

## 2016 Declaration of Vintage – Vintage Report, February 21st 2016

This day 12 months ago we were here looking towards vintage 2015. It looked like it would be pretty good – we had had some rain, and the healthy vines were moving along quickly. And quickly it continued: viticulturists and winemakers had to move fast with the rapid ripening to harvest grapes at their optimum. While not quite the earliest start that we have seen in the Barossa, it was still early and quick. By the second week of a balmy March many had all but finished picking.

2015 whites are showing delicate persistent flavours and varietal character framed by taut acidity, the reds have strong colours, good balance and rich flavours, with great structure that will make them lovely young wines and that will keep them fresh and long lived. 2015 was a great Barossa vintage.

So what of 2016?

Well it's been dry. Below average winter and spring rains resulted in an early start to the season and vines grew well and healthily. Warm spring and summer days kept this pattern going, although the clear skies did result many cool nights. The owners of the many new frost fans that can be seen through the northern Barossa would have been relieved that they were spared, what in some cases would have been, 4 years in a row of late season frost. The last significant frost was on the 1<sup>st</sup> December!

We will not of course forget the devastating Pinery fire of late November that came right up to the edges of the Barossa, and by luck spared most vineyards. It did not of course spare all of our neighbours and friends, and in true Barossa spirit many individuals, companies, wineries and vineyards have been helping those who lost infrastructure to rebuild.

Dry and warm conditions continued over Christmas and into the New Year, and just as many were thinking of picking up the snips or starting the harvester – a little rain fell in the last days of January. Not enough to damage, but enough to refresh many people and vines, and keep the ripening pace in check. Since then we have returned to the warm dry conditions, but often accompanied by cool nights giving the vines a chance to rest and retain their flavours and acid.

Season where once again we have seen what an amazing region this is – with an amazing resource of old vines with roots grown deep in the earth and the ability to withstand a dry year. Helped, of course, by the canny and dedicated growers who tend to them.

Harvest is now well underway. Many whites on the on the Barossa floor are finished and are similarly well under way in the Eden Valley. Reds are a bit behind the whites, but the last week has seen many of them harvested too – particularly shiraz, although other red varieties from the earlier sites are also ripe.

At this early stage whites are showing delicate but intense flavours and pleasingly good natural acidity, and reds strong colours and rich flavours.

Yield has been difficult to estimate this year – there is generally good bunch numbers, but the dry season has kept many berries small. Over all the Barossa crush looks like it will be about average in size.

Easter is early this year at the end of March. If you believe that this predicts an early finish to vintage, then we can expect that we will keep going at a lively pace. Certainly there is nothing in the weather forecast that we can see to slow down the ripening, or take away from the quality of 2016 – which is predicted to be another great Barossa and Eden Valley vintage.

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