

LA GAFFELIERE

1st Great Classified Growth

2003 Vintage

History :

Count Malet Roquefort, the owner of Château La Gaffelière, which is located at the entrance to Saint Emilion, was born of a very ancient family, who had settled in Saint Emilion in the 17th century. The vines are grown on one of the most ancient parts of our jurisdiction dating back to the Gallo-Roman era.

The vineyard covers an area of 22 hectares (54.34 acres). The vines have an average age of 35 years and are planted on clay-limestone soil ; half of them stretch over slopes and the other half over the plain. The grape varieties are 80% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. The yield is no more than 40 hectolitres per hectare.

Vineyard management :

The vineyard is maintained traditionally, combining ploughing the soil in some places and natural grass-growing between the rows in others, according to the plots and exposure. The vines are pruned with the Double Guyot technique to give better exposure to sunshine and ventilation for the bunches. In July, in order to maximise the quality of the crop, the bunches are thinned out.

Weather conditions and harvesting :

The growing season was supervised by our technical consultant, Philippe Gard. The 2003 was, in terms of weather conditions, an exceptional year, with drought and record temperatures. These extreme conditions are quite rare for the Bordeaux area. However, our vines managed to withstand these extremes thanks to the quality of our soils. These conditions brought about a reduction in vigour in the vine plants, which in spite of a more modest crop size, produced grapes of extraordinary quality when they were picked at the end of September. The harvest therefore took place in very good conditions from the 17th to the 27th September 2003.

Vinification and ageing :

The vinification took place under the supervision of our consultant oenologist, Pierrick Lavau. It was carried out in stainless steel vats. The method remains traditional, but the pre-fermentation cold maceration was technically less easy to carry out because of the high temperatures during September. The exceptional concentration in the grapes allowed us to macerate longer than usual, but by the same token, it meant that the alcoholic fermentation lasted longer. The malolactic fermentation was carried out in new barrels and in vats. The wine is being aged in new barrels for 14 to 16 months.

The proportion of second wine, Le Clos de La Gaffelière, will be around 10%.

Tasting comments :

This vintage is already showing outstanding qualities. The Cabernet Franc and the Merlot are superb. On tasting, the wine displays a very attractive dark colour, but what stands out even more is the nose, which has great aromatic complexity –strawberry, cherry, blackcurrant, spices, violets and mocha. On the palate, the wine has a good, fresh attack, good structure with fine tannins coming through. The length is astonishing and promises a great future.