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Initial vinification trials with the Radoux « Upside-down » fermenter

During the last Vinitech Show, Tonnellerie Radoux presented its latest innovation : the « Upside-down » fermenter. The prototype was tested during the 2015 grape harvest in Saint Emilion, and the results will be revealed during the primeurs tasting between the 4th and 8th of April 2016 on the premises of Jean-Luc Thunevin in Saint Emilion.

The « **Upside-down** » fermenter was created by cask maker Radoux and is an innovative process combining the advantages of the cone shaped cask with those of the inverted cone shaped cask. It works on the principle of gravity and was designed to obtain a full and gentle extraction of color and tannins.

Test in real life situation

The first experiment with this new vinification tool was carried out during the 2015 grape harvest. A cabernet franc from a 25-year-old vineyard with chalky soil was chosen for this test. The best bunches on the vine were handpicked and sorted.

Two batches, harvested the same day and on the same section of the vineyard were isolated and fermented using whole grapes, one in the « Upside-down » fermenter, the other in a 400 liter barrel with an open head.

Vinification protocol

The vinification protocol was identical for both batches: cold pre-fermentation maceration over 8 days with 2 turns of the « Upside-down » fermenter and 2 daily punch-down operations for the barrel. Then, after the beginning of fermentation, 5 half turns a day over 5 days for the « upside-down » fermenter and 6 punch-down operations for the barrel. Finally, during extended maceration (between 2 weeks for the barrel and 3 weeks for the « Upside-down » fermenter) 4 and a half turns and 2 and a half turns were made every day with equivalent stirring for the barrel. After the drawing off and gentle pressing, the two batches were transferred, along with the juice solids, into new barrels.



*Prototype of « Upside-down »
fermenter*

Differences perceived during tasting

During tasting, the two batches of wine present a fine, intense, deep color, with, as far as the batch coming from the « Upside-down » fermenter is concerned, a more sustained color intensity.

- The wine prepared in the « Upside-down » fermenter presents a palette of complex aromas of dark fruit (morello cherry, blackberry): with spicy, licorice and dark chocolate notes. It is strong and concentrated on the palate, with fullness and volume. The tannins are elegant, smooth, with a silky, fruity finish. The wine presents a perfect overall harmony: aromatic complexity, strength and fullness on the palate, with elegant and velvety tannins.
- The batch prepared in the 400 liter barrels releases aromas of dark fruit and spices but with less aromatic complexity. It has a good structure in the mouth, with strong tannins but less smooth than the wine from the « Upside-down » fermenter and with a slight astringency on the finish. The wine has beautiful strength, but with less aromatic complexity and more austere tannins on the palate.

A better average colorimetric index

The tasting results are confirmed by laboratory analyses, with evidence of a better average colorimetric index with the batch prepared in the « Upside-down » fermenter. The more intense color indicates that the extracted anthocyanins were better or more quickly stabilized by the system used with the « Upside-down » fermenter. In addition, the higher level of anthocyanins combined with the tannins reduces the sensation of astringency and renders the tannins more silky on the palate.

A successful trial for the « Upside-down » fermenter, which meets the objectives: obtain wines with more color and smoother tannins.

Several minor improvements are planned for the next trials, but the fermenter has already attracted a great deal of interest and pre-orders.

THESE TWO BATCHES OF WINE AND THE « UPSIDE-DOWN » FERMENTER WILL BE PRESENTED DURING THE TASTING OF PRIMEURS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE FROM 4TH TO 8TH APRIL 2016 ON THE PREMISES OF JEAN-LUC THUNEVIN, 7 RUE VERGNAUD IN SAINT-EMILION.

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