



VINTAGE 2016 REPORT

Wow! What a vintage!

Grape growing, as with all agriculture, can be a very rewarding endeavour, but, it can also present you with circumstances considered to be less than ideal, at best, and total disaster at worst.

Leading into the harvest can be a truly exhilarating, or equally disappointing, experience, that generally is based on the weather over which we have no control whatsoever.

You, dear reader, may recall the weather predictions leading into Spring 2015 that suggested that we were to experience an intense El Niño event, i.e. a very dry, and very hot, Spring and Summer.

There were numerous dire warnings of heatwaves and potentially catastrophic bushfires etc.

In the Hunter we experienced a slow and later start to budburst than recent years and rain just seemed to arrive when we needed it. We had some short hot spells during November, but enjoyed a milder December albeit a little dry. We had a cool and pleasant Christmas with over a week of mild weather with maximum temperatures early to mid 20's deg.C most of that time.

We constantly watch the weather during the growing season.

The long term prediction for our area as at mid December was for a very dry start to 2016 with the likelihood of rain in January, February and March rating number 1 to 2 on a scale of 10!

This translates to unprecedented dry conditions for our region.

How wrong were the predictions!

We noticed the moisture build ups in the tropics late in December and the movement of moist conditions through Central Australia into NSW through Dubbo and then on into Wine Country.

We thought, oh well we will get some rain and this would be good to keep things ticking along nicely.

The weather started to look ominous around January 2nd and we then experienced localised hail storms, rain and flooding, on the 4th, 5th and 6th January. The rain at Mistletoe on January 6th totalled over 100mm with it coming down faster than the storms we experienced when the Pasha Bulka



Flooded Semillon at Mistletoe – 6th January 2016

ran aground in Newcastle in 2007. We had rivers of water running through the vineyard with the wood ducks surfing the current. Unbelievable!

The hail damage was confined to the area between the Hunter Valley Gardens and Cessnock with the Hermitage Road area, where Mistletoe is located, seeing no hail at all and much less rain.

There were another two major hail events affecting the same area as previously and the rain continued with the area receiving 200mm of rain over 4 days up to January 7th.

By the end of the 3rd week of January 300mm of rain had fallen across the area with flood warnings in place for the Hunter, Williams and Allyn Rivers.

Our annual rainfall is approx. 700mm so we had already achieved 40% of that in the first three weeks of 2016.

If it hadn't hailed where it did, the subsequent vintage would have been a cracker for everyone.

However, with vineyards affected by hail fungal disease was rife and many growers were unable to harvest much quality fruit, if anything at all.

The rain came early in the ripening period when the bunches are not closed up and the berries are still quite hard. This is what saved us at Mistletoe.

We have been blessed! Through a combination of damn good luck, planning and timely maintenance of our vineyard we have had a wonderful vintage. Clean, ripe fruit in near perfect condition.

Our viticulturist said that our vineyard was the best of all the vineyards she oversees, with our Shiraz being the best Shiraz fruit she saw in the valley from Vintage 2016.

The Shiraz has just about finished fermentation and will be pressed out and in barrel by the weekend. Do yourself a favour and keep an eye out for this Shiraz 2016 when it released late 2017.

We have also made a Tempranillo this year and a bigger bolder Chardonnay Called WILD. We made our first vintage of this style Chardonnay in 2015 and we announce its release in this newsletter.

We are now well into February and experiencing drier and warmer weather with a few hot days. It is a great time of the year from now to the end of Autumn. The nights get cooler, the weather is more settled and things get much less frantic in the winery and vineyard. A chance to catch our breath after a few demanding and exhilarating months!

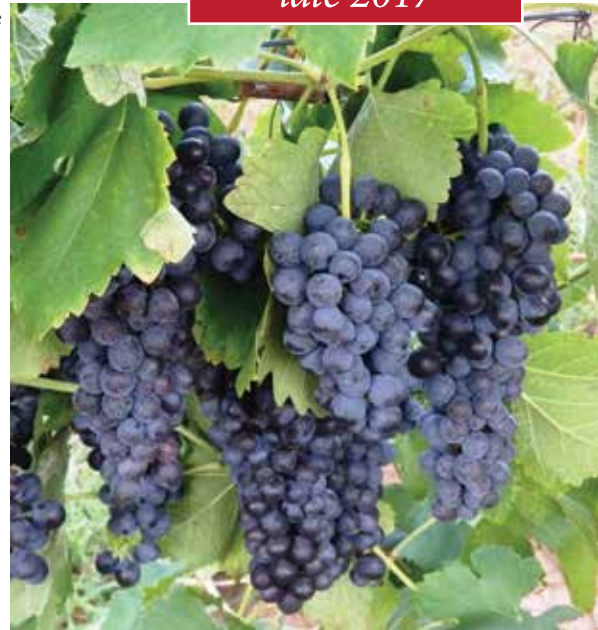
VINTAGE VERDICT

Very good to excellent white wines, absolutely Cracker Hunter Shiraz, New Tempranillo.

Hilltops Cabernet Merlot due early in March, looks like a great season down there with our late harvest Viognier due around 1st week of April.

Overall we rate it to be a very good to excellent vintage for both Hunter and Hilltops.

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MISTLETOE WINERY



HUNTER VALLEY AUSTRALIA