

Te MATA

ESTATE 1896

'Very early, very good.' **VINTAGE REPORT 2014**

Spring of 2013 was unusually dry and mild leading to budburst a good two weeks early. This increased the time tender young shoots were exposed to frost risk but on the few occasions frost fans ran in the district temperatures stayed above zero.

October was warm and dry with half the normal rainfall and November continued to be very warm with six days over 25 degrees and one at almost 30 degrees – summer temperatures! The early trend continued with Chardonnay flowering in full swing on the 13th compared with the usual first week of December. Flowering went well in all varieties. By late November soils were beginning to dry out although 70mm of rain on the 26th and 29th replaced soil moisture keeping the vines happy.

December stayed very warm, if a little humid at times, with many 25 to 30 degree days and warm nights. The vines thrived and even the 20mm of rain from showers on the 29th dried quickly. Rainfall on average was about 50mm.

Warm to hot conditions continued through January and it was windy at times. A diary note of mine on the 4th of January (another 30 degree day) stated that things were drying out fast and irrigation was beginning in some vineyards. Colour change in red berries and softening in chardonnay berries began by the 22nd of January – very early by our records. January finished with a cooler week. Rainfall for the month was again half the norm.

February began cooler with an easterly set to the weather. 40 mm of rain on the 7th and 8th allowed irrigation to be turned off for a week but the warmer temperatures returned on the 11th with all but two days of the rest of the month over 25 degrees and four days over 30. We spent much of February cluster-thinning to reduce the crop size in our red blocks, as bunch counts and weights at this early stage were indicating some large crops. Rainfall for the month was average at 60mm.

Harvest got underway with Chardonnay on the 3rd of March and was into full swing on the white varieties on the 9th - about a week earlier than usual. The rate of ripening had slowed down due to some milder temperatures late February and early March as well as the rain in February. Warm to hot weather again prevailed by mid March.

The very favourable weather produced grapes in beautiful condition and crops of above average weight that were ripening at the same time! With a massive effort in the vineyards and the winery we finished whites on the 14th of March. No rain at all had fallen between the 11th of February and

the 15th of March when an ex-tropical cyclone passed by, dropping 13mm of water. March rainfall was again half normal.

Merlot in our Bullnose Vineyard had modest sized crops for 2014 and was harvested fully ripe in lovely condition on the 10th and 13th of March. Harvesting of the reds restarted on the 20th of March with Merlot and Cabernet Franc. As with the whites the red crops were in pristine condition and had ripened all at the same time. We started harvesting reds in earnest on the 26th of March and then picked every day until finishing vintage on the 4th of April.

In our 35 vintages at Te Mata Estate 2014 was the second earliest to the excellent 1989, which we finished on the 31st of March. Forecasted rain began to fall on the 6th of April and by the time it stopped on the 18th over 150mm had fallen. All of our red blocks had ripened early, and there would have been nothing to gain and everything to lose by hanging fruit past the 6th.

Heat summation figures for the season makes interesting reading. The Bullnose block recorded 1433 degree days to the 4th of April which is close to the long term, full season average. That explains why the crops were ripe so early. Average heat summation in Hawke's Bay is ideal for full ripeness in white and red grapes as long as other factors don't work against us. To the end of April Bullnose recorded fifteen 76 degree days! The history books will record 2014 as one of the hottest summers but, of course, any warmth after the 4th wouldn't be any use.

There is no doubt that 2014 is an excellent vintage.

Warm and dry weather all season and the consequent lack of disease pressure allowed us to grow good quantities of perfectly ripe grapes. Acid levels in the finished wines are a little lower than normal with pHs about average, making the wines approachable and vibrant.

The young white wines from 2014 are showing delightful, pure fruit aromas and good palate weight. They will be delicious wines on release and the more serious wines will benefit from several years in the cellar.

One of the remarkable things about the 2014 reds is that the grapes on the vine developed more berry fruit flavours than usual and earlier than we can remember. It was a pleasure tasting for ripeness right from first sample!

The young wines look remarkably dark in colour and may be even darker than some of our 2013 reds, which is certainly saying something. Fruit aromas and flavours are in the perfectly ripe red and dark berry spectrum without tipping over into jamminess. The tannins are rich and firm and in the Syrahs appear to be the ripest we have ever seen. 2014 reds will impress right from the start and will cellar for a long time.

2013 and 2014 - The Celestial Twins?



8/5/14