



2005 VINTAGE

HUNTER VALLEY

The growing season for the 2005 vintage followed a very dry winter, with soil moisture levels at budburst a concern. Early spring rains proved adequate, and replenished water deficits. The major seasonal influence that followed through spring and early summer were mild steady temperatures reminiscent of the great 200 vintage.

In general terms, the weather pattern was one of mild to warm days with unusually cool nights punctuated by rain events that tended to accelerate vine growth and fill out the crop. The normal heat spikes that can occur for the Hunter were limited, and followed by cool to mild periods.

Yields for the 2005 vintage were about average, with the white varieties Semillon, Chardonnay and Verdelho producing excellent crops, the wines showing intense varietal aromas and flavours balanced by crisp acidity. Semillon, in particular, stood out as an exceptional performer and offered wines with outstanding cellaring potential. Viognier, although a light cropper this year, produced a wine of outstanding quality. The principal red variety, Shiraz, tended to be slightly lower yielding with the wines bodied, with ripe berry fruit flavour balanced by extended velvety fruit tannins.

ORANGE

The 2005 vintage in Orange was arguably the best on record, although cold weather and spring rains made for a difficult start with some vineyards requiring shoot thinning more than once to control vigour.

After November 2004, it was dry and mild for the entire summer with days averaging in the high 20's and very cool nights. This provided the ideal climatic balance with fruit ripening precisely when required. Budburst and fruit set were very even, offering the perfect start. While the summer was relatively cool and suggested a late start to harvest, February became drier and warmer with all varieties reaching optimum maturity. The crop levels were down on 2004 and the more even ripening period resulted in more intense varietal characters particularly in Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. The Verduzzo vines relished the great conditions and have produced an outstanding wine although in an extremely limited volume.

The reds show spectacular colour and flavour with Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon particularly strong. The more even ripening allowed the development of fine, and very ripe, tannins. This adds to the wines' overall complexity and coupled with the excellent natural acid levels suggests that these wines have a very bright future ahead of them.

COONAWARRA

The 2005 Coonawarra vintage was very good ending with warm dry conditions during March and April. The 2005 vintage will be remembered as comparatively compact with average to slightly below average yields and warm conditions throughout, making for trouble-free harvest management.

The early vintage can be traced back to the start of the season with early budburst and excellent shoot growth resulting from a wet winter and fine spring conditions. Flowering was also a little earlier and the weather was favourable for the most part but cooler conditions towards the end of flowering did inhibit fruit set in some blocks. Late spring and summer can be at best described as normal, with mild conditions experienced throughout the growing season but with noticeable absence of periods of hot weather.

This, along with a very dry summer and autumn, provided for a near ideal season in which the vines were comfortably able to ripen the fruit.

We are particularly pleased with our Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, both of which have good varietal characteristics and structure with a rich ripe flavour profile and generous ripe tannins, albeit with higher alcohols than normally expected.

WRATTONBULLY

The 2005 season was one of contrasting conditions. It was only slightly warmer with the heat summation being about 5 percent above the average of the last 20 years. There were two short periods when the maximum temperatures exceeded 40°C and yet in very early February the maximum temperature was only 15°C.

The winter rainfall recordings were about 10 percent above average and very good rainfall was recorded in August to start the season. A very good budburst occurred that was slightly earlier than the last few seasons. September was very mild while October was considerably warmer than average. The spring was virtually frost-free with no crop losses recorded. These temperature conditions during spring resulted in a relatively short flowering period and were very favourable to fruit set. Good rains were recorded in November and temperatures were relatively warm, encouraging excellent vine growth.

December and January were generally mild to warm with some hot periods being experienced. February was significantly cooler than normal. At the start of February as some varieties were completing veraison, there was a period of very cool weather that seems to have impacted on the final fruit flavour and tannin development at maturity.

The resulting wines are quite forward with Chardonnay being the most intense yet experienced. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot also reached extraordinary maturity levels but Shiraz was the most consistent performer. Tannat yielded a very low crop, producing a quite intense, 'muscular' wine which will no doubt continue to develop for many years to come. Finesse is not a word to use to describe this vintage but the power and complexity of each variety has maintained structure and balance.