

Welcome to Mistletoe Winery's 2018 Vintage/Autumn newsletter

2018 Mistletoe Shiraz harvest – Go You Good thing!



VINTAGE REPORT 2018

We have just pressed our last batches of 2018 Hunter Shiraz and are getting them ready for time in barrel. The Hunter vintage is over for another year. Every vintage is different and this one has been no exception.

We had a very dry Winter, and early Spring, and then received 150mm of rain in October. This rain at that time proved to be a game changer as it has been dry, dry, dry since then. Have a look at the accompanying image.

This is what makes a great vintage in the Hunter, it was so dry we have had cracks in the ground, like those shown in the image, for the first time since the mid 1990's. That is a 50 cent piece in the photo by the way.



Vintage started a little earlier this year because of the dry weather. Dry weather means no cloud cover, which means generally higher temperatures, which means earlier ripening. No rain means very little humidity so the conditions are less conducive to the outbreak of fungal related issues in the vines and grapes. An interesting observation this year is that the prevailing winds have been onshore (blowing from the North, East and South) for nearly all of January and February, with very little wind from the North or North West.

Winds from this NW direction draw in the heat from the inland and can lead to very trying and dry conditions with much higher temperatures. These winds are normally quite frequent at this time of the year.

We have only had reasonably short periods of hot weather, punctuated by short periods of cooler weather, and the nights have been just wonderful and temperate, or, quite cool on many occasions.

We could have a 36°C day and an hour after sunset the temperature quite often would be down to 25°C and then dropping as low as 17°C overnight. As ourselves, the vines recover overnight and are refreshed to take on another hot day by morning.

This year, to assist our hand picking crew finish prior to the really hot part of the day setting in, we commenced work at 4am harvesting the grapes with the use of individual headlamps by the pickers. The productivity was much higher and the workers enjoyed getting finished before it got too hot.



NOW, THE 2018 WINES

In my mind it has been an exceptional vintage. Because of the hot dry conditions encountered the white grapes showed sugar levels enough to harvest quite early.

However, we felt that the fruit flavours weren't as developed as we would like to see them, so we waited a little longer than most, before harvesting beautifully ripe grapes. The resultant wines will be a little more fuller bodied and full of flavour, much like the 2014 whites.

The weather just remained steady after we had taken the white grapes so we left the Shiraz blocks out to achieve perfect ripeness.

I feel that 2018 Hunter Shiraz will be as good as I have ever had the privilege of seeing in over 30 years. We shall have some absolutely lovely Hunter Shiraz to release in 2019. Keep an eye out for them.

Well, the Hunter is wrapped up and we are now waiting on Pinot Gris (new for Mistletoe) and Sangiovese from Hilltops (Young NSW) and also our first Pinot Noir from an old cool climate vineyard in Tumberumba. We should have everything wrapped up and in barrel by the end of March. It is such a great relief to have had such a wonderful vintage, especially following on the heels of a very good vintage in 2017.

As I always say to cellar door visitors, there is a lot of romanticism in the wine industry, but, at the end of the day, we are basically farmers. If we don't get the crop right (perfectly ripe, clean grapes) we can't make good or great wine.

