

CHATEAU BEYCHEVELLE 2006

Vintage dates: from the 20th of September to the 5th of October (15 days)

Composition of the final blend:

59% Cabernet Sauvignon
29% Merlot
7% Cabernet Franc
5% Petit Verdot

Area under vine: a total of 71.70 hectares in production in the Saint-Julien appellation in 2005

Production: a yield of 48 hectolitres/hectare in Saint-Julien, and 19,500 cases of Château Beychevelle.

TECHNICAL DATA:

The 2005-2006 growth cycle was marked by a return to precipitation levels more in keeping with the thirty year average. Temperatures were slightly lower than in 2005, but nevertheless high compared to the past three decades. May, June, July, and September were much warmer than usual.

Becoming widespread in the first week of April, bud burst was even and followed the normal pattern for the various grape varieties. Merlot started to flower about the 29th of May, and the other varieties followed shortly thereafter, virtually all at the same time. The weather was once again very good during flowering, which took place quickly (4-5 days) and with very little difference between grape varieties.

Peak *véraison* (colour change) occurred on about the 10th of August. This was very regular, and among the earliest in recent years.

Green harvesting in July and August was mainly limited to plots of young vines and vines with too many bunches. Leaf thinning also played an important role in keeping the fruit as healthy as possible.

Merlot grapes were picked from the 20th to the 24th of September, followed by Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot on the 25th and 26th, and Cabernet Sauvignon from the 27th of September to the 4th of October. Initial tastings when the wine was run off showed the wines to be very deeply coloured and fruity, equal or superior in quality to 2002 or 2004.

Once blended, the wine was put into French oak barrels in January and February 2007 with 53% new oak from the centre of France (Allier, Nièvre, and Cher) for the *grand vin*.

As in previous vintages, a third of wine (Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon) destined to be sold as Château Beychevelle underwent malo-lactic fermentation in new oak barrels.

2006 Beychevelle has a beautiful deep colour and expressive fruity aromas with overtones of wild berries and black cherries. The bouquet reflect good ripeness.

This fruitiness follows through on the palate, with understated toasty oak. There is plenty of tannin, but this is smooth and contributes to the wine's structure, without making it hard. While 2006 Beychevelle clearly has fine ageing potential, the softness of the tannin means this wine will undoubtedly be pleasant to drink in 5 years.

Good acidity adds a great deal of freshness and contributes to a delicious, long aftertaste.

This superb wine rounds out, in its own way, the beautiful series of vintages since 2000. Were one to rank these, 2006 is perhaps not quite a perfect as 2005, but outperforms 2004 in terms of richness and body. We thus feel it is very successful, and are certain that it will be a real treat in a few years.