



Vintage Report 2009

Weather

Tasmania's 2009 vintage can be summed up as "quality, not quantity". The unpredictable weather threw up some challenges, and particular climatic factors limited the yield in all Tasmanian growing regions, but this has aided in producing fruit of exceptional quality and intensity.

October was very dry, but November recorded above average rainfall across the state. Growers have reported that vines carried just as many bunches as expected, but a combination of low soil moisture leading up to fruit set and cloudy, cool weather in December led to much fewer berries setting. Low soil moisture at fruit set was brought about by a dry winter and spring and in Eastern and Southern areas was often unable to be remedied completely with irrigation due to limited water availability. This stress limits cell division in berries, restricting the potential size of the berry at harvest.

The cool weather continued into January except at the very end when record high temperatures were reached over a period of four days. The generally cool weather (with cold nights) kept fruit and canopy development retarded. Thankfully there was very little damage with the hot weather – mainland regions were not so fortunate.

January and most of February were dry with high rainfall at the end of February pushing that month's total to near average. The low rainfall has helped produce smaller berries of concentrated flavour, and also aided in reducing disease pressure. The late February boost to soil moisture was welcome and kept vines fresh for the task of ripening the smaller crop.

Berries were small this season (less than 1cm diameter), giving a high skin-to pulp ratio. There were also fewer berries per bunch, enhancing fruit exposure and flavour and tannin development. Many berries also had only a single seed which, in such a small berry, made valuable room for pulp.

The rest of the season was near perfect for ripening fruit. Fruit generally showed excellent flavour, concentration and acidity. Those who brave the elements and leave fruit out for a late harvest dessert wine were gifted with cool, foggy mornings, blowing off to mild sunny days, just perfect for this style.

The 2009 Vintage chardonnay is showing tremendous potential. Flavour concentration is great with high acidity and ageing potential for barrel fermented wines.

Riesling is by all reports a stand-out for the Vintage. Elegant citrus notes and lifted floral aromas with tight acidity are the hallmarks. One producer went as far as saying it was potentially the best this decade.

Other aromatic varieties followed a similar theme, displaying intense varietal characteristics but with reduced tonnage.

Pinot noir at harvest had bunches of about 70-100g, which is a lot lighter than the long term average of 140-170g. This corresponds to the reduction in yield on average of about 40%. The lighter bunches were composed of smaller berries giving a loose bunch structure and greater exposure of skins to sunlight. The higher skin to pulp ratio gives the ferment allows strong skin contact during fermentation allowing strong colour and flavour development in the wine.

As dry, overcast weather is ideal for powdery mildew development the pressure from this disease was high this season. Growers were vigilant, though, and there were very few reports of negative impact on fruit quality.

Botrytis (grey mould) was noted in sauvignon blanc and pinot gris but was not severe. Noble rot conditions were excellent during vintage.

Downy mildew was noted in March and April as a primary infection but had no impact on the vintage. Similarly there was very little light brown apple moth (LBAM) damage. Mealybug was noted in some vineyards but was not an issue at vintage. All of these pests and diseases have a huge potential to damage yield and quality but with diligent management and luck with weather they are readily managed.

Report prepared by:

Mr David Sanderson
Industry Development Officer
Wine Industry Tasmania
Tel: 0408 892 542

Date: 24 June 2009