

In my dreams I see Bickleigh decorated with bunting – the local pubs falling over themselves to excel their rivals in promoting the wonderful news of the season, the press full of wine experts comparing the delights of this Devon grape variety vs that variety. In short, Mid Devon doing what just about every other wine region of the world does – celebrating the vintage in style.

Then of course I wake up. The Today programme is waxing lyrical about the joys of autumn - fresh apples, a wonderful Somerset cheese – and a glass of **Sauvignon Blanc**.

Not of course fresh apples, wonderful local cheeses – and a glass of

a/ English sparkling wine

b/ Bacchus ( England's top white wine grape )

c/ Madeleine Angevine ( The South West's main grape – see I have to add that or hardly anyone will know what I'm talking about )

Reality check. There is of course no celebration to speak of of the Devon wine vintage – and little of the English one either.

Your local pub is more likely to be running a tasting of Chilean or South African wines over the next few weeks than of the wines from vines on their doorstep.

It's all a bit – surreal. Last weekend here we were amid the vines, a cloudless blue sky overhead, filling crate after crate with a bumper crop of delicious grapes, looking down on our own village – where the punters were obliviously sipping their shipped-in Chardonnay, or ubiquitous Pinot Grigio – in the case of the latter, not knowing perhaps that they were sitting a few yards away from a ripe crop of PG itself, turning dusky pink just behind the hedgerow.

Yet the truth is vinegrowers in the South West have been blessed this year.

Vintage 2010 is big – and ripe. Here at Yearlstone we are nearly one-quarter the way through an exhausting four-week schedule, during which we expect to make 80,000 bottles worth of wine...

This bumper crop ( the first since 06 ) gives us a great chance of regaining the momentum we have to some extent lost lately. Now at least the county's 20 or so commercial vineyards have some wine to sell – and for the first time in ages we are not going to have to disappoint our trade supporters by apologising for selling out halfway through the year.

So for those of you who have a keen interest in your local vintage what can you expect from the wines of 2010? Well the ripeness on the early varieties have been good – and the acidities are quite high. That should mean fruity wines with good potential to last – and again excellent news for sparkling wines. Whether we can repeat the exceptional ripeness which made us a gold medal winning red last year ( the best we've made so far ) remains to be seen – for that, we'll need the sun to shine from early October for a week or two more.

But so far – a wonderful year for grape growers. And if you're passing in the next few weeks drop in and have a taste of the deliciously sweet just pressed grape juice from crops coming in....even if you don't buy the wine it'll be the best juice you'll ever taste and beat that packaged supermarket imitation by a country mile!

