



Mornington Peninsula Vintage Reports

2004

A mild winter and early spring led to fairly typical and even budburst. Spring was average to slightly warm, resulting in steady vine development. November and December were warmer than average, leading to very good flowering and fruit set. Bunch weights were thus high and for Pinot Noir were at the very high end of recorded figures. A very cold January then slowed vine development considerably, ensuring late ripening and relatively high acid levels. February and March were about average and fortunately April was warmer than usual. Conditions were also very dry, meaning late ripening could occur with relatively low disease pressure. 2004 was the best vintage winemakers had seen for some time.

2005

A very wet end to winter and a wet start to spring saw some vineyards showing signs of stress from wet roots early in the growing period. The season moved on to be cool and dry. Flowering and fruit set was good and vine growth healthy. Very little disease pressure was encountered this season. Autumn turned out to be dry and very warm and grape maturities accelerated to see harvest getting underway about a week later than normal and then rushing quickly through with real pressure on to get the grapes picked at optimum maturity. Analysis of the grape juice showed good balance with slightly higher than usual levels of acid. 2005 was seen as one of the best ever on the Mornington Peninsula.

2006

Very warm starts to the season lead to early budburst and flowering. Good rains during spring continued during the start of summer. Post Christmas temperatures cooled down significantly which slowed the ripening rate although in general harvest was 2 weeks early. The quality in both red and white grapes looked extremely good - for the fourth year in a row. Yields were slightly less than average in red and average in white varieties

2007

The growing season followed a very dry winter and started with an early bud burst. A cool spring with some hail and frost in pockets within the region in October and November resulted in some poor fruit set which ultimately resulted in reduced yield in some parts. The soil type and water availability at specific sites dictated the fruit weights and ultimate yields. Low yields were due mainly to low berry weights, in some cases 50g instead of 80g bunches were experienced. About 75% of average yield has been experienced due to the unusual growing conditions but particularly the one in one hundred year drought. Although almost all growers reported reduced crops, variations due to varieties and the actual yield were seen throughout the region. Fruit quality was good with the smaller berries leading to some quite intense fruit flavours.

2008

Generally a favourable growing season with no drastic weather events producing quality crops slightly above region average weights. Growth in the spring was steady with vines showing no ill effect from the dry nor frosts of 2007. Weather was generally warmer and drier than 'the norm' (whatever that now is) until some timely rainfall in December that 'freshened' canopies and gave more weight to the very good set in bunches across varieties. Some extended moderate weather in December with more than usual humidity and cloud cover saw powdery mildew taking hold in some vineyards causing some commercial losses. Vineyards with dense canopy and poor airflow were the worst hit. LBAM and mites were only isolated in their incidence and downy mildew was well controlled. Botrytis was generally not an issue due to the excellent dry weather in February with most crops again coming in around two weeks ahead of the 'norm'. Both reds and whites were of a high standard and should produce wines that will continue to raise the benchmark for the Mornington Peninsula.

2009

The Mornington Peninsula wine region fared better than many other regions throughout Australia. Following a cool December last year, some vineyards were affected when flowering and fruit set was diminished, which resulted in predicted lower yields, particularly in the cooler areas of the Peninsula. By the middle of January all vineyards were growing extremely well with good vigor and vine health

Following three days of extreme heat in the mid 40s in early February, many grapes were sunburned which resulted in some shrivel in vineyards where rows which face west, or run north/south, were particularly exposed to the scorching sun. The vineyard aspect, elevation and management practices are always tested in such extreme conditions, and the timing of any irrigation, leaf plucking and bunch exposure will have resulted in specific outcomes in each vineyard.

A small number of growers harvested small parcels of fruit in late February but in general harvest appeared to be consistent with previous later ripening years. Smoke taint was not an issue at all, with no fires and negligible smoke present in the region following the tragic Victorian bushfires in other regions.

However, the overall effect of the above on Mornington Peninsula yields was expected to be an average loss of between 5 - 30% of 'normal' yields. The MPVA is mindful of calling anything normal in any agribusiness, as by the nature of the business, the yearly impacts will always be a result of the preceding year as well as the prevailing climatic conditions through the current season, quite apart from the individual aspect, orientation and management practices. Winemakers' feedback so far shows fruit with high natural acidity and good flavours.

Winemakers are very pleased with the quality of grapes picked and regrettably the quantity will be reduced in most varieties although typically some varieties fared better with these odd occurrences than others. We look forward to another fantastic vintage in 2009 which shows the viticultural integrity of the region yet again.