

2023 LATE HARVEST PETIT MANSENG

STYLE

The weather of the 2023 growing season gave us the first opportunity to make a Late Harvest Petit Manseng since the 2017 vintage. This wine shows the classic Petit Manseng tropical fruit aromas and flavor profiles: pungent pineapple, dried apricot, and guava. Dry growing conditions concentrated both flavors and sugars making this Late Harvest more unctuous than usual.

FOOD PAIRINGS

Salty gathering appetizers (salt cured Virginia Ham). Rich, decadent main courses such as foie gras. Desserts that feature fruits, especially apricots, peaches, pears or dried fruits. Very ripe triple cream cheeses.

VINEYARDS

Hardscrabble Vineyard (100%), Fauquier County, on top of the Blue Ridge at an elevation of 1300 feet. The Late Harvest blocks are planted on a northeastern slope. Deep, well-drained granitic soils. Petit Manseng was first planted in 2002 with additional plantings in 2006 and 2015.

VINTAGE

The dry, cool 2023 growing season produced powerful, concentrated wines. It was an easy vintage in terms of managing the vines and making harvest decisions.

Bud break was a week early (April 12 for Chardonnay). May brought the usual hot/cold temperature fluctuations, but the rain deficit had started. Flowering was average in timing, but very cool conditions contributed to some "hens and chicks" (incomplete fertilization of flowers resulting in many small berries). It was the summer of smoke haze coming from Canadian fires. The smoke was too early in the season to affect the crop, but there were several days when working outside was too hazardous (smoke inhalation). The drought continued into July. The vines stopped their vegetative cycle. Berries were noticeably smaller than normal and young vines were showing hydric stress. Veraison was early and quick. Cane lignification was the earliest ever observed.

Avenius Sauvignon Blanc was picked September 5, 2023. Clusters were perfect with no rot or damaged berries, making harvest and sorting easy.

It was a cool harvest. Clusters were perfect with no rot or damaged berries, making harvest and sorting easy. Sugars were alarmingly high, but acids remained fresh. All grapes except Petit Manseng were in by October 9. As the temperatures dropped, alternating rain and sun dehydrated and concentrated the grapes. On November 3 we picked our first Late Harvest Petit Manseng since 2017.

WINEMAKING

The traditional Jurançon method of passerillage is used to concentrate flavors and sugars: while still on the vine, the Petit Manseng grapes slowly lose water (dehydrate) under the right conditions late in the season. After a slow pressing, the wine fermented slowly in old French oak and was stopped by chilling (putting the barrels outside in February) to retain fruit and sweetness. This wine will become more honeyed and spicier with age. Residual sugar is 109 grams per liter (10.9%). Alcohol is 12.6%. Bottled in August 2024. 1,896 bottles (375 ml) produced. Drink 2025 through 2035.