

Vintage 2017

James Ceccato – Winemaking Director:

Just when I thought there was a trend to earlier drier vintages as the norm, we had the 2017 vintage to blow that out of the water.

The 2016 Winter/Spring was the second wettest on record for the Riverina since 1957, with 686mm of rain for the year, 286mm above average (400mm) for the area. A mild, not cold winter continued through to December and early January and as a consequence the vines budded late and the season progressed slowly. Many old timers were heard to say “this is how it used to be, we wouldn’t start picking until well into February”.

With the abundant moisture and mild conditions, the vines thrived setting good crop levels and were the healthiest looking vines I have seen in quite some time. Early rains caused isolated mildew infections, and a few blocks in the area were lost as a result, mostly due to it being too wet to get into the vineyard to spray against infection.

Our first fruit picked was on the 8th February, almost 3 weeks behind recent years. The last of the local Cabernet Sauvignon was crushed on the 19th April, with South Australian Cabernet Sauvignon finishing up on the 1st May, ensuring 2017 was one of the longest vintages in my 36 vintages in the Riverina.

Overall, we have some pretty nice parcels of whites with standout reds being the Shiraz and Merlot, resulting in a good solid year.

I’ll let our winemakers share their take on this vintage:

Glen Snaidero – White Winemaker:

A mild summer and cool nights resulted in a long ripening period and good fresh fruit flavours in most white varieties. In the vineyard, flavour ripeness came well before sugar levels were achieved and thus lower alcohol 2017 white wines will be prevalent.

So, what will 2017 actually taste like? Fresh citrus and tropical fruit flavours with plenty of herbaceous notes to be found in most varietal blends particularly those of Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Moscato. Whilst many Chardonnay’s will be somewhat lighter in body than previous years, winemakers will be working hard on this with extended lees and oak maturation. A positive however is crisp acidity and freshness will see these wines age well going forward. Eden Valley Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are looking the highlights with good intensity of fruit and excellent acidity.

Bill Gumbleton – Red Winemaker:

Our local reds began with Shiraz coming in on 17th March, rather late compared to the past 8–10 years. With the lateness of the vintage, growers found it hard to reach the desired sugar specifications however with cooler conditions looming, the decision was made to pick on fruit and seed ripeness on a parcel by parcel basis, ensuring the best possible quality was maintained.

This saw us apply almost double our normal attention, requiring higher turnover regimes to aid colour stabilisation & tannin extraction out of the skins whilst maintaining the desired characters.

Stand out varieties for the vintage were Shiraz and Merlot, however Cabernet parcels taken from Padthaway, Coonawarra & Murray Darling regions all show good colour and varietal characters. Our Big Block Shiraz & Eden Valley Cabernet parcels are lighter in spectrum (more red fruit) than previous years and these wines show good varietal characters.