



2021 Vintage Report

The 2021 vintage has been described by local winemakers as classic Clare with cool and dry conditions producing solid yields and fruit with great varietal character and natural acidity.

Good late-winter and early-spring rains led to an even budburst, good early canopy growth and contributed to mitigating frost with no major frost damage reported this season. Dry conditions prevailed from November onwards, with rainfall well below average for the remainder of the growing season.

Weather conditions from mid to late November were ideal for flowering and good fruit set was achieved. Bunch number, size and berry size were higher than crop estimates in most varieties, with overall yields the best since 2018 with early indications that total yield for the region is slightly below average at approximately 20,000t.

Riesling bunch and berry sizes were lower than average which reduced yields of this variety. Riesling was the most solid performer in the previous two seasons of drought, drawing on the vines reserves and resulting in lower yields this year as the vines recover. In comparison, yields of the red varieties have rebounded significantly this year, following extremely low yields during the drought years. Cabernet sauvignon is a particular standout this season with the best yields for quite some years and showing strong varietal character captured by the long, cool ripening period. Winemakers are also reporting some really intense parcels of shiraz and pleasing natural acidity and expression of site in the rieslings.

Low disease pressure continued all season, with wineries reporting spray programs with as few as four applications. The cool growing season, with only one day of real heat in late January, resulted in minimal sunburn. While the growing season was mainly dry, there was a small rain event which caused some minor split and shrivel, mainly in the riesling.

Clare Valley Wine & Grape Association executive officer Anna Baum says it's one of those special years where we see full flavour ripeness at lower baumes which is only achieved when we have an extended cool ripening period.

"We were blessed this year with a long, cool, dry growing season and ripening period and no frost. Expectations are really promising in 2021 for all three wines in the Clare Valley trilogy - cabernet sauvignon, shiraz and riesling," she said.

Despite the lack of international winery workers this year and challenges recruiting vintage workers, wineries did not report shortages in staffing. This was aided by the spread-out nature of the vintage with some wineries operating on only one shift for the whole vintage. However, staffing and accommodation is a major challenge for businesses in the region, particularly in the tourism sector.

Anna Baum
Executive Officer

15 June 2021