



LINDENWARRAH



## King Valley (Victoria) Vintage Reports

### 2005

Good winter rains preceded the start to the season with budburst occurring in mid-late September throughout the valley. Average temperatures prevailed during October and November and the customary mid-October cold snap did not eventuate this season. The average temperatures, coupled with below average rainfall resulted in steady shoot growth in the lead up to flowering in mid-late November. Warm, dry conditions resulted in a relatively fast flowering period. Fruit set was very good, and together with large bunch structure this meant that crop thinning had to be undertaken in order to maintain high grape quality.

Average temperatures and average to below average rainfall prevailed during December and January. Heavy rainfall ranging from 150 mm to 300 mm occurred in the first week of February and plummeting temperatures—maximum temperature below 10°C for three consecutive days saw veraison stall in early varieties such as Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The heavy rainfall resulted in a sudden increase in berry size. Cool, dry conditions followed with below average maximum and minimum temperatures for February being recorded.

Harvest commenced in mid February with Chardonnay and Pinot Noir being harvested for sparkling. The cooler conditions experienced in the higher elevated sites ensured that high acid levels were achieved. The cool, dry conditions continued throughout March resulting in steady ripening for all varieties. White varieties were harvested throughout March and displayed good varietal characters. The ideal ripening conditions resulted in target Baumes being easily reached.

## **2006**

Soaking rains throughout winter and early spring filled the soil profiles to capacity, and were welcomed after the relatively dry winters of the past few years. Budburst occurred in mid to late September throughout the region. Cool conditions throughout October and mid November saw slow but steady shoot growth, allowing foliage wire lifting to proceed in an orderly fashion. Flowering commenced in mid November – up to one week earlier than average – and the relatively dry, warm conditions resulted in an average flowering period reducing the risk of Botrytis infection. Unfortunately, growers hopes of a dry December were dashed when the region received 40-60mm on 4 December.. Fortunately, the very dry conditions throughout mid December to mid January, coupled with heatwaves in late December, early January saw the soil profiles dry out very quickly. This enabled deficit irrigation regimes to be carried out, resulting in reduced berry size and good cane lignification prior to the onset of veraison in mid to late January. Growers started to apply supplementary irrigation in mid January, just prior to the onset of veraison and continued through to harvest, to ensure good leaf health and optimal ripening conditions.

The dry conditions continued in February, with many areas of the valley receiving less than 20mm since the start of January. Thankfully the heatwaves eventually subsided and the region was blessed with cooler overnight temperatures and warm days in February, which was ideal for colour and flavour development. Veraison progressed very well and fruit ripened steadily thereafter.

Vintage commenced on 15 February with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay being harvested for Sparkling wine. With steady ripening, ideal weather conditions and lower yields the 2006 vintage in the King Valley produced some outstanding quality grapes and wine. White table wine varieties were harvested in early to mid March, whilst red table wine varieties were harvested in mid March to early May. Most growers reported harvest dates up to two weeks earlier than average.

Earlier predictions of some outstanding wines were also proven to be correct with winemakers reporting high acid levels and delicate flavours in Chardonnay and Pinot Noir destined for Sparkling wine, and exceptional quality in Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris and Verdelho table wines with all varieties displaying full varietal flavours and crisp acids. Stand-out red varieties include Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot with high colour and well-developed palate weight and structure. High colour and rich flavours were also in abundance in the non-traditional varieties of Sangiovese and Nebbiolo.

## **2007**

Due to bushfires and smoke taint the majority of King Valley winemakers did not harvest the 2007 vintage. You may find some producers made wine with fruit from regions other than the King Valley however.