

# Seasons in the Cellar

## Spring (October - December)

This period is almost like a second harvest due to the sparkling wine activity. The blends are made up after strenuous tasting sessions. They are stabilized and prepared for bottling. Yeast cultures are started for inoculating base wine cuvees. The cuvees are then bottled and taken to cold rooms for a controlled second fermentation in the bottle. By November barrel activity reaches a peak. The previous vintage reds are removed and replaced by the new vintage coupled with a 25% replacement of barrels. The reds are then bottled after a possible polishing fining. This job has to be completed by the new vintage because tank space is vital and there is no time for bottling during harvest. This period is also cluttered with wine events, auctions, shows, competitions and promotional tastings. Labelling also continues to run at full capacity, as does the disgorging of sparkling wine - it is the season of bubbly.

## Summer Harvest (January - April)

This is a frenetic time in the cellar. All the equipment lying dormant for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the year springs into action to handle the incoming harvest. The daily intake of healthy, ripe grapes varies between 40 tons and 100 tons with the majority arriving in the morning when it is cooler. Red, white and sparkling wine grapes are all handled differently. Sparkling base wines have to be very delicate while white wines have to be aromatic but elegant. Red wines must have intense colour and layers of flavour. The nerve center of the cellar during harvest is the cooling plant because of the critical role that cooling plays in quality wine production. The grape reception area and the pressing area are also hives of activity. Ultimately it is the pungent smell of the fermentation permeating through the cellar that stimulates the excitement about the birth of the new wines. It is a time of experimentation and creation, and the adrenalin keeps the staff going even if the hours are long.

## Autumn (April - June)

The harvest comes to an end and the machines grind to a halt. Tired bodies don't have time for a rest but they slow down for a week or two to marvel at what has just occurred. Then the serious tasting and quality evaluation begins. Blends are made up, white wines are stabilized, clarified and generally prepared for bottling.

## Winter (July - Sept)

During Winter the bottling and labelling lines start up in earnest. The white wines are bottled at this time and export orders reach a peak, which means the regular loading of containers. Packaging availability has to be carefully planned to ensure timeous execution of all orders. The riddling and disgorging of Cap Classique sparkling wines becomes more important and is performed almost daily. Filtration and cold stabilization continue and barrel work on red wine remains a priority. It is also a time when the winemaker can go out and do some marketing. September is also the time of the annual migration to Domaine Grier in France for the French 'vendage' (harvest).