

## Vintage Report 2020

Once again Riesling has shown its incredible resilience this season, maintaining good yields in a tough growing environment.

Below-average winter rainfall led to low soil-moisture reserves at the start of the growing season in September and many vineyards applied irrigation during winter and spring to set up the vines for the forecast dry season. Dry conditions continued during spring, with the three months recording lower than average rainfall, and large volumes of irrigation water were used throughout the district to meet the plants' requirements.

Maximum temperatures were also higher than average during spring which increased the vines' demand for water. A 40°C day on 20 November impacted on the fruit set of several varieties and was one of the factors that led to an extremely low-yielding harvest. Careful management of grapevine water and nutrient requirements was imperative this season to retain vine canopies and maximise yield.

Riesling was the star performer in terms of yield this season with yields down on average by only 15-30 per cent. Red varieties, including Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon, recorded lower yields, down on average by 40-80 per cent, challenging the profitability of some enterprises.

Milder temperatures in the New Year, particularly in February, were a welcome relief and provided ideal ripening conditions for flavour development and steady rates of sugar accumulation.

Clare Valley Wine & Grape Association chairman Hon Martin Ferguson AM said the region was exceptionally lucky not to be in an area affected by fires and our thoughts were with regions having to deal with the loss of vineyards and wineries and smoke-tainted fruit.

"In the Clare Valley, we have been blessed with a small but sound harvest. Our winemakers are saying that Riesling is a solid performer this year and that 2020 will be remembered for its flavoursome white wines which show strong sub-regional character. Our reds are also developing well, showing great intensity of colour and concentrated ripe-fruit flavours," he said.

Grape grower Alister Sandow said that good vine health and retaining the canopy had a huge bearing on results and growers who achieved this produced excellent quality fruit this year.

Vintage flowed well but, with total yields predicted to be 40 per cent down on the 10-year average, the bulk of the fruit was harvested by the end of March.

Record rainfall for the month of April has led to an early break and heralds a good season ahead for 2020-2021.

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