



# HARVEST REPORT

SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

2018



# SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

## 2018

---

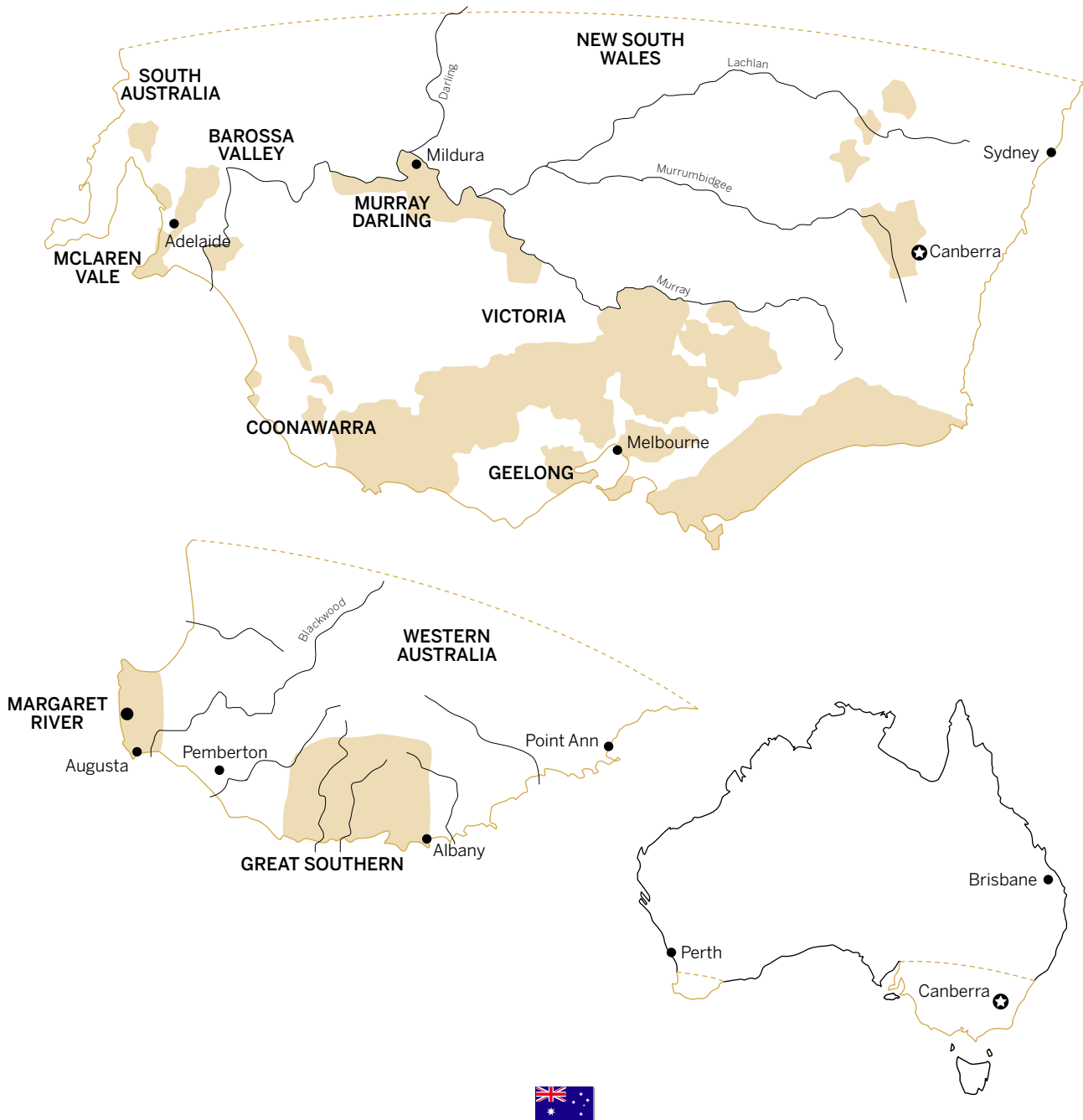


In contrast to the Northern Hemisphere and due to the large distances between the major wine producing countries, there is little reason to expect consistency across the vintage.

That said, in 2018 most of the Southern Hemisphere can be pleased with the results of the vintage. Argentina and Chile saw a return to form following a couple of difficult years, whilst Australia is celebrating an extremely high quality vintage. New Zealand faced challenges due to high temperatures and late rains, but careful work in the vineyard helped to ensure that a good crop of high quality grapes was brought in.

Even South Africa, where the well-publicised drought caused much concern for many growers, was able to produce good wines where water was available and where dry-farmed old vines were better equipped to cope with the stress.





# AUSTRALIA

Reports from Down Under are positive, with a warm dry growing season and beneficial conditions during harvest leading to predictions of high quality wines from all regions. Overall volumes are down on the bumper 2017 harvest, but not to such a significant degree so as to cause any major concerns.





## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### COONAWARRA

November saw spring frosts and a period of heavy rainfall but apart from a brief heatwave in January which affected the whole of South Australia, the rest of the growing season was clear, warm and dry.

At **Katnook Estate** harvest began on the 12th of February and finished with the last of the Cabernet Sauvignon on the 12th of April, three weeks earlier than normal. The harvest came in around thirty percent down compared to the bumper 2017 vintage, primarily due to the spring frosts and drier conditions, but the quality is expected to be extremely high, particularly for Riesling and Shiraz. In the words of senior vintage winemaker **Greg Clayfield**, "Ideal, even ripening conditions led to a very controlled harvest and crush schedule, with all varieties picked at optimum maturity. A key factor was the sustained dry season, with neither rainfall nor temperature extremes having any influence. In short, 2018 was a very good Coonawarra vintage here at Katnook."

### MCLAREN VALE

At **Chapel Hill**, the 2018 vintage went well from start to finish. Plenty of rain during the winter helped to set the vines up well for the growing season and spring saw perfect conditions for balanced canopy growth. January was warm and very dry with only a few heat spikes and was followed by a comparatively cool and dry February and March allowing the fruit to ripen at a moderate pace. As a result, harvest was well ordered and produced yields in line with the average. Winemaker **Michael Fragos** is excited about the quality, saying: "The red wines are quite expressive with lashings of fine grained tannins, very much in the 'powerful and graceful' window."

## VICTORIA

### MILDURA

Over at **Deakin Estate** in Mildura, a dry September was followed by normal rainfall patterns from October to December. January saw the same high temperatures that were experienced in other Australian regions but these were handled with careful irrigation and canopy management. Picking began on the 23rd of January and was finally completed on the 5th of April, with the warm dry conditions remaining throughout the harvest. Volume was significantly down on the bumper harvest of 2017, although it remained largely in line with the average size. Winemakers **Frank Newman and Aidan Menzies** are extremely positive about the vintage, saying "The warm, dry weather which was the hallmark of the 2018 season made for good, ripe flavours across the board. Overall, we had a smaller than average crush and excellent quality, so we are confident of a successful 2018 vintage once these wines are bottled."

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### MARGARET RIVER

A wet December and a relatively cool January and February, with temperatures keeping below forty degrees, has meant the 2018 is looking like a fantastic vintage both in terms of quality and yield. **Andrew Watson** at **Woodlands** states that "2018 provided almost perfect conditions in Margaret River, with a remarkable consistency of warm and dry weather. Honestly, you couldn't plan it better. I consider it to be potentially Margaret River's greatest, together with 2016, 2012, 1995 and 1981."





## NEW ZEALAND

The 2018 vintage in New Zealand will certainly go down as one of the warmest on record, with above-average temperatures in all regions. These high temperatures, combined with the heavy rains in January and February brought by Cyclone Gita, meant that the decision around when to harvest was absolutely crucial. The risk of rot was very real, so careful vineyard management was an absolute necessity. Picking began and finished much earlier than usual, with the harvest season far more compressed than as well. Nonetheless, where these challenges were well managed, high-quality wines will be produced.



## NORTH ISLAND

### HAWKES BAY

An extremely hot spring and early summer was followed by continued warmth and significant concentrated periods of rainfall, giving the same quandary around the timings of the harvest. That said, the total amount of rainfall was only a little above the long term average. **Simon Nunns** at **Coopers Creek** reports that their Chardonnay from here “may be the best we have ever seen” whilst Syrah has “deep colour and glorious structure.”

Over at **Babich**, **Adam Hazeldine** is quite happy with their results, confirming that “due to some deft and brave decision-making, we managed to ripen most of the fruit to absolute perfection, resulting in quality you usually only see in those ‘easy’ and great vintage years.”

### GISBORNE

Spring was the warmest and driest and summer was the earliest in living memory. Like other regions, March saw significant rainfall in concentrated bursts. For **Coopers Creek**, Malbec was harvested in great condition and Albariño was high quality, although a smaller than usual crop. Arneis unfortunately fell foul of the weather and no grapes were harvested.

### WAIRARAPA

The hot summer led to an extremely early harvest at **Mount Holdsworth**, with picking commencing and finishing earlier than ever before. Heavy rains did appear around harvest time, but ensuing warm spells ensured that ripe, healthy fruit was harvested; the Pinot Noir is already showing great depth of colour.

## SOUTH ISLAND

### MARLBOROUGH

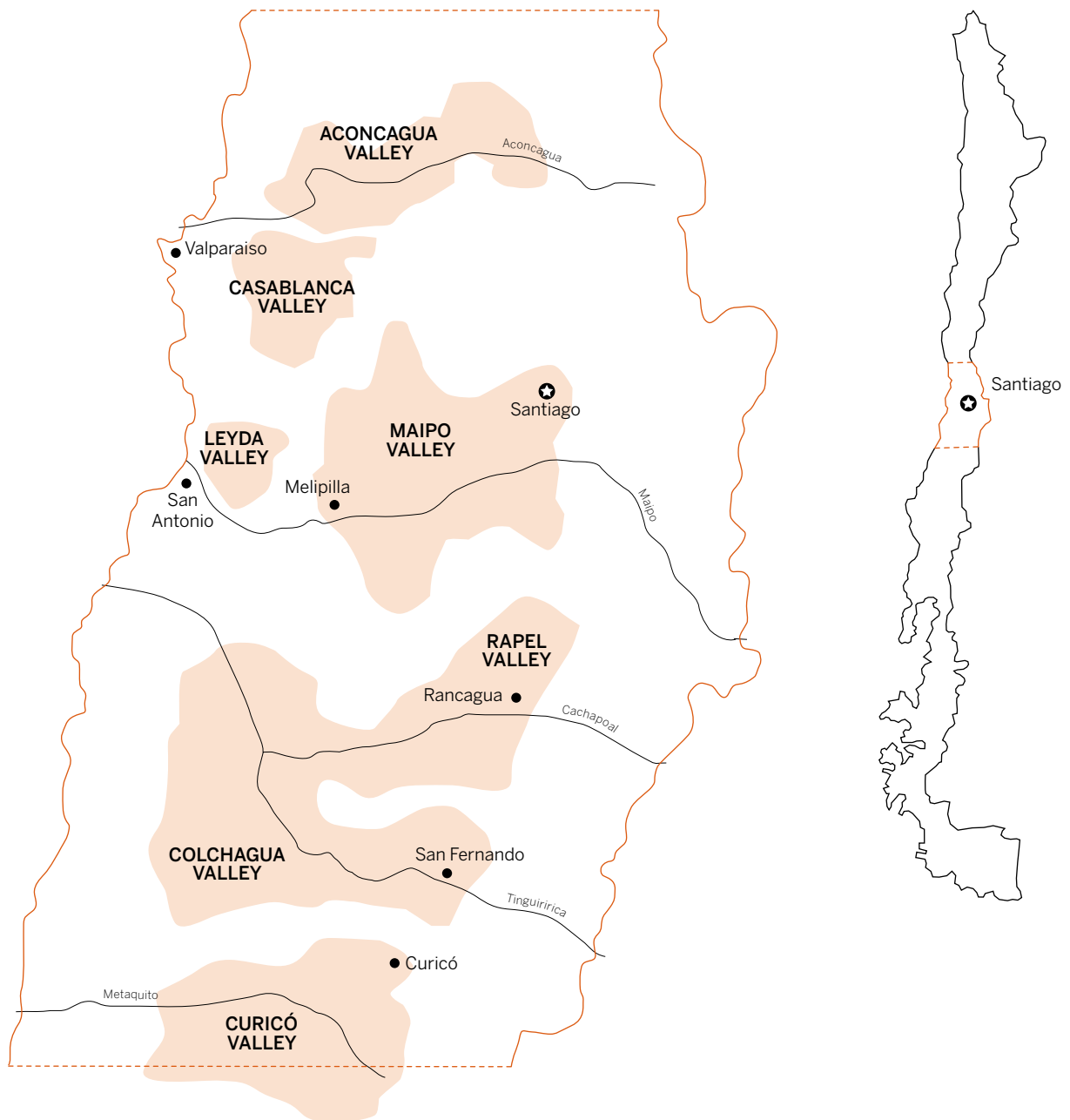
A moderately rainy January was followed by the wettest February on record for Marlborough. March brought respite from the rain though and the harvest began at **Mahi** on the 19th of that month, around one week earlier than normal and was completed by the 6th of April. To put that into context, this was one day earlier than harvest commenced in 2012! The vintage team reacted well and took advantage of the drier spells to complete the harvest and according to **Brian Bicknell**, “at this stage we are super happy with the fruit quality, picking decisions, and wine potential that we have seen so far.”

The team at **Coopers Creek** are similarly happy with the decisions that they made during the harvest, with winemaker **Simon Nunns** stating that “we harvested some of the best Sauvignon Blanc that we have seen in a number of years.”

**Babich** winemaker **Adam Hazeldine** is equally buoyant, suggesting that “while it was a challenging season, it’s produced some stunning wines easily on par with our best vintages of the past.” Particularly pleasing is the Sauvignon Blanc, where “flavours are ripe, and intense aromas are lifted and pungent.”







## CHILE

Following on from the wet 2016 and the hot 2017, 2018 can largely be characterised as a cool, dry vintage, finishing later than on average and producing wines with elegance, finesse and lower alcohol levels.

The total volume harvested was around ten per cent up on the previous vintage in the interior regions, with the coastal regions production largely in line with the long term average.



## MAULE

Maule is situated towards the southern end of Chile's Valle Central and has some of the country's oldest vineyards. The improvement in quality here has been stratospheric in recent years as wineries have taken advantage of established old vineyards producing high quality fruit that was previously lost in generic bulk blends to feed the domestic market. In 2018 the temperatures in Maule were at the lower end of normal, with double the rainfall of the previous vintage, which was luckily concentrated during the winter months. These lower temperatures have meant that the harvest took place some fifteen days later than the previous year and we can expect to see elegant and balanced wines from this vintage.

## MAIPO

Reports from **Morandé**, one of whose estates is in Maipo, suggest that temperatures throughout most of the season were lower than the previous year and only reached parity with the previous vintage in March and April. There was little rain and what there was, was concentrated during the winter and at the very beginning of the summer. The cooler weather meant that the harvest was between seven and fifteen days later than in 2017.



## COLCHAGUA/CACHAPOAL

Over at **Lapostolle** they started bringing in the first blocks of Sauvignon Blanc on the 27th of February with the last blocks of Carmenère reaching the press on the 15th of May – a slow but steady harvest.

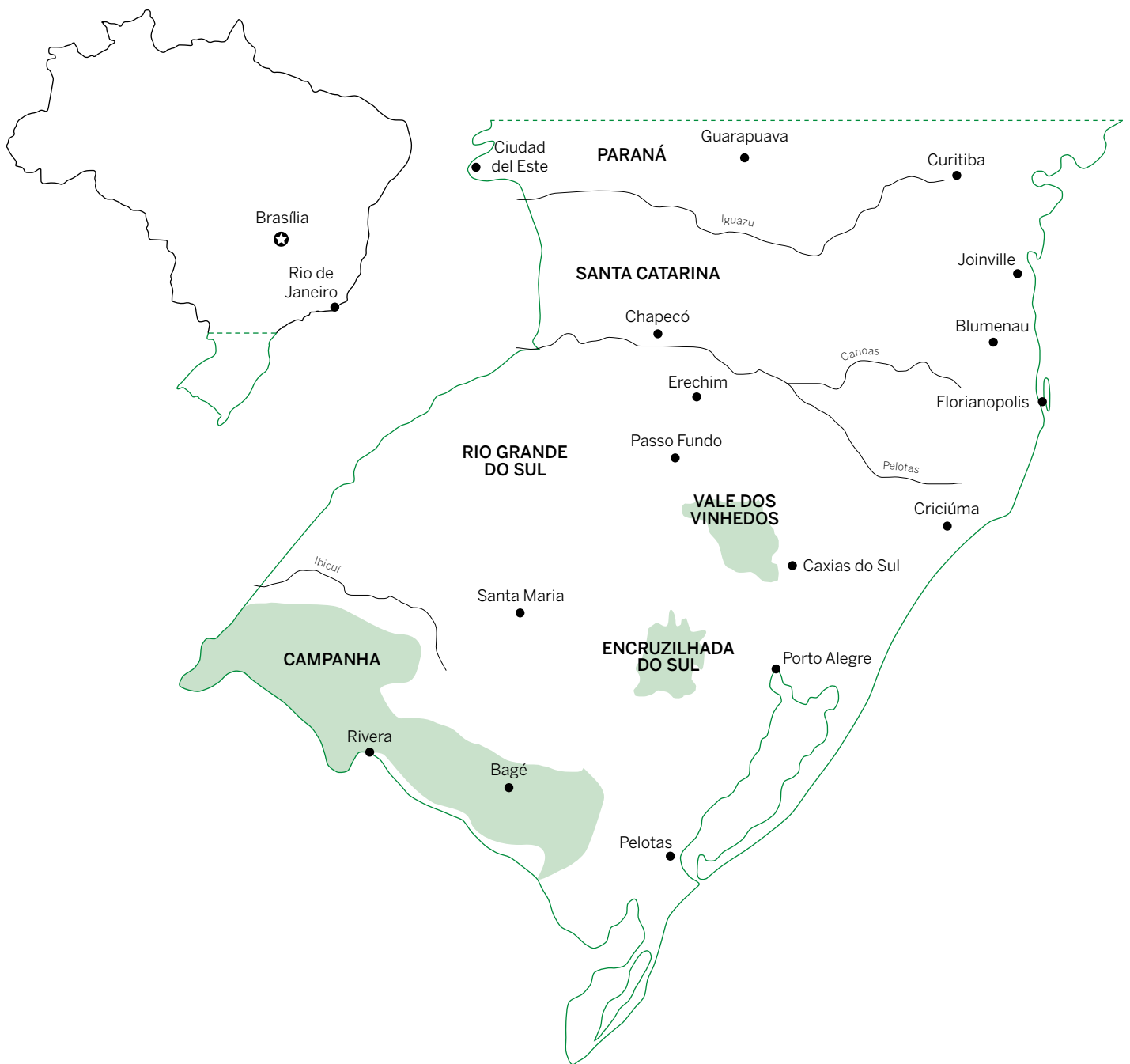
A cool, wet winter was followed by cool conditions in April and March, but since there were no heavy rains throughout the season, they could be patient and wait for the grapes to ripen fully before picking. The total volume harvested was good and the grapes were healthy – this vintage will produce fresher wines with below normal alcohol levels. Andrea León says “overall this is a vintage that will deliver finesse and elegance.”

## CASABLANCA

The cool-climate coastal region of Casablanca is perfect for Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, and 2018 was even cooler than average. In some cases this meant that the grapes were harvested a full month later than in 2017. This can lead to difficulties at the winery as bringing in the harvest becomes congested, but the slower ripening makes for high-quality grapes with a more complex flavour profile, producing elegant wines with lower alcohol levels.



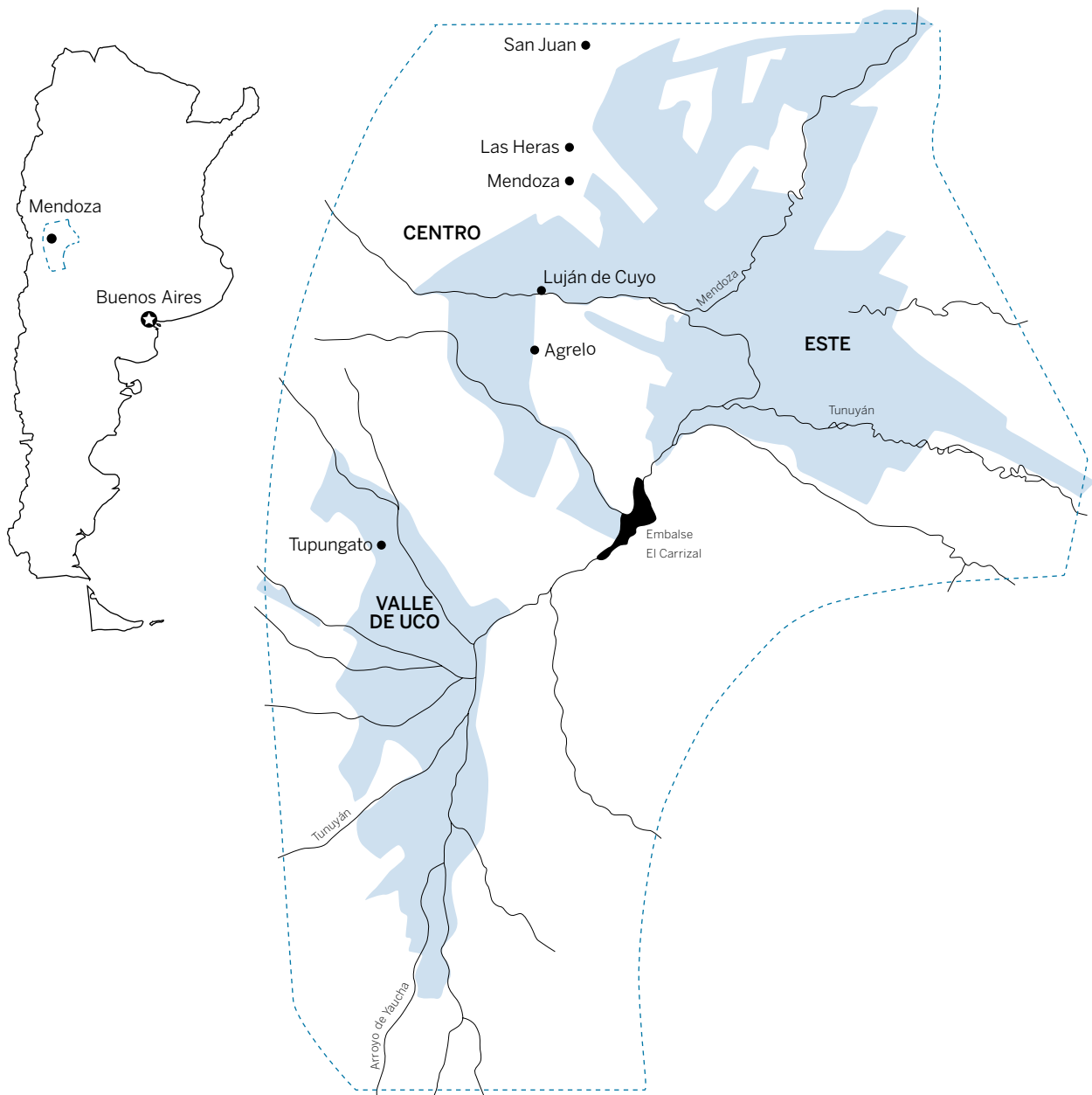




Brazil's wine industry is concentrated in the south on the high Serra Gaúcha in the Rio Grande do Sul state. Here the relatively cool winters and warm dry summers make the cultivation of vines possible. Harvest traditionally commences earlier here than in most other Southern Hemisphere countries, with the first bunches normally picked in January.

The winter of 2017 was warmer than average. 410 hours with temperatures below 7°C is the norm, but during this winter the temperature only fell below 7°C for a total of 188 hours. Normal weather patterns returned in the spring and summer however ultimately bringing some balance to the vintage.

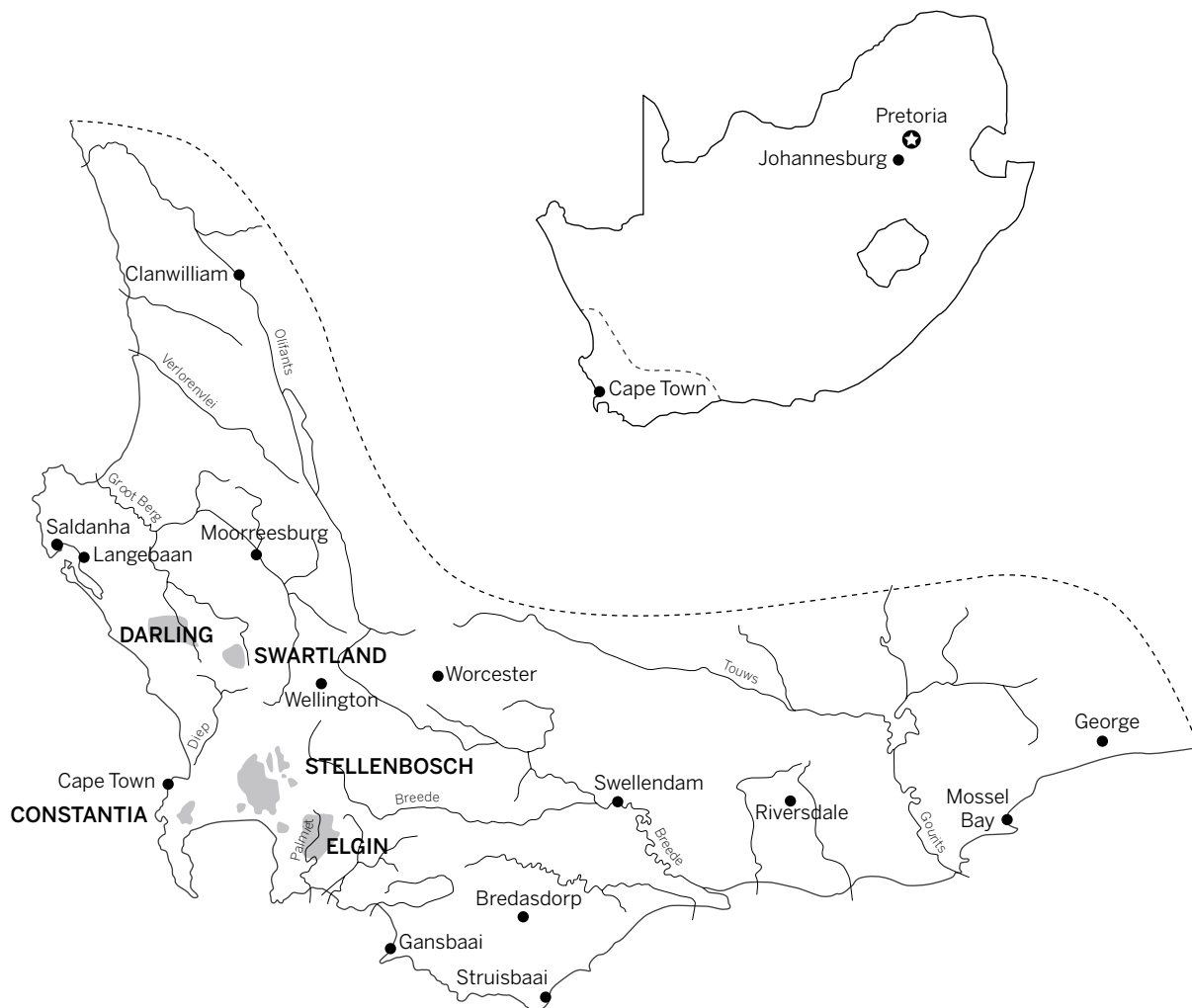
**Casa Valduga** make wines in three of the sub-regions of Rio Grande do Sul: Vale dos Vinhedos, Campanha and Encruzilhada do Sul. Due to the warm winter, bud break occurred early and harvest began approximately one week earlier than normal, with the first bunches of Chardonnay for sparkling wine being picked on December 27th, and finished two weeks ahead of the previous year on the 14th of March. Lower-than-average rainfall during the season and cooler nights helped ensure that the grapes ripened well with good sugar levels and deep colours, whilst retaining good levels of acidity.



The 2018 harvest in Argentina will yield volumes in line with the long term average – much needed after two short years. This represents an increase of over thirty percent over the difficult 2017 vintage. In addition to the good volumes, quality is also expected to be high. A warm spring ensured good fruit set and a moderately warm and dry summer was followed by cooler weather during the harvest months. Rainfall was low throughout the season and there was plenty of sunshine to ensure even ripening of healthy grapes, both red and white.

At **Finca Decero** in the Agrelo sub-region of Mendoza, yields were a little lower than normal, particularly for Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon, but the perfect ripening conditions during March and April mean that the early assessment of quality is positive: “Structure, acidity and flavour concentration of young wines allow us to predict great aging potential and solid quality across all varieties.”

**Bodega Norton** own five vineyards in the Luján de Cuyo region of Mendoza. Some of the higher altitude sites here experienced late frosts in October, but after this weather patterns returned to the norm allowing for a good harvest of healthy grapes. Clement weather at harvest time was particularly beneficial as it allowed the grapes to become fully ripe before picking. As a result we can expect 2018 reds to be ripe, rich and powerful and whites to show good aromatic intensity, freshness and balance.



## SOUTH AFRICA

The Cape's much-publicised drought during the summer months has undoubtedly had a significant effect on the 2018 vintage for many producers, with the rainbow nation expecting its smallest harvest for thirteen years. The biggest effect will have been felt by bulk wine producers who tend to rely more on irrigation, but overall a fifteen percent deficit on 2017 is expected. The effects of drought were compounded by frosts in the winter as well as the long term trend for farmers to uproot vines to replace them with more profitable crops. Ultimately quality will be high across the board, but access to water was critical to ensuring reasonable yields were harvested – those without will be feeling the pinch.



---

## CONSTANTIA

In spite of the challenges faced, over at **Buitenverwachting**, owner **Lars Maack** is positive about the vintage. Harvest finished at the end of March, which is becoming the norm for this suburb of Cape Town. Constantia received some beneficial rainfall and the dry-farmed vineyards experienced little to no water stress. Whilst volumes were slightly down on 2017, the outlook is good and in his words, "Fruit concentration and physiological ripeness was top class and we are expecting some exciting wines for 2018."

---

## PAARL

Paarl experienced a similar lack of water during the growing season, although temperatures at harvest time did cool down a little. Overall volumes were down on the previous vintage at **Niel Joubert**, although production levels did vary across different vineyard sites and grape varieties. The estate irrigates only sparingly and has plots of old vines which are more resistant to water stress, meaning that the volume losses were not as significant as they might have been. The vines produced small but ripe, healthy berries giving concentrated juice which should bring a greater intensity to the finished wines. Thinking ahead, though, the Joubert family "are hoping and praying for a really cold and wet winter, so that not only will the vines really get their feet wet, but that we rebuild the underground reserves after three dry years."

---

## SWARTLAND

The arid Swartland several hours north of Cape Town was always likely to bear the brunt of the drought conditions, with the expected harvest anywhere between thirty to fifty percent light on the long term average. The saving grace will be the relative age of the vineyards – old bush vines with deep roots cope better with water stress than young vines. Nonetheless, the lack of water has led to a delayed harvest of smaller berries which ultimately means less wine, although the fruit that was harvested was healthy, ripe and concentrated. We can expect high quality wines from this vintage, especially Chenin Blanc and red Rhône varieties.

---

## STELLENBOSCH

Timings for this vintage were back in line with the long-term average following the early starts of the last three years. The dry winter and high winds during flowering have somewhat hampered fruit set, leading to smaller berries and bunches, but have helped to mitigate the risk of rot. At **Neil Ellis**, quality is expected to be very good. **Warren Ellis** reports that they received "a bit of rain during ripening, fortunately at critical times which really helped ripening of the grapes. If you had patience this vintage it will pay off in the end."

---

## ELGIN

Elgin has a markedly different climate to the other Cape wine regions, being much cooler and wetter due to its location high up in the Hottentot Holland Mountains and on average the harvest here takes place around a month later than in Stellenbosch or Franschoek. Unlike the rest of the Cape, drought did not affect the vineyards – in fact Elgin farmers were able to donate ten percent of their water reserves to Cape Town in March of 2018. That does not mean that the vintage did not have its challenges. North westerly winds, rain and hail during flowering hampered fruit set, ultimately affecting yields.

Warm conditions during December encouraged rapid shoot growth which was difficult to control, demanding careful canopy management. A very cool January and February followed, so the grapes ripened slowly, developing good colour and flavour. For **Elgin Vintners**, this meant that harvest came around two weeks later than normal, with below average yields. Quality appears good at this stage, with Chardonnay expressing intense aromatics and flavour, Merlot attaining perfect physiological ripeness and Pinot Noir showing good structure and texture. **Richard Rose**, the general manager, suggests that "the wine in the cellar looks promising" and that "this vintage has great potential".

