

# BODEGAS CASTRO MARTIN

## Harvest Report 2009 – Another unsettled summer

The winter of 2008 was not particularly memorable as both temperature and rainfall were pretty average for this part of Europe. It was only when we reached the early part of 2009 that we witnessed a few strange anomalies. At the end of January parts of Spain and France witnessed violent storms, with Paris airports closed for the first time in 34 years, and winds gusting over 100kph. At the same time torrential rain also caused local flash floods.

However, by the middle of February all this had changed – the sun was out, and more or less stayed out until the end of March, with many daytime temperatures of between 20° and 23°C (68°-73°F). Inevitably this unseasonably warm weather made an impression in the vineyards, with buds and shoots appearing perhaps as much as three weeks premature.



Grapes in 'Old El Pazo' ripe for picking

In the period leading up to our flowering at the end of May the weather had changed yet again, and by now was cool and damp – far from ideal at this critical time. Fortunately complete disaster was narrowly averted when a period of warm sunshine arrived at just the right moment.

The next two months of June and July were also quite cool and damp with temperatures rarely exceeding 25°C (77°F), hardly enough to

generate decent sugar levels in the fruit. Once again we started to fear a poor harvest.

The month of August however, may be remembered fondly as the month that saved the vintage. An entire month of hot sunshine (up to 30°C, 86°F on many days), and almost unbroken cloud – a real saviour. Fortunately these excellent conditions stayed with us during September, up to the beginning of the harvest.

As usual, Angela had spent the weeks leading up to harvest rushing around every single vineyard (including our outside suppliers) collecting grape samples, and then analysing them in her modest laboratory. The object being to consider the maturity of fruit within each location - this not only helps us decide when to pick, but also the order in which we should go about it.

With all this information to hand, our 2009 campaign began on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September under clear blue skies.

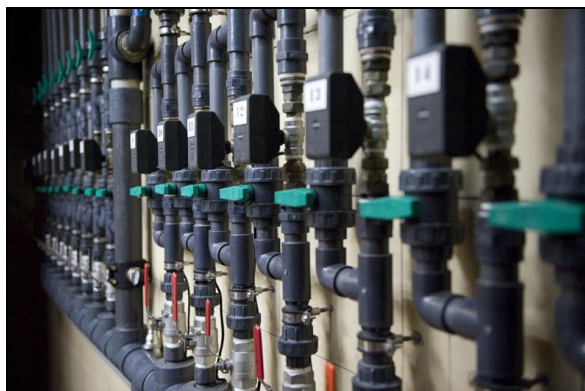
Within two or three hours the first grapes had arrived and almost immediately started their journey through the cellar - the hopper in reception taking them straight to the press situated on floor below. Our first impression was good, and analysis of the bunches confirmed a better balance between sugar and acidity than in 2008. Of course only time would reveal the true quality....



Loading the press from grape reception

In an average year our harvest takes about 6 or 7 days, and so as always, we pay particular attention the local weather forecast. The initial prediction was good, albeit that the long-range

forecast was not quite as positive, predicting a remote possibility of rain. However, as it transpired we needn't have worried because as the week progressed, so the forecast gradually improved, and we soon realised that rain would not play a part in the 2009 proceedings. With this in mind, we could simply concentrate on bringing in the fruit at the optimum moment.



At harvest time our cooling system works overtime

During every harvest one of the most important factors is controlling the quantity of grapes arriving in the cellar at any given moment - this is for two main reasons. Firstly, we need a steady supply to keep the presses ticking-over and working efficiently, and secondly, we need to ensure that the fruit is not sitting around for too long before it is pressed (thereby avoiding any possible fruit oxidation).

Every morning we therefore have to calculate how many kilos we would ideally like to receive, and then it is just a question of organising our transport accordingly. Settled weather allows us the opportunity to control the flow of fruit more precisely simply because there is less pressure to crop quickly. In poor years when we are dodging the rain, we are left with little option but to gather everything as quickly as possible.

With each day that passed the grapes flowed in and everything was running like clockwork – everyone in their place, doing their job, and all relatively stress free. Of course the hours are long, and the nights short, not to mention that the work is much more physical than sitting behind a desk writing my blog. (My tired, old muscles were aching!)

After six days of hard but relatively smooth harvesting we were almost at an end, with just a few small parcels of our own vineyards remaining. In an attempt to eek-out the last few grams of sugar we decided to allow the fruit one

additional day in the sunshine, and did not work on Sunday, allowing ourselves a brief moment of relaxation (albeit that the real work load had already shifted from vineyard to the bodega).

On Monday it soon became apparent that we had probably miscalculated the kilos still hanging on the vine, and despite our best efforts, the daylight evaporated before we were able to finish. Apart from being annoyed with ourselves for getting it wrong, the usual end-of-harvest euphoria appeared slightly subdued as we faced yet more hours of picking the next day.

To summarise, our 2009 looks very promising - first tastings of the 'must' reveal many of the typical characteristics that we have come to know and enjoy in our albariño. Naturally, we would always like a few more kilos, but in the end we harvested a total very similar to last year. Now over to Angela to work her magic!....



One of our favourite growers brings her last few cases in a Fiat Panda!

As always you can find a detailed day-by-day account of this year's harvest by visiting our blogsite on [www.castromartin.blogspot.com](http://www.castromartin.blogspot.com)

#### Technical details of 2009 (all measurements at harvest):

**Total kilos harvested: 138.376 kg**  
**Potential alcohol: 12,1°**  
**Total acidity: 9.01 gm/litre (tartaric)**  
**pH: 3,20**

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