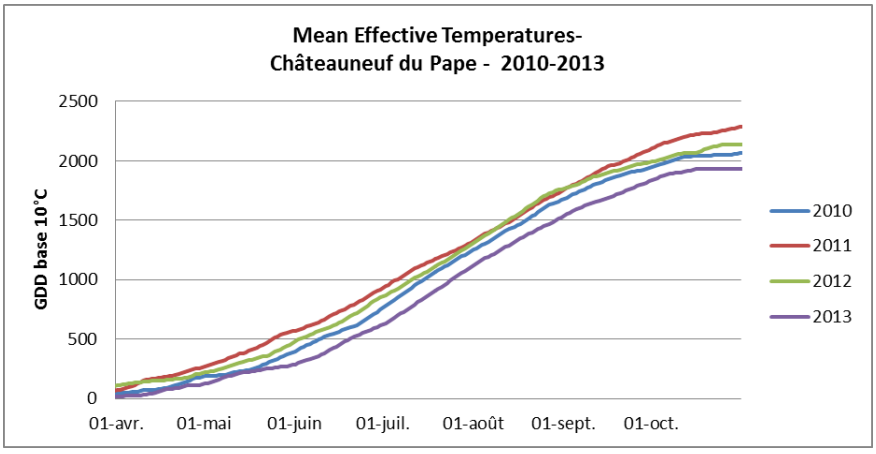
VINTAGE 2013 - Southern Rhone

The consequences of the late harvest which characterizes 2013, were felt outside the Northern Rhône Valley. This peculiarity hit all European vineyards, from Alsace to Portugal, with varying effects, but notably resulting in an austere and northern character, providing a now rare but accurate reading of these different *terroirs*.

Châteauneuf-du-Pape – Domaine La Bernardine

The Châteauneuf vineyards suffered a wet winter (>400mm from November to March) and a late spring where warm temperatures struggled to make an appearance, resulting in a delayed bud burst, three weeks later than in 2012.

Even more than in the North, the first stages of growth of the vine were affected by the spring temperatures warming up slowly 'in steps'. The last ten days of April (barely reaching an average temperature of 12°C) had the combined effect of complicating the early stages of ovule differentiation in the flower buds and of significantly slowing down the growth rate. This meant that during the flowering period reserves were drawn to the foliage at a time when the flowering usually requires all the energy generated by photosynthesis. Flowering itself took place in unusually cool daily minimal temperatures (averaging <8°C in the last ten days of May). The Grenache was heavily affected by fruit set failure (*coulure*). This grape variety is particularly sensitive to this phenomenon, even in less difficult climatic conditions. *Coulure* was particularly noticeable on the old vines, which had already been hit harder than the young vines by the heavy frosts in February 2012.



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Fortunately, in one way, the spring hydrological regime, which had certainly not been depleted, (243mm of rainfall over April and May) encouraged the early formation of secondary shoots. The improved weather conditions in June (which continued all through the summer, reverting to normal local weather patterns) promoted, on these secondary shoots, an abundant and homogenous flowering, benefitting fully from the photosynthesis of the primary shoots now almost relieved of their own growth. At this stage, the skill and experience of the wine grower were crucial. The wine grower had to retain only those second generation grape clusters at an advanced stage of development, because the lateness of the vintage and the threat of violent September thunder storms had dashed any hopes of heterogeneous grape clusters reaching full maturity.

After thundery weather throughout France in July, August stayed fairly dry (15mm) which caused a moderate deficit in water levels, benefitting a slower rate of growth and ripeness.

The grape harvest got underway on 23rd September, the Syrah was picked first, but the Grenache needed 15 days longer to reach anticipated physiological ripeness. As the post-fermentation macerations draw to an end, the wine shows generous fruitiness with some vigour, certainly very different from the classic generous Châteauneuf style but with an uncomplicated expression and a fruity Pinot-type character, typical of the Grenache in a late vintage.