



LOUIS BERNARD

HARVEST 2018

A classic winemaker's vintage



SYLVAIN JEAN
OUR WINEMAKER

*Sylvain Jean, the head winemaker, is the guarantor of the « Louis Bernard » style, which is very much focused on Grenache, the king of grapes in the southern Rhône Valley. He explains the main characteristics of the 2018 vintage : “It’s a vintage of extremes with abundant rain in the Spring and a heat wave in the Summer. Yet **harvest conditions** were close to **perfect** in September and October with warm days, cool nights and a little Mistral wind to dry off the morning dew. The grapes were in very good condition allowing for long macerations of up to one month for the red wines. The acidity levels were also very good, providing crisp yet lush profiles on the rosés and bright, stone fruit notes on the white wines.”*

Right after the budding process, regular episodes of rain set in right up until harvest time. This made it particularly difficult to enter the vineyards due to very wet and muddy conditions. At the slightest sunny spell, the vineyards were treated against all forms of vineyard blights brought on by the humid conditions. Winegrowers needed to be ready at all times to take advantage of any break in the weather to check the vineyards and verify the sanitary conditions. This is what is referred to as a “winemakers’ vintage”.

2018 showed promise on the volume front, contrary to the two previous vintages, with a healthy fruit set on all varieties and no “coulure” (shatter) problem on the Grenache. In addition, after two quite precocious vintages, 2018 was back to a **more normal ripening cycle**.

An additional challenge was the warm temperatures which, along with the water-logged soil, favored vigorous vegetative growth, including grass between the vines. There was intense vineyard work, including cane-lifting, debudding and top-pruning...

With the arrival of Summer and its drier, warmer conditions the first half of July, “veraison” (the period of colour change) began around the 18th, 10 days later than 2017. The best period of warm weather was first half of August, with 15 consecutive days of heat wave conditions. Thankfully, the plentiful water reserves in the soil kept the vines from shutting down the maturation process.

An intense rainy episode around the second half of August allowed the grapes to swell and counter any effects caused by the excessive heat. The end of August/beginning of September saw splendid conditions for ripening, with warm days (but not excessive), gentle nights and little **Mistral** wind, allowing the grapes to achieve a very balance maturity.

It’s important to point out that although 2018 is a vintage of extremes (abundant rain and heat wave), **harvest conditions** were close to perfect in September and October : warm days, cool nights and a little Mistral wind to dry off the morning dew! This allowed us to bring in grapes in very good condition.

The wines are already showing a **lovely balance with plenty of finesse and a generous aromatic profile**, indicative of a great vintage.