



PHOTO: GAVIN QUINNEY

Bordeaux 2022 - the weather factor

With the world descending on the region to taste the latest vintage, here's how the weather shaped the style of the wines. **Gavin Quinney** delivers part one of his annual report

Bordeaux 2022 was a remarkable year. In short, it was both hot and dry during the growing season, with long periods of drought and protracted summer heatwaves. It really was a year of highs and lows – namely high temperatures and low rainfall. What was also remarkable was that the vines, not least in the better-placed vineyards, held up incredibly well.

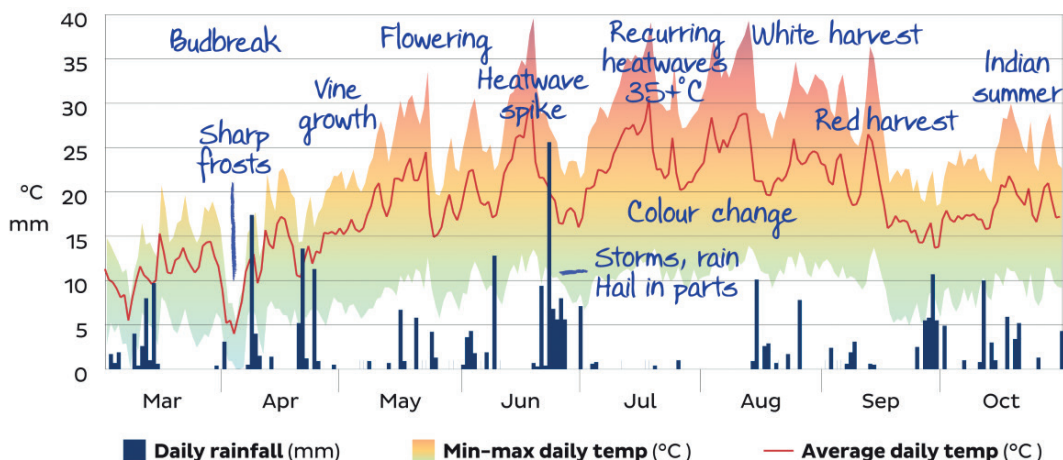
I've been putting together these reports for more than 20 years, having worked and lived through each vintage, and they serve as a backdrop as to why the wines taste the way they do – even at this early stage. They also help put 2022 into context with recent vintages: it was the hottest that I can recall, and that includes the steamy 2003.

The white harvest began early in mid-August and the vast majority of the red grapes for Bordeaux 2022 were harvested in September, much like in 2018 and 2020. (In many other great years, such as in 2010, 2016 and 2019, the red harvest stretches well into October.)

The first chart shows broadly what happened in the vines at each stage. In the 20 weeks from 7 May to 23 September, 117/140 days saw daytime temperatures reach 24°C or more, 72 registered 28°C

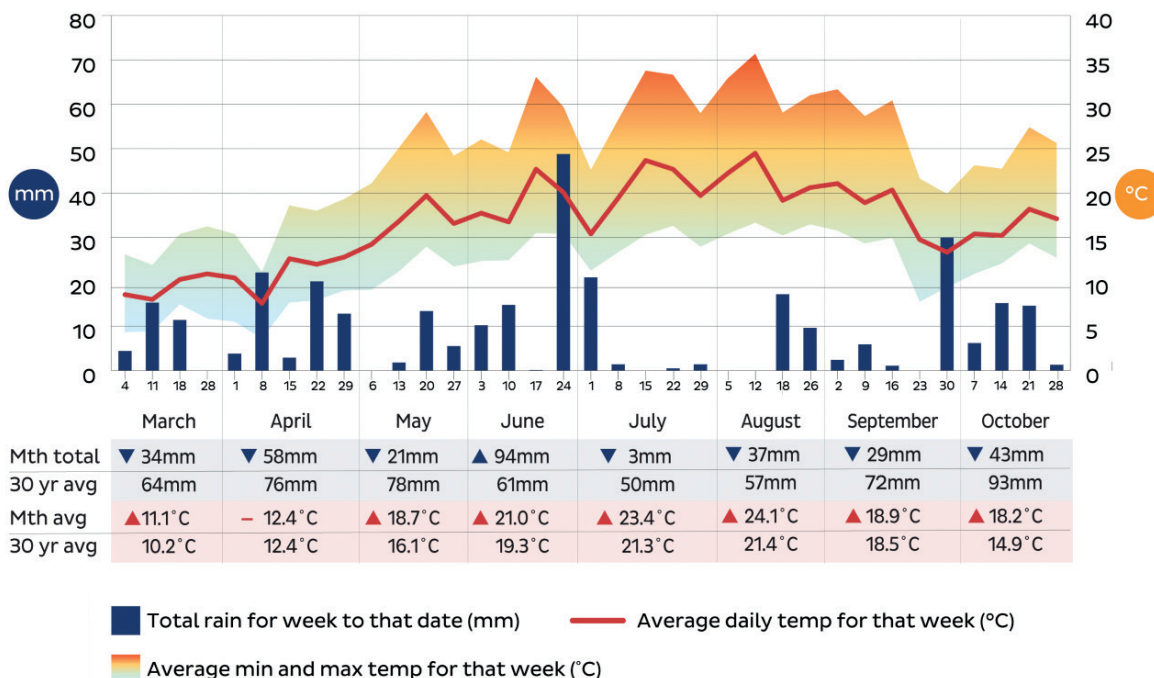
GROWING SEASON

► BORDEAUX DAILY RAINFALL & TEMPERATURE – GROWING SEASON 2022



Average from six regions: Graves, St-Émilion, Haut-Médoc (centre/Margaux), Northern Médoc, Entre-Deux-Mers and Blaye/Bourg.

► BORDEAUX WEEKLY RAIN AND TEMPERATURE, MARCH-OCT 2022



2022 figures are averages from six weather stations; Graves, St-Émilion, Haut-Médoc (centre/Margaux), Northern Médoc, Entre-Deux-Mers and Blaye/Bourg. 30-year average figures from Bordeaux Merignac

SOURCE: @GAVINQUINNEY/GAVINQUINNEY.COM

"2022 was the hottest and driest growing season I can recall of any vintage this century"

or more and 38 days clocked 32°C plus. Those were very warm days. Thankfully for the vines, the nights remained relatively fresh. The amount of rainfall in June varied across the region (eg, Saint-Émilion had 69mm in June vs Pauillac's 134mm) but provided a crucial break in the drought.

The chart beneath shows the average weekly temperatures and the total rain each week during

the season – but also how the 2022 season compared to the 30-year average. We had less rain each and every month, except in June when storms followed the 40°C heatwave on the 18th.

Likewise, in all eight months shown we saw higher temperatures than the average – often excessively so – with the exception of April, which was in line with



COMPARING 2022 WITH RECENT VINTAGES

► BORDEAUX TEMPERATURES, GROWING SEASONS 2009-2022

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	10y avg	30y avg
Mar	-	9.1	11	10.5	9	10	9.5	8.9	11.4	9	10.9	10.2	10.1	11.1	10.0	10.2
Apr	11.6	13.3	15.5	9.9	12	13.8	13.6	11.3	12.6	13.8	12.1	14.9	12.4	12.4	13.0	12.4
May	16.4	14.2	17.8	16.5	12.5	14.7	15.8	15.7	17.5	16.1	14.5	18.1	14.4	18.7	15.9	16.1
Jun	19.7	18.6	18.2	19	16.6	20.1	20.4	18.5	21	20.3	19.2	18	20.1	21.0	19.1	19.3
Jul	20.7	21.7	18.8	19.4	23.4	20.2	22.1	20.8	21	22.5	23	21.6	20.2	23.4	21.3	21.3
Aug	21.4	20	20.8	21.8	20.3	18.5	21	21.7	20.8	22.1	21.2	21.8	19.8	24.1	21.0	21.4
Sep	18.2	17.8	19.3	18.5	18	19.5	16.5	19.5	16.3	19.2	18.9	19	19.3	18.9	18.5	18.5
Apr-Sep avg.	18.0	17.6	18.4	17.5	17.2	17.8	18.2	17.9	18.2	19.0	18.2	18.9	17.7	19.8	18.1	18.2

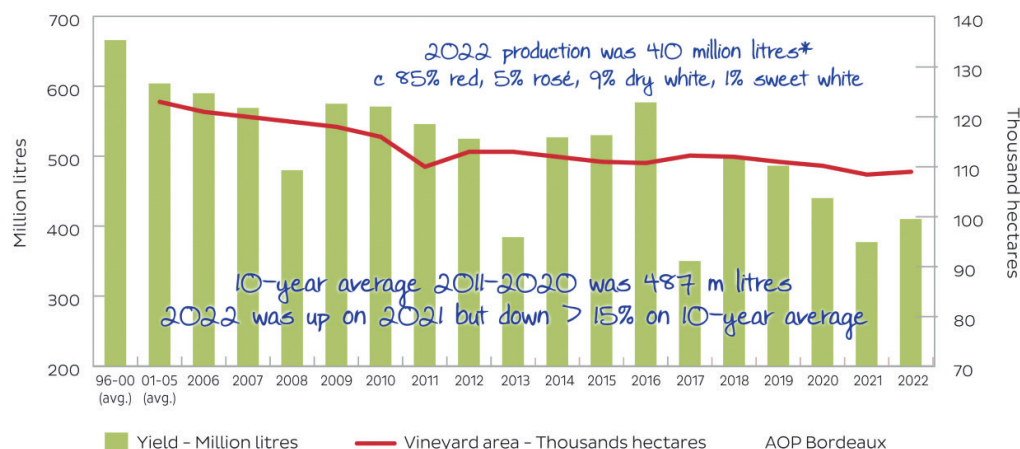
Each month's figure, and the 10-year average 2011-2020, is the average in °C of six regions: Graves, St-Émilion, Haut-Médoc (centre/Margaux), Northern Médoc, Entre-Deux-Mers and Blaye/Bourg. 30-year averages are widely quoted figures from Bordeaux Mérognac 1981-2010.

► BORDEAUX RAINFALL, GROWING SEASONS 2009-2022

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	10y avg	30y avg
Mar	36	62	33	22	63	76	38	99	80	126	43	99	17	34	68	64
Apr	109	24	10	179	55	67	51	66	21	87	104	111	21	58	75	76
May	80	45	17	44	110	70	38	90	82	71	45	126	111	21	69	78
Jun	55	76	38	86	133	83	52	82	136	77	83	87	184	94	86	61
Jul	55	20	60	32	51	83	22	5	28	35	44	5	53	3	37	50
Aug	37	17	76	14	44	62	103	14	30	23	29	59	24	27	45	57
Sep	48	34	36	63	70	32	49	62	93	24	51	72	60	39	55	83
Mar-Sep total	420	278	269	440	526	473	353	418	470	443	399	560	469	278	435	469

Each month's figure, and the 10-year average 2011-2020, is the average in mm of six regions: Graves, St-Émilion, Haut-Médoc (centre/Margaux), Northern Médoc, Entre-Deux-Mers and Blaye/Bourg. 30-year averages are widely quoted figures from Bordeaux Mérognac 1981-2010.

► BORDEAUX WINE PRODUCTION 2006-2022



*Estimates from CIVB, March 2023. Equivalent to c550 million bottles. AOP Bordeaux appellations only

SOURCE: @GAVINQUINNEY/GAVINQUINNEY.COM

FEATURE Bordeaux report



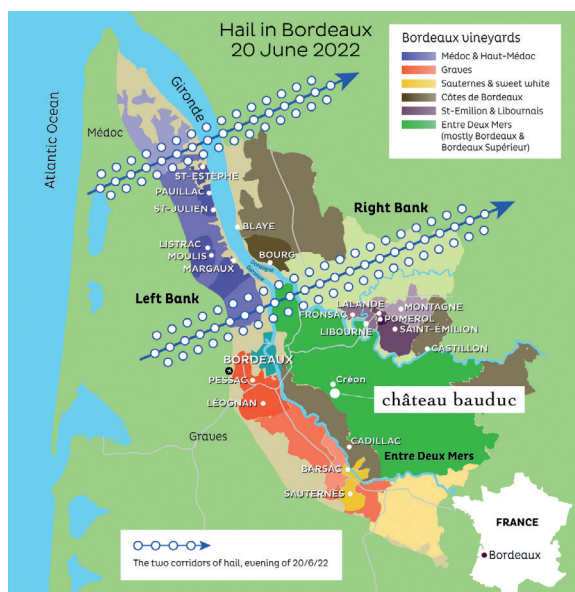
◀ THE MERLOT
HARVEST IN
SAINT-ÉMILION,
21 SEPTEMBER
2022, CHÂTEAU LE
PRIEURÉ

“There’ll be plenty of rich, exuberant and exciting wines, so it could come down to a question of balance. And money”

"The official week for Bordeaux 2022 en primeur tastings is the last week of April 2023, with many trade specialists and critics arriving before that"



PHOTO: GAVIN QUINNEY



the norm. In Bordeaux, we're not allowed to irrigate the vines.

In the tables to the left there's a deep dive into just how warm it was in 2022, and how the low amount of rain compares with previous years.

Highlighted in yellow are the 'highest' average temperatures for the main months of the growing season in 2022 – they are considerably warmer than the 10-year and 30-year averages and, say, a year such as 2021.

I've stretched the table to as far back as 2009 and 2010 because those were both excellent, modern vintages for Bordeaux, and many of the great reds from those years are, arguably, just entering their window of drinkability. Many wines from 2022 could similarly be built for the long haul.

2022 was undoubtedly one of the hotter and drier years and, using my data from six weather stations (other similar grids would contain different statistics), the total rainfall from March to September is similar to that of another dry year, 2010. The average temperatures in 2022 however, shown above, were much higher.

Note also, for example, how the recent excellent 'even' years of 2016, 2018 and 2020 had dry summers, as did 2022. One main difference with 2022 and those vintages is that we didn't have that much water in the spring. We had lower rainfall in (a cold) January and February too.

It is, of course, for the trade experts and critics to pass judgement on the wines. There'll be plenty of rich, exuberant and exciting wines, so it could come down to a question of balance. And I'd argue that it'll be worth noting the level of alcohol.

I've also updated my graphic showing how much wine was produced in Bordeaux from 2006 to 2022. Bordeaux produced 410 million litres of wine in 2022, and although this was more than in 2013, 2017 and 2021, it was still a relatively small crop.

With a modest yield of around 37hl/ha, Bordeaux 2022 may be up 9% up on 2021's 377 million litres, and it sits neatly in between that and 2020's 440 million litres, but it was down more than 15% on the 10-year average from 2011-2020 of 487 million litres.

That decade included three smaller crops in 2013, 2017 and, to a lesser extent, 2020. In the noughties, the average annual production from 2001-2010 was more than 580 million litres, equivalent to over 770 million bottles – over 40% more annually on average than for 2022.

A report on the weather for Bordeaux 2022 wouldn't be complete without a mention of the hailstorms on 20 June. Hundreds of vineyards were affected on both the left and right banks of the Gironde estuary.

As is often the case after a 40°C heatwave (18 June), hailstorms were forecast for the night of Monday, 20 June. Two corridors of hail swept through the Bordeaux region and, as ever, the impact of hail on vineyards was localised, with the damage variable from one area to the next. As we know ourselves from May 2009 and August 2013, sometimes your luck just isn't in. This time we were more fortunate but you always feel for those that have been hit.

If you have any questions, you can find Gavin on Twitter @GavinQuinney (DMs are open).