not to last: with a rainy June and July, the humidity climbed... and patches of mildew began appearing on the vines. This was a particularly sensitive year because of our now official conversion to organic farming. Under unstable skies, the véraison (when the grapes change colour) began in mid-July, continuing into mid-August for recalcitrant berries. Fortunately, the next two weeks through to early September were brighter and, as is sometimes the case in Bordeaux, transformed the grapes and saved the vintage. The dry whites will be deliciously fresh and aromatic.

WINE MAKING SCHEME

The grapes were harvested by hand into small crates on the plots selected for R de Rieussec. The Sauvignon was picked fairly early to preserve its freshness and rich thiol aromas, while the Sémillon was harvested when the grapes were thoroughly ripe to give the wine structure and body. The harvest was refrigerated before pressing to reduce oxidation. Pressing was gentle so as to preserve the grapes' aromatic freshness. After cold settling, a large part of the Sémillon musts was vinified in new oak barrels and barrels that had held one wine. The Sauvignon musts were mainly vinified in stainless steel tanks at low temperature and a smaller quantity in barrels that had held one wine. At the end of the fermentation process, the wines in barrels were aged on the lees for six months with regular stirring. After ageing, the wines in stainless steel vats (50%) and in barrels (50%) were blended prior to bottling.

TASTING NOTES

Expressive, complex nose, underscored by a lovely freshness, characteristic of this 2021 vintage. Some notes of tropical fruit in the initial nose, predominantly passion fruit, followed by floral notes with a hint of aniseed, suggesting fennel and tarragon. The wine's minerality and concentration are already apparent in the nose.
On the palate, the attack is round and full, with subtle notes of fresh butter. This is followed by superb notes of freshly cut wood which contribute to the wine's concentration and purity. A sensation of minerality underscores the entire palate, with warm notes of flint, reminiscent of summer walks on the pebbles at Etretat beach. The finish is concentrated and long, balanced by a pleasant hint of bitterness.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Varietals : Sauvignon blanc 59%, Sémillon 41%
Alcohol content : 12.5 % vol.
pH : 3.14
Total acidity : 4.59 g/l