



## 2006 VINTAGE

### **HUNTER VALLEY**

Harvest began earlier than usual with Semillon, Chardonnay and Verdelho due to the unusually dry season. There were no significant rain events during January and February with continued warm to hot weather resulting in a lower than expected yield. The Semillon wines are fresh and limey with a crisp acid backbone and show great potential to mature into classics. Verdelho and Chardonnay have plenty of fruit weight with our two Verdelho (Limited Release and "Australia Range") looking close to, or at the best we have ever produced. A very small parcel of Viognier was processed and looks great. The main red variety, Shiraz was harvested from mid February to early March depending on vine maturity and crop level. The consistent dry, hot weather again reduced yield with smaller berry size than usual. The resultant wines are deep in colour, rich in berry fruit with a soft tannin finish. We had the opportunity to source a small parcel of fruit from the historic "Hillside" vineyard in Pokolbin and the results are spectacular. Definitely a wine to keep a very close eye on. The Hunter harvest was completed in early March with a general feeling of success given the reduced yields in what was the hottest first three months of the year recorded coupled with below average rainfall.

### **ORANGE**

Vintage 2006 in Orange was earlier for Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay while being considerably later for Verduzzo and Zinfandel. The Zinfandel was harvested a staggering five and a half weeks later this year on May 31<sup>st</sup> which prolonged our processing period. Rainfall during the growing season was 370mm, minimizing the need for irrigation. Consistently mild weather leading up to harvest encouraged optimal ripening. Weather conditions during harvest were perfect, making for a smooth vintage. Daytime temperatures ranged from 13°C to 30°C, with whites harvested in the cool of the morning and reds at desirably warmer temperatures later in the day. The vine canopies were moderately vigorous with healthy leaf colour and loose configuration, allowing good airflow and filtered light. Grape berries were small and with yields down, flavours were concentrated and flavour enhanced. The standout wines were Chardonnay and Verduzzo, closely followed by Zinfandel. To potentially top this list though, is an experimental parcel of very late picked Sauvignon Blanc which, coupled with some botrytis, looks spectacular as a dessert style.

### **COONAWARRA**

The 2006 harvest in Coonawarra may well turn out to be the best on record for us. January and February were slightly warmer than average with conditions in March being almost "dial up" perfect. A small rain event in February provided some relief for the vines in the very warm conditions, again, perfectly timed. Our Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot were both picked at the same time (15<sup>th</sup> April), being slightly earlier than 2005 which itself was recorded as an early harvest. The ideal ripening conditions allowed the fruit to achieve fruit ripeness at slightly lower sugar levels and the resulting wines retained fabulous natural acidity. The yields were relatively low (around 2 tonnes/acres) which resulted in small berry sizes, which, in turn, produced great colour and wonderfully intense flavour. The wines produced are what Coonawarra has become famous for... pure class and elegance. The sophistication and balance of each wine is remarkable considering how intense the fruit characters are. They have the power of the very impressive 1998 wines while offering the seamless style of 2000. Even at this early stage our predictions are for world class product.

### **WRATTONBULLY**

Wratttonbully experienced very favourable growing conditions with a strong spring leading to a warm to hot summer with modest (near average) rainfall. White varieties performed well with solid yields averaging 10-12 tonnes/hectare, although red varieties were near averages Cabernet and Shiraz at 7-9t/ha with reduced flower set and some extreme temperatures in late January affecting yields. Merlot yielded well at an average of 10t/ha. Excellent weather conditions also prevented the occurrence of any fungal diseases and pests, allowing for a smooth and trouble free harvest. Rain events were modest in relation to other regions which kept canopy vigour at levels suited to premium production. Again, the Chardonnay from our selected blocks is excellent but the wine of the vintage is undoubtedly Cabernet Sauvignon. One parcel in particular has already received our very selective "Grand Reserve" status. The wine presented great fruit ripeness early and therefore maintained a superb natural acid balance. It is the first Cabernet parcel that has shown elegance and class, a characteristic normally associated with nearby Coonawarra. Tannat although very limited in quantity, performed very well and will see a style similar to previous vintages. 2007 will see the appearance of very small amounts of Viognier and Tempranillo, two varieties in the experimental stages. Vintage ended a bit earlier due to the warm spring conditions which established excellent fruit composition and developed flavour.