

Interview Elin McCoy - SEPT 2020

Answers by Miguel Torres Maczassek – 5th generation and General Manager Familia Torres

1. Have you started picking yet? if so, when, and if not, when do you expect to begin (and with what grapes)? And I know Torres has vineyards in so many places, it would be great to have info on all of them.
 - We started harvest on August 19th with the first Chardonnays in the warmer areas of the Penedès, a week earlier than last year due to the high summer temperatures and the advance of the bud break. Also in the Priorat we started a week earlier than last year, this year on the 1st of September with a small parcel of Garnacha en El Lloar. The same applies for our vineyards in Conca de Barberá where we started on the 25th of August. In the southern part of Costers del Segre we started on the 3rd of September and in the Northern part (in our high altitude vineyards in the Pre-Pyrenees) on the 31st of August.
 - In Rueda we just started on the 3rd of September and the forecast for Rioja is to start around 15th of September and in Ribera del Duero around the 19th of September. Also, in all these regions we are around 1 week earlier with our actual (or planned) harvest in comparison with last year. The reason for this is also the already mentioned high summer temperatures and the advance of the bud break in March.

2. What has the season been like in terms of heat, precipitation, weather events -- and how is that affecting the quality and character of the wines?
 - Despite having been a climatic complicated year, we are optimistic and expect a good harvest, thanks to the excellent work done by our viticulture team, which has managed to minimize the impact on our organic vineyards of mildew and powdery mildew, whose incidence has been significant. In areas like the Penedès for example we had large amount of rains during spring, but this water reservoir was well used by the vines during the very warm and dry months of June, July and August. But in general, yields have decreased, and some plots have uneven maturation, which means that we will have to do more selection in some vineyards. For your information, in our vineyards outside of Catalonia, we also had relatively more rainfall during spring, but there we had less problems of mildew and powdery mildew.

3. How early is the season in your region, two weeks ahead? 10 days ahead? compared with last year. Plus, especially for Torres, how do you see the 2020 harvest times and conditions in light of climate change?
 - In basically all our vineyards the season is about 1 week earlier in comparison with last year. It is always difficult to link a specific vintage to climate change, but over the years we have of course seen changes, for example in the average temperatures: at Torres for example we have seen an increase of 1,3 C in the average temperature in our region over the past 40 years and now the beginning of our harvest is as an average 10 days earlier than 20 years ago.
 - Unfortunately, climate change is a fact and if not immediate measures are taken, the world in general but especially viticulture will be heading for big problems and changes. Of course, every company should have a decarbonization program in place (we for example have our Torres & Earth program), but I think the key for the future is working together. Therefore, at

the beginning of last year Jackson Family Wines and Familia Torres started a new initiative called 'International Wineries for Climate Action' (www.iwcawine.org) to make the collaboration between wineries regarding climate change easier. The idea is that IWCA will be a trigger for other wineries to join and accelerate or to start the implementation of carbon-emissions-reduction-programs. We are now 18 months later, and it is great to see that we are already 8 important wineries (from Chile, New Zealand, Portugal, USA (3x) and Spain (2x)) who are either full member or an IWCA applicant. As an international working group, each member of the IWCA will target an overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) of 50% by 2030, aiming to become Climate Positive by 2050.

4. There's been so much talk of a grape glut, and people in Champagne cutting output, as well as Hugel in Alsace doing green harvesting, and wineries sending off excess wine to be turned into industrial alcohol. What is happening in your region, to you?
 - Initially – at the beginning of June – we were afraid that we would have an over-yield, but then the high temperatures and almost no rain during June, July and August balanced it out. Although I have to say that in some plots it went the other way, meaning we may have some lower yields there.
 - But you might be interested to know that the Spanish administration in coordination with most of the DO's and the support of the European Union will put into action different options to help vine growers for this harvest. The point is that because of Covid many wineries have a large stock of wine that they haven't been able to sell, meaning that they will not buy the same amount of grapes as usual. Some of these lines of help are for example the 'green harvest' where the vine grower will be paid up to 60% of the usual price of his grapes by the government. There will also be a program for distillation, to take wine out from the market. And some denominations are also imposing lower yields per hectare. All these points are aimed to reduce the offer of grapes in the market, help the vine growers and regulate the transition to a normal year. I believe France and Italy are taking similar measures too.
5. How are you managing with coronavirus restrictions -- is there a shortage of vineyard workers and pickers and cellar workers?
 - Not really: we normally already have all the extra people we need under contract in July. Like the other team members, everyone has to work under very strict security and protection measures which we already implemented during the lock-down period to minimize the risks. Extra security measure also include that all extra seasonal workers are tested on Covid-19 by us.
6. Last, but not least, what's your opinion of wine quality for 2020?
 - As mentioned in the beginning, despite having had a climatic-wise complicated year, I am optimistic and expect a good harvest. Actually, you can see the real difference in quality between one bodega or the other, when you have a complicated harvest. Wineries with good teams in the vineyards and good winemakers have the ability to make a better selection of the grapes, and this will lead to good quality wines at the end of the day.