

Pomerol, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017

**AB** Everyone's talking about an outstanding 2016 vintage. As the winemaker for Beauregard for over twenty years now, do you think this 2016 reaches the level of great Beauregard years like 1998 and 2010?



**Vincent Priou** Undoubtedly. And the more I taste it and observe its development, the more I'm convinced that 2016 will be even better than those two great years at Beauregard.

**AB** How do you explain this phenomenon? Nobody was really predicting this in October, and certainly not during the growing season.

**Vincent Priou** At Beauregard, there are two factors that go some way towards explaining it. Firstly, the weather conditions which were totally unparalleled. We were on unknown territory with the long period of rain followed by two months of drought. We'd never experienced this weather pattern before, and we were taken aback and feared the worst. We suffered throughout this vintage and had little idea of how everything would eventually fall into place. It was only when the grapes comfortably reached full ripeness after such a long season that we began to comprehend something of the potential of the vintage.

**AB** It was a one-off...

**Vincent Priou** It was unparalleled, although the end of season conditions bore a certain resemblance to 1998. But otherwise we were in uncharted waters.

**AB** Yet with such late ripening and relatively large crop loads on the vines, the situation didn't augur well for full ripening...

**Vincent Priou** Well, we have had slightly similar scenarios with magnificent vintages in 1982 and 1990, and even 2009, in which crop loads were similarly large if not more so.

**AB** How large was the crop at Beauregard in 2016?

**Vincent Priou** It was 40 hl/ha.

**AB** In general terms, are you surprised by the profile of the 2016, which doesn't resemble a large crop vintage at all? 1990 was a very digestible, easy-drinking wine. Apparently 2016 has a quite solid tannic structure giving it a somewhat classic Bordeaux profile.

**Vincent Priou** The 2016 will be very drinkable for other reasons. It has beautiful freshness, which makes it pleasant to taste. But it will need a bit of time, because the tannins and acidity will make 2016 a touch austere in the first years.

**AB** For you, does it therefore bear some similarity to the 2010?

**Vincent Priou** Yes it does. It's unlike the 2009 or 2015, even the 2005, which was quite exuberant. The 2016 has wonderful freshness, great purity and superb length of flavour on the palate, like the 2010.

**AB** You were going to mention a second factor that made this vintage so special for you. What was that?

**Vincent Priou** The reason I stated that 2016 was a notch above our 2010 and 1998 is the advantage of having a different winemaking environment today. We now have the potential, thanks to our new vat cellar with all its latest equipment, to exploit the full potential of each vintage. We never had that scope before 2015.

**AB** To handle the raw material with more care and vinify with greater precision?

**Vincent Priou** Yes, and sorting meticulously, vinifying in small vats with gently managed temperature control at very precise degrees, a gravity-flow system and so on. These are wine-making methods which are much more conducive to the production of very high quality wines.

**AB** How do all these high-powered precision techniques translate into the wine? What will we find in the 2016 that we wouldn't have found, if those new wine-making facilities hadn't been available to you?

**Vincent Priou** There's a greater purity, greater precision in the wine, both in the fruit and the aromas. There's enhanced elegance and complexity. We're extracting more things but more gently.

**AB** Tannins for example?

**Vincent Priou** That's a good example of what we can do now: we extract only good tannins, never bad tannins. The extraction is more refined.

**AB** By all accounts, 2016 is most definitely a Merlot year on the right bank. Would you agree with that?

**Vincent Priou** We are great believers in our Cabernet Franc, which is very good again this year, but Merlot is undoubtedly the star in 2016 in our appellation. The Cabernet Franc suffered more from the dry conditions, and we won't be including so much in the final blend.

**AB** The proportion of Cabernet Franc is close to 30% in the Beauregard vineyard. What percentage will make up the First Wine in 2016?

**Vincent Priou** 17 to 18%. It's lower, but this proportion is really of superb quality.

**AB** In two or three words how would you sum up the tasting characteristics of the Beauregard 2016?

**Vincent Priou** Freshness, elegance, complexity and especially good length of flavour on the palate. I really believe that this vintage is going to improve even more. I'm confident that it's the best vintage ever made at Beauregard.

**AB** Where will visitors be able to taste Beauregard during primeurs week?

**Vincent Priou** At L'Union des Grands Crus at Château La Pointe, Pomerol (Tuesday to Thursday). Also here at the château (Monday to Friday) and as usual at Pomerol Séduction, which this year will be at Château Némin, Pomerol (Tuesday and Wednesday).