

Phew, it's all but over.
The biggest harvest since 2006.

The first grapes come in before it's light in the morning, and the last are being processed long after sunset. Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Rondo, Seyval Blanc, Madeleine Angevine, Regent, Auxerrois – a roll call of famous and not so famous names now grown widely all over Devon, Dorset, Somerset Cornwall – and all rolling into the Yearlstone presses.

It has been a thoroughly exhausting time for all of us, and especially Juliet, – who has over 20 individual wines to look after – and the best-laid plans of keeping one day for pressing, and the next for follow-up winery operations crashed in flames pretty early on!

So, what can be say of the South West vintage of 2010 at this early stage? First of all that nearly everyone enjoyed a good but not quite bumper harvest. Second – the ripeness of all varieties has been good. Thirdly – the lack of warmth at the back end of the season has led to slightly higher than ideal acidities. Once again, great for sparkling wines and crisp dry whites – but a tough year for making red.....That at least is the theory – but winemaking is bound to throw up a surprise or two before bottling next spring.

The Yearlstone team for this winemaking season has been based on a core of old friend Markus and “Australian” John from Cadbury, well known to cricketers in Bickleigh! Should be fun to help out in a little English grape harvest, thought John – 10 tons into the 80 ton 3-week marathon, he must have wished he was back in Queensland white-river rafting past the crocodiles.

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Happy to report that our wines are selling well at the new deli in Bampton Street – the Flying Pickle, a welcome sign of interest from Tiverton since the demise of the Country Cupboard. Here Charlotte is back from organising her annual arts exhibition in Taunton and back in charge of the cafe – thanks to Francesca for belying her youth and taking over in Charlotte's absence.

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Not everyone in English grape-growing circles is as happy as we are here in the South West. Groaning and moaning from the South East, and East Anglia in particular. Yes, folks, we got the best of it down here – for once.

Time to go – Juliet is back off up to the winery to rack yesterday's pressed wine – and for me, another couple of tons to shovel onto the trailer and take to the compost tip. Ah, the sheer romance of it all.

Can't wait till the winter rest.

PS Yearlstone Vineyard & Charlotte's Kitchen is staying open till Xmas this year usual times.