

2008 Vintage Report

Season	Rainfall (mm)					Growing Degree Days (heat units)				
	07-08	06-07	05-06	04-05	03-04	07-08	06-07	05-06	04-05	03-04
October	88	126	67	57	129	112	113	113	120	110
November	28	61	18	47	68	176	181	156	203	146
December	74	60	41	162	12	241	169	280	183	239
January	16	31	24	44	90	324	274	290	270	322
February	29	10	37	11	224	255	223	234	300	205
March	39	44	67	181	38	233	260	171	215	179
April	98	43	61	57	47	127	108	151	102	85
Totals	372	375	315	559	608	1396	1328	1395	1384	1286

After the crop-depleting ravages of frost and cold weather at flowering, which bedevilled the previous three vintages, the 2007-2008 growing season saw a return to what we would like to think of as more normal conditions. We had the usual number of Spring frost events but, with the assistance of helicopters and frost pots, none were severe enough to cause any damage. Flowering conditions were benign with above average temperatures for November and December and fewer bouts of North-Westerly gales. As a result fruit set was the best since the bumper 2004 vintage. Drought conditions prevailed over the key January to March ripening period with regular irrigation needed to keep the vines in good health to ripen the crop. The warmth and low rainfall kept disease pressure completely out of the equation and meant we were able to harvest exactly when we wanted to.

Harvest commenced slightly earlier than average on the 26th of March and we picked our final grapes exactly a month later with the last of the Pinot Noir coming in on the 26th of April. April rainfall was higher than average but as it fell later in the month and after we had harvested the potentially more botrytis-susceptible varieties it had little impact. It may seem contradictory but in warmer seasons we typically harvest at slightly lower sugar levels than cool seasons. 2008 certainly reflects that as the flavours we look to pick at arrived at lower sugar levels and also at better acid levels than we expected. Across all the varieties flavours in the juice were notably pure and fine and the tannin structure in the Pinot Noir should result in silky, seductive wines. Despite the warmth of the season I expect the wines of the 2008 vintage to be remembered more for their balance, purity and finesse rather than the blockbusters some might have anticipated.

Here is a summary of the harvest parameters for each variety:

Variety	Brix	pH	Acidity (g/l)
Chardonnay	23.4 – 24.8	3.4 – 3.5	5.5 – 6
Pinot Noir	23.4 – 25.3	3.6 – 3.8	7 – 8.3
Riesling	22.9	3.02	6.9
Sauvignon Blanc	21 – 23	3.24 – 3.32	6.3 – 7.6

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May 2008