



HARVEST REPORT

SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

2019



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIA



The general pattern for the east side of the country was one of cool weather, frost and high winds during spring, which had an adverse effect on flowering, followed by periods of extreme heat and drought during the summer, with the result that many regions will see lower-than-average yields from the 2019 vintage. These lower yields have however contributed to high-quality, concentrated fruit and the dry weather during harvest has ensured that grapes were healthy coming into the wineries.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

BAROSSA

The 2019 vintage in the Barossa Valley presented a number of problems which have impacted on yields. A combination of frost and hail, a lack of rainfall during winter and spring, high winds during flowering and an extremely hot and dry January and February have all contributed to much smaller than usual harvest. In spite of these conditions, the old vines at **Langmeil** have coped admirably and whilst quantity is down, the lower yields of the 2019 vintage have resulted in wines of amazing depth of colour and flavour.

COONAWARRA

Coonawarra saw some light frosts and rain through until mid-December, followed by a heatwave in late January. At **Katnook Estate** the weather hit overall yields, which came in 20% down on the previous vintage. Quality is expected to be good though, with senior viticulturist **Chris Brodie** commenting “The whites showed good natural acidity and complex flavours at harvest. The reds had good, deep colours and great varietal characters.” New winemaker **Tim Heath** expanded on this, stating that the Shiraz will produce “fresh, elegant wines that showcase a “cooler climate” aroma and flavour profile”, whilst Cabernet Sauvignon appears to be “lifted and fragrant”.

MCLAREN VALE

McLaren Vale was no stranger to difficulty, experiencing indifferent weather during budburst and flowering, and extremely hot and dry conditions during early summer, although more stability did return in February and March. At **Chapel Hill**, these conditions contributed to lower-than-average yields, although the heat did help to reduce the risk of disease and the improved weather later in the season helped to ensure even ripening. In the words of winemaker **Michael Fragos**, “Whilst yields were slightly lower, the concentration and vibrant flavour in the resulting fruit was definitely a highlight.”

RIVERLAND & ADELAIDE HILLS

At **Unico Zelo** the winery is focused on working with grape varieties that are naturally resistant to drought and heat, which gives them an inherent advantage in such a hot, dry vintage. That said, 2019 was a vintage of juxtaposition; whilst South Australia experienced its hottest day on record, with the mercury hitting 47°C, uneven weather during flowering led to significant incidence of millerandage.

This coupled with drought meant that yields were significantly down on the previous vintage. The millerandage did, however, provide an unexpected quality benefit as the combination of ripe fruit and high-acid fruit brought balance and helped prevent overripeness due to the heat. In addition to this, new vineyard sources meant that **Unico Zelo** have been able to produce more wine in total than in previous vintages. Winemaker (and Chief Thinker) **Brendan Carter** sums it up best: “Slightly more wine, at slightly higher quality – and a natural phenomenon that afforded us a greater ability to craft wine the way we want to – with minimal-to-no irrigation or acidification. It’ll be a vintage of enjoyment and entertainment for consumers – unexpected freshness and joyous flavours abound.”



AUSTRALIA

VICTORIA

MILDURA

Dry conditions prevailed in the run-up to the 2019 vintage here, with very little spring and summer rainfall received; when rain did come, it arrived during flowering, affecting the fruit set. At **Deakin Estate**, harvest started and finished early, largely due to three hot spells in late January, mid-February and early March. Well-managed irrigation ensured that the vines did not suffer too much and that quality was maintained, but these hot spells led to irregular ripening patterns and causing the picking process to stop and start, which in turn placed pressure on the winery to cope with several days of large crushes. Overall yields were around 13% down on 2018's bumper harvest and more in line with the average for the region. Viticulturist **Craig Thornton** was pleased with the overall quality, stating: "We are seeing terrific flavours across the board and excellent colour in the reds and I would call the vintage a very good season."

Winemaker **Frank Newman** added "I consider the quality rating for 2019 to be good to excellent given that the vintage required more winemaker intervention than normal."

YARRA VALLEY

At **Yarra Yering** in the Yarra Valley, the 2019 growing season started relatively dry and remained so throughout. Some late spring rain kept the vines growing well but interrupted fruit set in Shiraz resulting in natural fruit thinning, however Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon all set well.

January was the hottest and driest on record and this was followed by three weeks of cool days and especially cool nights. Harvest commenced on the 11th of February and lasted for six weeks, producing average yields. Winemaker **Sarah Crowe** is optimistic about quality, stating that "flavour development was good with moderate sugar levels and acids remained bright", adding "we are very happy with the quality of what we have in the cellar".



PYRENEES & HEATHCOTE

At **Tournon-Chapoutier**, harvest took place over a six-week period, commencing with Chardonnay at the Landsborough Vineyard in the Pyrenees on the 6th of March and finishing with Grenache from the same vineyard on the 16th of April.

The harvest has been good overall, with good rainfall over winter and spring and none of the frost damage experienced in other regions. Shiraz from the Lady's Lane Vineyard in Heathcote was hand-picked on the 15th of March and according to the winery's general manager, **Marco Hall**, is "full of concentration and freshness". From the 2019 vintage all the estate produced wines will have organic certification.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

MARGARET RIVER

In Margaret River, **Woodlands** experienced a mild summer and cooler temperatures, leading to delayed flowering and a longer ripening period. Picking took place four weeks later than usual, with the last of the Cabernet coming at the end of April. According to owner **Andrew Watson**, "Chardonnay is already expressing translucent elegance and finesse, whilst the reds are generous and luscious with a character reminiscent of the 2005 vintage".

The 2019 vintage is something of a milestone for Woodlands. Seven years ago they embarked on the journey towards achieving full organic certification, which has now been confirmed from this vintage onwards.

NEW ZEALAND



NEW ZEALAND



New Zealand has experienced a mixed vintage in terms of volume, with early reports suggesting that total yields could be down as much as 20% against the pre-vintage expectations and also down against the previous year. A large portion of this deficit can be attributed to difficult weather conditions in Marlborough, although Hawke's Bay also suffered. Despite these difficulties, quality is expected to be extremely good.

NORTH ISLAND

HAWKE'S BAY

Hawke's Bay experienced a generally warm and dry growing season, although several large spells of rainfall did occur during the summer. Whilst these did not cause a profound effect on fruit quality, they did create the need for a huge amount of extra work in the vineyard to control grass cover and canopy growth.

At **Coopers Creek**, they harvested the Chardonnay for the Swamp Reserve on 20th March and made two passes through the Chalk Ridge Syrah vineyard. The top and hillside parcels were picked on 27th March and the flats on 5th April. The Chardonnay has already gone through both primary and malolactic fermentation (the earliest in the winery's history) and according to winemaker **Simon Nunns**, "the Hawkes Bay wines look great."

Babich are reporting a short vintage, particularly for Cabernet, Syrah and Chardonnay. The warm weather did ensure good ripening though and at an early stage the ferments are looking good.

WAIRARAPA

In Wairarapa, spring came with several cold nights where the risk of frost reared its head. This was followed by a period of intense rain during flowering. At **Mount Holdsworth**, this hit the yields of Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir, although Sauvignon Blanc was saved as it flowers later. The period between January and March stayed dry, with March being one of the warmest ever recorded, allowing harvest to take place in ideal conditions. Overall yields were moderate, with small bunches and berries providing concentrated fruit.

Winemaker **Miles Dinneen** notes that the Pinot Noir is "outstanding with deep colour, rich varietal aromatics, ripe tannins and balanced acidity", Pinot Gris has a "a lovely balance of ripe phenolics while maintaining good acidity at moderate Brix" and that the Sauvignon Blanc is "characterised by the full flavour range from fresh herbs, blackcurrant bush, citrus and passionfruit at moderate brix and ripe acidity".

SOUTH ISLAND

MARLBOROUGH

Extremely dry conditions post-Christmas will see an exceptionally short harvest in Marlborough, New Zealand's powerhouse, with a likely deficit of 15-20% against the expected volume across the region. This will undoubtedly place upward pressure on pricing, especially for Sauvignon Blanc, the region's key variety, although Pinot Noir is also in short supply.

Mahi have reported their earliest ever start to a vintage, with picking commencing on the 7th of March. Rainfall affected flowering in December, meaning smaller bunches and berries, with Sauvignon Blanc grapes 30% smaller than average and yields on Pinot Noir down around 50%. The period from January to March was extremely dry, with only 75% of the typical amount of rain falling during this spell, ensuring that botrytis was extremely rare and the grapes brought into the winery were clean and healthy. So, whilst yields are down, quality is expected to be very good, leading winemaker and owner **Brian Bicknell** to emphatically state "I know personally that I will remember this harvest as one of our best".

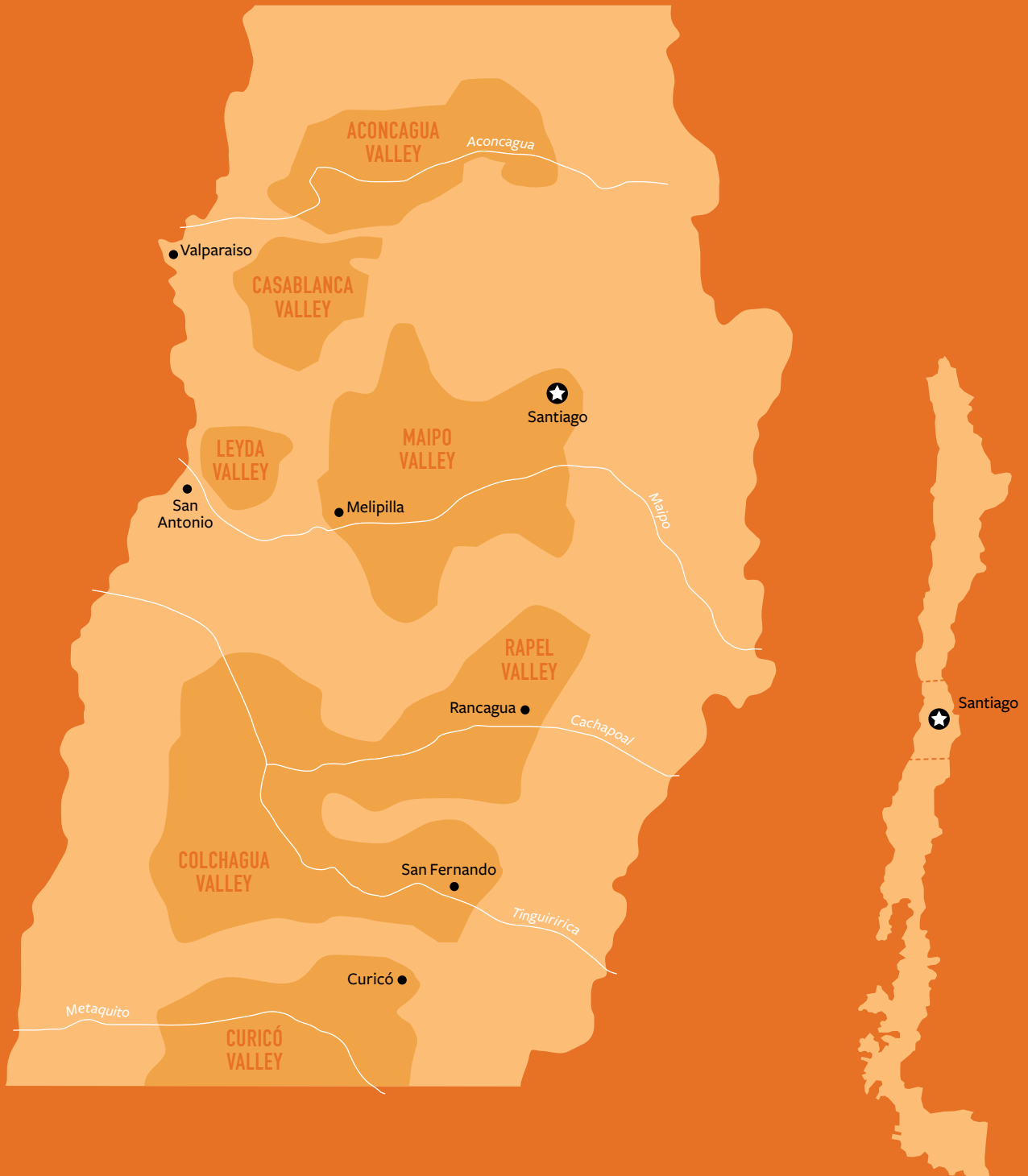
Babich experienced similar difficulties, reporting yields of Sauvignon Blanc down around 15% against pre-vintage expectations and similar difficulties with Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris. Quality is good though, with plenty of concentration.

For **Coopers Creek**, the story is no different – the extended dry spell between Christmas and harvest led to an early vintage, with very small crops. In the words of **Simon Nunns**, "the overall feeling is that the Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir from 2019 are superb, but there is not as much of either of them as we would like."

GISBORNE

GISBORNE experienced warm, dry and settled conditions during the 2019 growing season, allowing for a straightforward harvest period. At **Coopers Creek**, Chardonnay was picked on the 15th March, followed by Albariño on 29th March and Malbec on 1st April. **Simon Nunns** is extremely positive about the quality potential, describing the Chardonnay as "beautiful" and the Malbec as "dark and brooding". In this vintage, he also took the opportunity to experiment with their Albariño with a small proportion of wild yeast and barrel fermentation to add "complexity and intrigue".

CHILE



CHILE



Winter was cold and dry, and the cool temperatures continued into spring, delaying bud-break. A normal pattern of rainfall during this period meant that water levels in the ground were sufficient. The weather remained quite fresh through December, before heating up late in January with the warm weather continuing through February. At times this heat caused vines to shut down, delaying harvest. As the season continued, temperatures dropped in the early mornings and evenings, ensuring a long ripening period.

Chile's harvest drew to a close in May and weather during harvest was excellent, with the dry weather meaning that the wineries could bring their grapes to the presses unhurried.



CASABLANCA

Casablanca experienced some hot spells during the vintage, although these were mitigated somewhat by the valley's trademark cloudy mornings, which helped to keep the temperatures down.

At **Morandé** harvest began with Sauvignon Blanc, one week later than the previous year, although Chardonnay and Pinot Noir were picked roughly in line with the 2018 vintage. At this early stage the Sauvignon Blanc is showing appealing stone fruit character and the Chardonnay looks perfectly balanced.

MAIPO

In Maipo the temperature remained broadly within the normal range, although rainfall was low and spells of heat during March did at times cause the vines to shut down, leading to harvest beginning around fifteen to twenty days later than the norm. For **Morandé** overall yields were a little down, but quality is expected to be good, although sensitive winemaking will be required to manage the tannins in the Bordeaux varieties.

CACHAPOAL

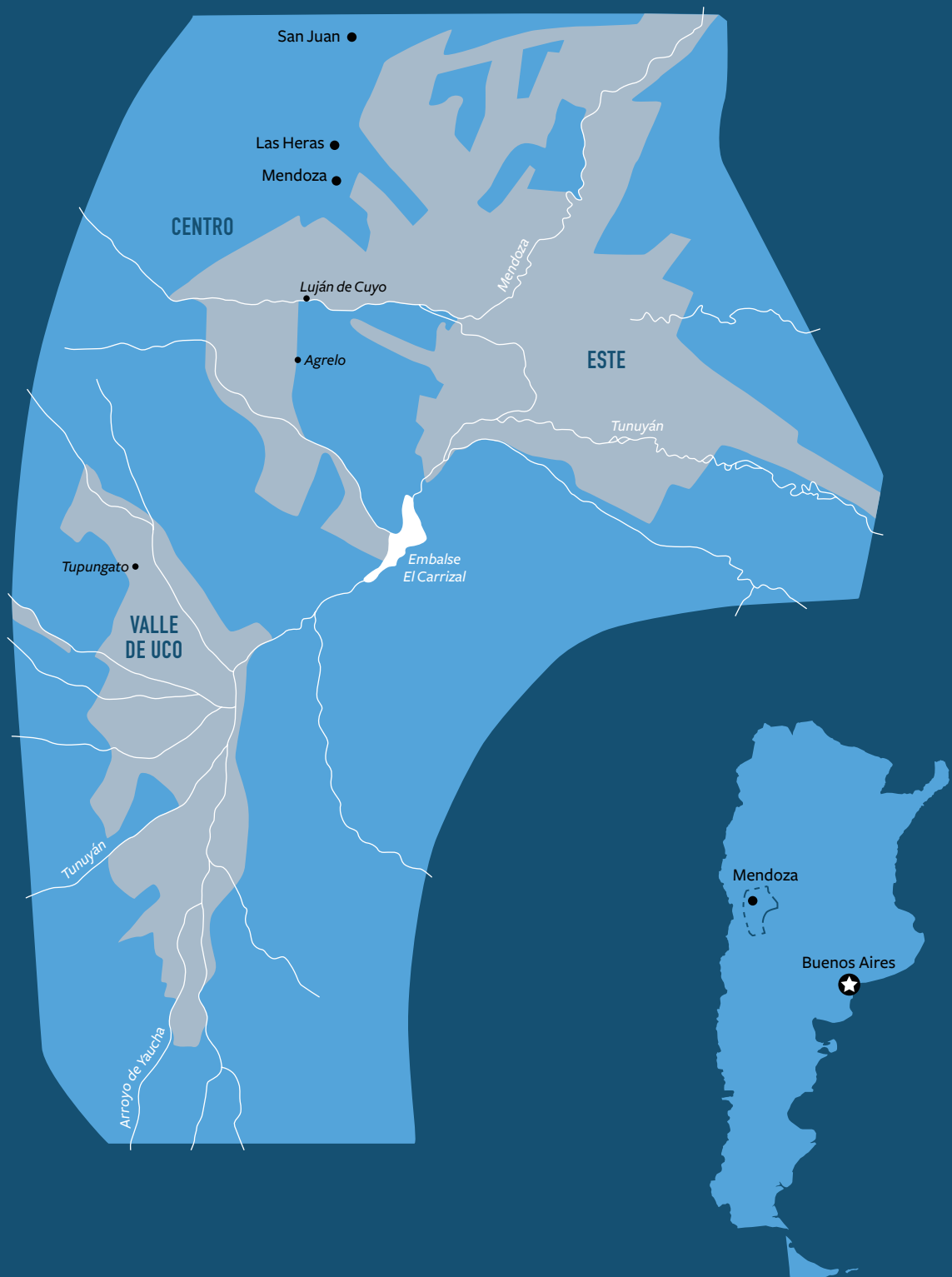
Normal temperature patterns prevailed here, except for February, which was particularly warm. January and April also saw the temperature fall significantly during the evenings, which according to **Ricardo Baettig** of **Morandé** will contribute to "good acidity and colour in the reds". Their yields were a little down on the previous year, but quality looks good.

Lapostolle began picking Sauvignon Blanc on the 21st of February at the Las Kuras vineyard, whilst they began harvesting Merlot in Apalta on the 14th of March. Picking of Cabernet and Syrah commenced on the 1st of April. Winemaker **Andrea Leon** is particularly pleased with the "concentration and freshness of the fruit this year".

MAULE

Winter was cooler than normal, slightly delaying budbreak whilst February and March saw above average temperatures. Rainfall was concentrated mainly during the winter and the weather remained dry throughout. **Morandé's** Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc harvest did show a small decrease in volume against 2018, but their dry-farmed vineyards of Mediterranean varieties performed exceptionally well as the old vines are better equipped cope with the heat.

ARGENTINA



ARGENTINA



Overall, the harvest came in at a 7% deficit to the large harvest of 2018, although to put this in context, 2019's total harvest was still 22% larger than the difficult 2017. Broadly speaking, Argentina experienced a cold winter, delaying veraison by a few weeks, followed by a warm and dry summer, which allowed for a calm harvest period and for grapes to be picked at the ideal moment.

The only area which suffered any significant adverse conditions was San Juan, where a prolonged period of heavy rains during flowering caused a deficit of nearly 25% of volume against the previous vintage.



MENDOZA

UCO VALLEY

In the Uco Valley, sprouting occurred around one week later than usual and winter was cold. Cool and rainy weather continued through Spring and into the first half of January, before the weather became drier and warmer for the remainder of the season, allowing the grapes to ripen evenly and slowly. The resulting wines are showing the perfect balance of alcohol, fruit and acidity, with good concentration of aroma, colour and flavour.

LUJÁN DE CUYO

Some frosts in October caused concern, but as very few sprouts were yet to appear, damage was minimal. The summer was warm, with some hot spells and autumn was long and warm, allowing for even ripening and a calm, controlled harvest. The yields were good and the grapes were healthy, with good tannins, colour and concentration.

Juan Marcó of **Finca Decero** in the Agrelo sub-region describes the vintage as being typical for Mendoza, with "fresh weather, sunny days and very dry conditions across the ripening season". He adds that "Precipitation was 50% lower than usual and vintage was characterized by small berries and cooler temperatures overall. The result was high skin/juice ratios that made for highly concentrated wines with great colour. The young wines are clearly showing the massive potential of the 2019 vintage!"

SOUTH AFRICA



SOUTH AFRICA



Whilst South Africa did not suffer from a lack of rainfall in the 2019 vintage, the preceding three years of drought meant that many vineyards had still not recovered, and the overall size of the harvest fell again by between 1-2% against 2018. The after-effects of the drought were further exacerbated by rain and wind during flowering. Harvest began earlier than normal across the Cape, but a spell of cool weather came through slowing down ripening and causing a protracted period of picking and a later than normal finish.

CONSTANTIA

Constantia experienced cool weather over the winter, with good rainfall continuing right through January, helping to replenish the depleted water levels caused by several years of drought. This cool weather also meant that vine growth took place at a slower than normal pace.

For **Buitenverwachting**, picking began later than normal, but late increases in sugar levels meant that the harvest period was somewhat condensed. Sauvignon Blanc was all picked by mid-March with yields 20% down on average, with Chardonnay coming in a little later at 35% down; the low yields highlight the long-lasting effects of last year's extremely dry conditions. Red varieties came in about on a par with the average. According to owner **Lars Maack**, for Sauvignon Blanc "quality looks very exciting, as cool summers favour this variety" whilst for Chardonnay "fruit concentration and physical ripeness look promising" and finally for red varieties "the cool summer resulted in elegant fresh fruit ripeness."

ELGIN

At **Elgin Vintners**, due to a cool winter followed by a cool summer, the 2019 growing season was much more protracted, with weather remaining cool throughout January, only reaching 30°C in February. March was cooler than anticipated with intermittent rains. This cooler weather did, however, ensure an even veraison and ripening, and diligence in the vineyard ensured that the risk of rot due to the late rains was countered. The preceding winter was also cool, with huge variations in day-to-day temperatures as well as strong winds during flowering, leading to smaller than average bunches and berries, which lowered yields but also the benefit of greater concentration and flavour. Harvest here began in the second week of February with Pinot Noir and ended in last week in March with Shiraz; winemaker **Marinda Kruger-Claassen** predicts "Lovely concentrated and intense fruit flavours with good structure and ripe tannins" in the finished wines.

STELLENBOSCH & PAARL

Stellenbosch seems to have a medium to good crop, with the younger, leafroll virus-free vineyards really coming through in yield and quality. The older, leafroll ridden vineyards are suffering, maybe a hint that their era is over, and the drive to "clean" vineyards and the economic sustainability of these vineyards, becoming more evident.

Paarl was one of the South African wine regions to see a larger harvest in 2019 than 2018, although the bar had been set low by the previous vintage and production was still below the long term average.

At **Lievland**, although they still had lower than average rainfall over the total growing season, they saw some quite substantial rains that fell during the late season, typically the driest part of the year. Despite the more moderate weather conditions, the vines still seemed to be recovering from the long drought: the fruit set was light and the bunches and berries smaller than average. The harvest ended up being about 20% below the long-term average. At this stage, head winemaker **José Conde** is "cautiously optimistic about the quality", stating that "the whites are rich and flavourful whilst the reds are low in alcohol, but with good concentration and structure."

DARLING

Hennie Huskisson at **Cloof** winery in Darling reported a similar sized harvest in 2019 to the previous year's, with "bolder flavours coming from the fruit revealing better quality". He is also optimistic that the increased rainfall post-harvest in the autumn and winter will see increased volumes from the next harvest.