

Vintage 2011 – May 2011

Harvest 2011 –What a long and challenging vintage season – both the hardest and possibly most rewarding we have seen at Mount Edward.

Vineyards that needed more attention than in any other season, wines that needed to be cared for every step of the way, some stellar vintage crew coming and then, unfortunately going, new wines, excellent food and of course music to keep us sane.

Spring came in 2010 and delivered what was the best start to summer that we have ever experienced, a good 8 weeks of fine, hot weather – it was amazing – 2 days rain in total.

The vines took off, grew easily and flowered almost 2 weeks ahead of normal – this period set the harvest up for us - it was the luckiest start to spring and as it turned out the exact prelude we needed as the weather, somewhat typically, turned to holiday hell over the entire holiday period, rain and fairly foul weather. We then had a period of 2 months over the summer where it was not particularly hot - more mild - and at the same time rained every few days.

In the vineyard disease pressure was high and the ability to ripen fruit (crop size) was lowered and then constantly changed as the summer progressed. For us this meant a lot of passes through the vineyard – keeping the canopy open to avoid humidity, lowering croploads and then taking out any fruit that looked behind or less than perfect ripeness. Every plant probably got looked at 4-5 times over the summer.

Come harvest we then did a further 2 passes taking out any fruit that was substandard and maintaining an exact level of ripeness and condition.

Our grounds soaked up any excess water and our plants performed particularly well – credit this year is down to our vineyard crew and the switch to organics several years ago - all of which have given our vines the extra strength and vitality needed to combat the difficult weather thrown at them.

So despite the challenges we got in some pretty fine fruit – not as much as we had hoped however always better to have abit less and it be good than the other way around !

In the winery we then had to handle the fruit very carefully – the fermentations were like soufflés! Open the oven door too early - ergo overdo the fermentation in any way – and the soufflé would collapse! This meant keeping a close eye on temperatures – staying over many a night tending the fermenting wines –plunging gently at just the right time – trying to extract just the right amount of colour and flavour without working the grapes too hard –

Now in barrel we already see some of the results – wines of delicacy and finesse – pretty wines with some balance and texture are emerging – not overly concentrated nor with sweet fruit however wines with some depth, lovely savoury and cherry notes, and with enough power to suggest some length and longevity will eventuate.

We are seeing the same style albeit with different flavours emerge with our whites. Delicacy and finesse being the bywords to look out for

On reflection the start to spring allowed the vines to develop early strength and then the mild conditions allowed good hang time without the fruit getting overly ripe – at the same time our vineyard work meant that any associated dangers with this type of weather were kept at bay.

It was a vintage that suited our style of wine it seemed – not big fruited nor concentrated but if you took the time and finessed your vines then you were able to get some finesse in your wines. Not for the lovers of the big ripe and concentrated – but then frankly who cares as we are not !

A year to definitely look at individual producers and associated styles - something that i suspect will apply across most of New Zealand.