

THE 2002 VINTAGE

CHATEAU RIOU DE THAILLAS

CHATEAU FOUGAS

The distinguishing feature of the 2002 vintage was the year's unusual climatology – there was a considerable lack of rainfall with both autumn and winter having been dry, together with a shortage of sunshine associated with unsettled weather throughout the summer.

Put in perspective against averages for the last thirty years, records for 2002 show a shortfall of 100 hours of sunshine and almost 300 mm of rain.

Following a cold start to the winter in December and January, temperatures rose again in February. There was a shortage of rainfall at the beginning of spring, which turned out to be mild and sunny.

May and June were much wetter and, throughout the summer, the prevailing weather was rainy and cloudy, interspersed with brighter spells around 15th August.

The equinox in September also brought periods of rainfall.

Budburst began on 29th March for the Merlot vines and around 6th April for the Cabernets.

The midway stage of flowering took place between 3rd and 10th June, with slight failure to pollinate amongst the Merlot vines. Veraison was in line with the average for the last thirty years and took place around 1st August.

Leaf removal was carried out by hand in both vineyards, followed by cluster thinning in the last week of July and first fortnight of August.

End of June 2002 – leaf removal prior to crop thinning

The year's lack of rainfall significantly affected the weight of grape clusters and the harvest was small.

There were one or two withered bunches scattered about the vineyards at the end of the season.

Thanks to the care taken during leaf removal and to the even distribution of grape clusters on the vines, the crop was healthy and of excellent quality, despite sporadic bad weather in the month of September.

Harvesting took place on 21st September at Château Riou de Thaillas, on the 25th and 26th September in the Merlot vines at Château Fougas and the 8th October among the Cabernets.

By virtue of our cluster thinning initiatives and low yields, we were able to offset the vagaries of the weather. The grapes thus reached a good level of maturity with a high concentration of polyphenols.

At both Riou de Thaillas and Fougas maceration was carried out cold. Temperatures were maintained at 5°C / 41°F for a week at Fougas. This was followed by daily punching down of the cap. Malolactic fermentation took place in new barrels.

Characterised by a good level of acidity, these wines are supple and aromatic with excellent concentration.