

# BODEGAS CASTRO MARTIN

## Harvest Report 2010 – A long, hot summer

To use an old football analogy you could easily say that this year's growing season was really 'a game of two halves'. The first half being pre-flowering, and then the second, post flowering.

Winter and spring had been extraordinarily wet, so much so that we worried for the flowering itself. However, a short period of dry weather just at the crucial moment enabled the flowering to pass almost without incident. June was more of a mixed month although mostly sunny, but then the months of July, August and September yielded almost no rainfall whatsoever, with temperatures regularly reaching 30°C (86°F).

Under normal circumstances we would not complain about a hot summer, but 2010 was bordering on the extreme as far as grape growing was concerned. By the end of August the grapes were showing signs of stress, the canopy starting to wilt, and some leaves starting to turn yellow in the heat.



The vines show the first signs of stress as they start to wilt in the heat

Working on the long accepted rule of 100 days after flowering, the harvest would not normally have been anticipated much before the end of September, but the extreme heat of the summer months had served to accelerate the maturity of the fruit by as much as two weeks. Therefore, by early September Angela was already out in the vineyards gathering her grape samples in anticipation of the picking.

Analysis of the samples proved exactly what we had suspected: correct sugar levels, and acidity already starting to fall quite quickly. Armed with

this new information we quite naturally decided to bring forward our plans...

Looking for a period of settled weather in which to start the harvest was never going to be an issue in 2010. The summer had given us such a sustained period of warm, dry weather that there was unlikely to be any risk when selecting a suitable start date. We finally decided upon Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September to collect the first fruit from the most southerly of our grape suppliers. (We have so many different microclimates within our denomination that even being located a few kilometres further south can make a marked difference in maturity).



The first tractor collects empty cases on a misty first morning

As we opened the shutters in Salnés on the first morning it was extremely misty, but within an hour or so the sun was already burning through. Shortly after lunch the first grapes arrived, and as we started to assess them, so it was confirmed that we had made the correct decision to start. For our bodega, and for our style of wine (which we believe to be a truly typical albariño), the balance between sugar and acidity was just about perfect.

The first day started at a very brisk pace, which we were to discover later, would set a benchmark for the duration of the harvest. A continuous stream of fruit passing through our presses, expertly handled by our well drilled bodega team. At the end of the first day we also witnessed the first of two new records that were created during the 2010 campaign. Our largest delivery ever on a single truck (around 6,000 kilos), the contents of which were swallowed up almost immediately by our two presses. The start of the harvest may have arrived a little earlier than anticipated, but it appeared that we were more than ready to deal with it.



The Galician version of tailgating, complete with table cloths

There is always a certain degree of excitement and anticipation as the first drops of juice spill from the presses, as obviously this is our first real chance to assess the potential of the vintage. Admittedly it is only grape juice at this stage, but with many years experience of making albariño, Angela can usually make a fairly accurate prediction of the quality to come.

We were not to be disappointed – 2010 has produced a light, fragrant must, with slightly lower acidity than last year (probably a better overall balance). In the mouth there are floral overtones with hints of lime blossom, fresh apple, stone pears and as always, a very piercing fruit - very typical of the Albariño grape variety.

One of the more notable improvements that we made to our grape handling in 2010 was the extra effort that we put into retrieving fruit from the vineyards as early and as quickly as possible. As a result, the first presses were loaded by mid-morning as our vehicles rushed to gather the fruit in. Logistically this creates a difference that benefits the rest of our working day – grapes flow much more smoothly through the cellar, without delay, helping to maintain a steady stream and thereby reducing the risk of backlogs.

By Saturday, our third working day, the flood of grapes had almost reached its peak. Many of our growers have full-time jobs from Monday to Friday and so, quite naturally, opt to take full advantage of their weekend to pick grapes with friends and family. The following morning we were to discover that the previous day had been our busiest day for grape collection since the huge harvest of 2006. Little did we know that merely a day or two later even this number

would be surpassed, and yet another new in-house record created.....

It subsequently transpired that Wednesday was to be our busiest day of the last decade, if not in the history of the bodega. This fact was made even more astonishing when we realised that, apart from feeling just a little bit jaded, it did not really seem like it had been an exceptional day (probably all thanks to our super efficient team).



With a big thank you to the super heroes of the 'BCM crew'

And so, after 7½ days of toiling in the fields, our 2010 harvest finally came to a close. With excellent quality, and very good quantity, it was almost the perfect end to a dream summer. Of course it is the finished wine itself that will determine the true success of our campaign.

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 2010 (all measurements at harvest):**

Total kilos harvested: 212.538 kg  
 Potential alcohol: 12,4°  
 Total acidity: 7,8 gm/litre (tartaric)  
 pH: 3.22

Footnote: It goes without saying that owing to the excellent natural balance between fruit and acidity in this year's fruit there will be no requirement for malolactic fermentation.

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