

VINTAGE REPORT



— DOMAINES —
PAUL MAS

LE LUXE RURAL DEPUIS 1892

2024 VINTAGE

A YEAR ON THE EDGE

The 2024 vintage was marked by **various weather challenges**, including hailstorms, late frosts, and an unusually rainy spring. As a result, the diverse terroirs of Domaines Paul Mas have shown **particularly stark yield differences this year**. Yields fell short on two-thirds of the vineyard, varying greatly by region and grape variety. For several appellations, harvest volumes are already expected to fall short of demand. However, some terroirs once again proved their exceptional nature, and the traditional grape varieties of Languedoc also demonstrated excellent adaptability in their native soil.

These climatic challenges required **constant viticultural expertise** to mitigate their effects. In the vineyard, the teams dedicated time, skill, and experience to determine harvest dates that would yield optimally ripe grapes and meet the high-quality standards of Domaines Paul Mas. In the cellar, ongoing vinification processes show that extra care will be needed to maintain the Jean-Claude Mas' style. One thing is certain: there will be no compromises on wine quality.

“Years like this test our resilience. It’s in these hard times that we demonstrate our commitment to excellence. With precise vineyard management and meticulous winemaking, we are confident that we will again deliver the consistency and quality that our clients expect from Domaines Paul Mas.”

Jean-Claude Mas



CHALLENGING WEATHER CONDITIONS LEAD TO VARYING YIELDS

From Gard to Pyrénées-Orientales, passing through the Hérault and Aude valleys, Domaines Paul Mas's estates have all faced contrasting climatic impacts.

At **Château Oustau Saint-André**, at the easternmost end of Languedoc vineyards in the Costières de Nîmes appellation, 50 hectares (ha) of organically farmed vines are cultivated, of which $\frac{4}{5}$ are white grapes. Over 600 millimeters (mm) of rain fell in spring, and cold temperatures during the critical flowering stage compounded the issue. These conditions were conducive to downy mildew, which appeared earlier than last year, leading to an average yield reduction of 30%, affecting all grape varieties.

Due to the lingering spring humidity extending into the summer, the vines avoided water stress, and harvest began 18 days later than in 2023.

The vineyards located in the Hérault valley, near Montagnac, were also generously watered starting in May after a very dry winter. Springs even bubbled up from the ground in certain places. *“Le Mas des Tannes, with more than 50 hectares of organically certified vines, gets its name from one of these springs”*, notes the vineyard chief, Nouredine Chihib.

Similar yields to last year's mask highly variable results across varieties and terroirs. Numerous efforts, including treatments with tracked all-terrain vehicles to access even the waterlogged parcels in spring, helped prevent downy mildew. However, poor weather during flowering had a notable impact on some varieties, particularly Grenache, affected by coulure, and Merlot, which experienced millerandage. In contrast, Cabernet Sauvignon, which flowers later, has very good volumes, as do Cinsault, Caladoc, and Chardonnay. Viognier suffered from early April cold snaps and dreary June weather.



The villains of the vintage

Coulure refers to the accidental and unusually significant shedding of fertilized ovaries or young berries. Cool, wet conditions during and after flowering are the main causes of this phenomenon.

Millerandage is an incomplete pollination of the flower, leading to grape clusters with berries of varying sizes and maturities.

The rocky soils of the plateau where **Domaine Silène des Peyrals**, sits, part of the young Grés de Montpellier appellation, once again proved their value. These highly draining soils resist both rain and drought. However, in this area of Hérault, the hot August led to another issue: slow ripening for heavily-laden Cabernet Sauvignon and some Chardonnay clusters. Consequently, harvest started later than usual, on August 25, with teams working non-stop as all grapes ripened simultaneously.

Similarly, at **Château des Crès Ricards** in the Terrasses du Larzac appellation, an arid winter and warm temperatures were followed by spring rains necessitating treatments every ten days. The same weather impacts resulted in coulure for Merlot and Grenache clusters. *“The vines, tired from the past two dry vintages, probably needed a rest”* suggests the cellar master Guillaume Bonnet.

Moving east to Aude Valley, challenges persisted. At **Château Jérémie**, in the charming village of Fabrezan within the Corbières massif, an August hailstorm devastated around 90% of the 70 ha of vines. Here too, cold weather during flowering caused coulure, especially for Merlot and Grenache.

Between Corbières and Minervois, a lack of water, rather than excess, stressed the vines, leading to slow ripening in some varieties. For instance, Chardonnay was harvested last, though it is usually one of the first. Thanks to an advanced irrigation and gravity-fed drainage system, the 154 hectares of vines at Domaine Ferrandière lagoon fared better than parcels outside the lagoon or the vineyards at Château Capendu and Château Villegly near Carcassonne. Nonetheless, with less than 7 tons/ha, the Ferrandière yield is the lowest ever on these quality soils.

Just 15 km south of the medieval city of Carcassonne, at **Château Martinolles**, which produces Blanquette, Crémant, and still wines in AOP Limoux, the same combination of rain and cold during flowering led to significant coulure for Merlot and millerandage across all varieties. This rainfall, although below normal at 130 mm from March 21st to May 21st, had severe effects during critical periods, reducing yields per hectare by 35%.

At **Château Lauriga** in Pyrénées-Orientales, *“the leanest vintage in 20 years has just ended, with volumes down by 70%”*, laments Jules Trabis, the cellar master. The cause? Severe drought that has affected the entire region for the past two years. The average yield of 2.2 T/ha also conceals significant variations between grape varieties and between irrigated and non-irrigated plots. For instance, Syrah, Macabeo, Muscat, as well as white and grey Grenache, produced low yields, while Viognier, and especially Cabernet Sauvignon, were more generous. Half of the estate is now irrigated, and an irrigation project is underway to support the vines on this arid land, offering a more hopeful outlook for the future of this property, where viticulture has deep roots.



A VINTAGE DEMANDING VIGILANCE AND VITICULTURAL EXPERTISE FOR UNDENIABLE QUALITY

Domaines Paul Mas team responded to this capricious vintage with determination and resilience, which paid off, as grapes now in the cellar already promise well-balanced wines.

In the vineyard, beyond the numerous treatments to protect the plants from fungal diseases—especially in organic vineyards where only contact products are allowed—it was necessary to work the soil to help the vines root deeply, allowing them to access water and mineral salts. At **Château Jérémie**, where the vines were plowed six times (not including the use of inter-vine tools), “the vegetation is still in good condition despite the drought, which is crucial for the plant's reserves for next year,” said the estate manager José Ramos Dos Santos in early October.

It also required patience to harvest at optimal ripeness. At **Château des Crès Ricards**, the 40-hectare harvest began on August 30 and was significantly extended. For example, the Syrahs planted on the poor soils of the plateau were picked on September 4, while those from the Cambous plot, nestled between the Hérault River and the Lergue River, where the old vines benefit from deeper, stonier soils, were harvested on September 20. Likewise, the Merlot and Grenache grapes are looking beautiful. Picked at 14.5% potential alcohol, they carry a rich strawberry aroma and show a fine balance. As for the sole white parcel, a hectare co-planted with Grenache Blanc, Viognier, Roussanne, and Vermentino, the resulting wine is fruity, with a fine balance of richness and freshness. The new AOP Languedoc cuvée was refined through plant-based fining and micro-oxygenation. Guillaume Bonnet sums it up: *“While one is not always sure of the effects of rain - concentration? Dilution? –are sometimes unclear, this vintage shows quality. Phenolic ripeness was reached for all grape varieties.”*



*“This is a
promising
vintage”*

In general, everyone speaks highly of a quality harvest and very promising juice in the cellar. With his global vision, Bastien Lalauze, head of development and improvement across the Domaines Paul Mas vineyards, remarks, *“This is a promising vintage in terms of aromas and acid balance, following several very hot years”*. Of what he’s tasted, he especially appreciated the roundness of the Viognier and Chardonnay from **Château Oustau Saint-André**. This year was their first in the estate’s new cellar, designed to receive all grapes, with concrete tanks for reds and stainless steel for whites. A 150-square-meter cellar equipped with tronconical wooden tanks for aging reds and vinifying certain whites will complete the setup.

At **Domaine de la Ferrandière**, José Ramos Dos Santos also promises *“a good vintage”*. The white grapes, which make up 62% of production, *“were all harvested at the desired ripeness”*. Bastien Lalauze praises the Sauvignons planted in the Marseillette lagoon: *“They develop an explosive aromatic palette of citrus and tropical fruits without excessive exuberance”*. The reds, meanwhile, are concentrated, with vines benefiting fully from their terroir; the depression of the former lagoon allows for large temperature variations, both compared to hillside vineyards and between day and night.

Château Villegly also benefited from this temperature variation between warm days and cool nights, ideal for berry ripening. The Syrah, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes already show complexity, with ripe tannins and tension. *“These are wines to age and keep longer”*, predicts José Ramos Dos Santos.



At **Château Martinolles**, it was also necessary to wait for perfect ripeness. This goal was achieved on October 4, when the last parcel of Cabernet Sauvignon was harvested at around 14.5% potential alcohol. All attention is now focused in the cellar. The old Chardonnay vines, planted on highly draining clay-sand-limestone slopes and clay-limestone soils, are used for still wines. The practice of bâtonnage, stirring the fine lees settled at the bottom of barrels, will continue until Christmas. This technique protects the wines from both oxidation and reduction, preserving the purity of fruit and encouraging a color with greenish-yellow nuances. For Mauzac, the star of Blanquette (where it must make up at least 90% of the blend), careful selection of yeast and fermentation temperature further enhances its flavor profile.

Patricia Almeida Da Cruz, who became the estate's manager at the start of the year and did her first harvests here in 2018, shares a special fondness for Pinot Noir. This grape of Burgundian origin is used in the Brut and Brut Rosé Crémants. Treated like a white wine, it already shows a very aromatic profile and is smooth on the palate. *"At the end of the alcoholic fermentations, the wines are very balanced, smooth, and without bitterness"*, she says with satisfaction.

Finally, at **Château Lauriga**, phenolic ripeness also varied over time. Harvests, which began on August 18, concluded on September 23. Jules Trabis, like his colleagues, anticipates the best for the 2024 vintage: *"The harvested grapes were healthy and of high quality, with concentrated berries. Everything is looking good!"*