



## ***Does nature know best ? Consider Daumas Gassac's 2007 vintage !***

Until recently, fixing the date to start grape picking in the Languedoc midi has never been a problem. Grapes ripened, ready for harvesting, at more or less the same time in all the vineyards. Obviously, producers of the best regarded wines picked last.

But over the last five years climate change has had a huge effect, not only in the Languedoc but in all the great French wine producing areas. Each producer now has to ask :

**"should I pick on the traditional, classic dates, that is 110/115 days after flowering, or at the end of the vegetative cycle, precisely when the stalks attaching the bunches to the vine stems become hard and dry; in 2007 this was on average 100 days after flowering."**

The moment when the stem becomes dark and woody marks the exact moment when the aromas and rare, subtle qualities are at their peak. From then on, each day adds to the sugar content and thus the alcohol level but, simultaneously, burns up the quintessential components that are at the root of a great wine and its character.

It follows that vineyards such as Daumas Gassac, which give birth to outstanding vintages, have no option but to start picking at the end of the vegetative cycle when the stalks become dark and woody, the grapes have ceased getting nourishment from the vine and delay would simply mean a more concentrated fruit and raised alcohol levels.

For Daumas Gassac, the year 2007 meant starting to pick a hundred days after flowering rather than await the traditional 112 which used, indeed, to be when grapes became fully mature. It's an astonishing revolution even to those outside the world of agriculture.

The 2007 red and white Daumas Gassac give every indication of being superb. Why ? Because we accepted that nature knows best ! Agreed, they'll be a touch less alcoholic than some years, but they're already showing every sign of utterly fabulous aromas and savours. It's proof that wine makers need to develop the modesty of listening to nature and taking heed of the message !

Obviously, this willingness to bend with climate change is vital to the producer of an outstanding vintage, but may not apply to other producers : it may well come as a surprise to anyone who is inclined to forget that superlative wines can only emerge from great land managed by a vigneron who is sufficiently aware to listen to, understand and obey the laws of nature, even when these impose surprising breaks with the past.