
Harvest Report - The Winemaker Experience

Overview

First day of Harvest:	30th July 2021 (Viognier - Peter)
Last day of Harvest:	3rd September 2021 (Touriga Nacional - Chris & Nellie)
Total Kg Harvested:	7.800 Kg
White Wine (wine-must):	1.600 L
Rosé wine (wine-must):	730 L
Red Wine (wine-must):	3.300 L



Climate & grape quality

The 2020/ 2021 winter was very cold, in January the night-time temperatures frequently dropped below 1°C. Such cooler temperatures would usually entice the vines to remain in their winter dormancy longer than usual. However, this year we encountered another welcome weather phenomenon, which provided a push for the bud-break to occur on schedule: rain. An unusual amount of rain initiated the emergence of leaves in the vineyards, without the need for any irrigation on our side, as was outlined in April's bud-break report.

The next step would have been cluster thinning, which has become a staple of our production philosophy. As is the case in most such decisions, we almost always advise in favour of quality over quantity, and cluster thinning is the prime example of this balance. This year was one of the only ones where it was not necessary, as nature handled this work on our behalf. Overall the natural yield was greatly reduced compared to previous years, both in terms of the number of grape-bunches as well as the size of the grapes. However, what we lost in productivity we gained in concentration, so we basically experienced a natural cluster thinning this year, which is why the quality expectations of the 2021 harvest are very high!

Harvest

The maturation of the grapes this year was incredibly fast, unprecedented in our history at Quinta dos Vales. Usually the harvest period spans a full 2 months, whereas this year the entire harvest was completed in 5 weeks. The reason was heat, but it wasn't the peaks that made the difference, the days were not particularly hotter than in previous years. However the nights were that much hotter, which meant the grapes never stopped developing. In a normal year the cool nights would provide the grapes with a pause from development, often even a reduction in their development, whereas this summer the never-ending heat meant the grapes worked and worked and worked. This resulted in our winemaking team having to do the same, to work and work and work. The busiest 2 months of the year were condensed into just 5 weeks.



Private productions

Since 2018 we have gradually increased the number of private wine-makers joining us on this adventure every single year, however we have never had such a considerable jump as we did in this last year. The 2020 harvest included a total of 7 private productions that our winemaking team had to manage in parallel to the production of Quinta dos Vales. Whereas this year we had 18 such private productions!

In terms of production-volume The Winemaker Experience now accounts for almost 10% of our overall production (7.800 out of 82.000 Kg). A considerable challenge, but we are happy to report that even so everything worked brilliantly.