

Central Otago Vintage Reports

1997

A cool summer with several snow events on the surrounding mountains. Low to moderate yields. Harvest started on April 20. Rainfall Feb=58mm, Mar=43mm, Apr=84mm. Heavy frost on 26 April over the whole region.

1998

Warmer than 1997 with low to moderate yields. Harvest started on April 6. Rainfall Feb=34mm, Mar=69mm, Apr=41mm.

1999

A very hot summer with many days over 30°C resulted in an early harvest starting on March 27. Large crops probably helped balance this quick ripening. Interestingly, around April 15, 100mm of snow fell coating vineyards in the Gibbston area and lighter but still enough to dust tanks and equipment in Bannockburn – an unusual sight especially the snow on the bird nets. Rainfall Feb=4mm, Mar=83mm, Apr=69mm.

2000

A vintage that was dominated by the heavy rains in mid-November of 1999 that caused the flooding in Queenstown and Wanaka. December was dry then followed by a very wet January (117mm). Feb=28mm, Mar=32mm, Apr=53mm. Low to moderate yields caused by very small berry size gave wines excellent concentration. Harvest date of April 12.

2001

After the lower yielding 2000 vintage, 2001 was large. Incredibly hot, sunny and stable weather during the flowering in early-mid December gave us the faster and most even flowering yet seen. A warm summer with the heavier crops, harvest started on April 6. Rainfall Feb=25mm, Mar=28mm, Apr=8mm.

2002

Very cold winter temperatures in 2001 were followed by an unusually early and warm spring. This was followed by a moderate summer with

warm temperatures without the highs (few days into the 30's) and lows (very few summer snow events on mountain tops). Strangely enough, this led to the earliest harvest date yet of March 26. Yields were low to moderate with small berries. Rainfall: Feb=12mm, Mar=19mm, Apr=53mm. Harvest at Bendigo started on March 21 for Pinot Noir still wine and for sparkling wine on March 11. The last very early harvest was in 1990 at Black Ridge on March 27.

2003

Very cold weather in spring resulted in slow spring growth yet amazingly frost damage free. Unusual hot spells followed by cold spells in early summer. Typical warm to hot February and March (incredibly dry), evened growth and ripening. An unusual series of frosts in early to mid April slowed ripening allowing hang time without usual rapid sugar accumulation. Harvest started on April 6. Rainfall Feb=30mm, Mar=2mm, Apr=24mm.

2004

Very good even bud burst before frosts on 14 and 28 November which are responsible for a large reduction from the anticipated 4,000-4,500 tonnes down to 1,800 tonnes. Generally cool summer with above average rainfall in February before weather settled and ripening could proceed sufficiently in warmer sites before the early frost during harvest on 8 April. Despite being a very challenging vintage, early samples have shown very good tannins and fruit expression.

2005

A good warm start (Budburst around 10th of October) to Spring with no frost damage reported anywhere. The latter half of November and the month of December were miserably cold, (4 degrees below average monthly temperature) drastically affecting crop set with most areas seeing a 50% crop reduction (Average bunch weight at harvest 40 to 60gr, normally 80 to 120gr). January and February were both slightly warmer than average with a mini heat wave through for two week's where temperatures approached 40 C! There was more rainfall than average through these months with a shower every couple of weeks lessening the dependence upon irrigation. Autumn played a mostly benign hand with cool weather and very little rainfall allowing fruit to hang to full ripeness resulting in very low Malic acid levels. A late autumn frost did affect ripening in some parts of central. Total tonnage harvested 1695 tonnes.

2006

An early bud burst and a very dry spring led to even shoot growth and an early flowering. Warm and stable conditions during flowering resulted in a very successful fruit set. The warm conditions continued with harvest starting as early as March 16 for many sites (the earliest on record). Interestingly, March was cooler than normal and provided more "hang time" and slowed the rate of ripening. Without these cooling temperatures the harvest would have been over very quickly and quality could have suffered. Overall this is a very exciting year for Central Otago, with a good year in quality and a very good year in quantity with higher yields than expected. At this early stage, we see similarities to 2001 and 2003; not the concentration of the 2004 and 2005's but wonderful ripeness.

2007

A wet and cool spring was followed by a cold December and resulted in a slightly later start to the vintage. Numerous frosts were recorded and most were successfully fought, although there were reports of localised frost damage; interestingly mainly on higher elevation vineyards which is unusual. Poor weather during flowering affected the fruit set and reduced yields by around 25%. The cooler start to the season was offset by healthy canopies and the reduced yield meant that for the most part, the vines didn't have a problem in ripening the fruit. Summer finally arrived in early January, with February being the driest on record with virtually no rainfall. The warm and dry late season conditions allowed the grapes to ripen fully and have led to wines which display both good concentration and exceptional flavour. The early white bottlings of Riesling and Pinot Gris show very good quality, clarity of fruit and weight. The Pinot Noirs, at this early stage show good concentration and the typical Central Otago Noir definition. Overall 2007 is a very fine quality vintage that will reward the best sites and viticulture producing some very high quality wines.