



MARGARET RIVER WINE

MEDIA RELEASE

31 March 2020

A Silver Lining:

MARGARET RIVER VINTAGE 2020 HAS BEEN OUTSTANDING

At the start of the 2020 growing season, no one would have believed the situation we are in right now. However, it is during challenging times like these that we look for a silver lining, and the silver lining for the Margaret River region is the exceptional vintage we have just wrapped up.

The Margaret River wine industry finishes one of the most unusual harvests to date, the region raises a collective sigh of relief to have been able to complete the 2020 vintage undisrupted; without significant rain, lockdowns or the impact of bushfires and losses that sadly, some regions in other parts of Australia have had to endure. We are humbly counting our blessings.

The region enjoyed an early start to the season, with warmer than average spring temperatures evolving into the perfect summer growing conditions. Low disease pressure, timely flowering of native Marri trees to keep the birds at bay and little to no rain meant that growers could literally “take their pick” when they wanted.

Compared with the challenges of cooler weather and significant bird pressure in 2019, the 2020 vintage in Margaret River was a real treat for viticulturists. The only downside of note has been the lower than normal yields across all varieties, resulting in one of the smallest harvests in recent years.

Yet here is another silver lining... the lower yields have resulted in exceptional fruit that is physiologically ripe and shows divine concentration of aromas and flavours.

While the 2020 vintage from Margaret River will be in scarce supply, it will be a very special vintage to look out for.

Our thoughts go out to all those who have been adversely impacted by the current pandemic. We hope to raise a toast in acknowledgment of the difficult days we’ve survived when we get through to the other side of this.

GROWING SEASON

After a significantly wet winter with rainfall 30% above average, temperatures gradually crept up to above long-term ranges while rainfall fell well below norms as spring commenced. Regular heat-waves through the months of October, November and December saw maximum daytime temperatures regularly in the mid 30's. These periods of high temperatures caused an acceleration in grape development, fortunately without the related sunburn which can occur if such heat occurs after veraison.

Chardonnay was first out of the blocks with an early budburst at the end of August. This allowed the soil to dry and warm, providing ideal conditions for early root growth and optimal access to nutrients. As other varieties commenced their growth, we saw development of healthy, well-balanced canopies across the region.

The growing season overall offered ideal conditions for a wide range of varieties, from early to late ripening. The beautiful weather and lower yields gave sufficient time for fruit to reach its best without the pressure of a premature harvest date due to disease or poor conditions.

HARVEST CONDITIONS

Harvest began at the end of January, the earliest start on record, brought on by lower yields and warm, dry weather which ripened the fruit more rapidly than is usual.

The warm daytime temperatures saw the first half of the vintage race along with all white grapes harvested by the end of February, a very early finish for the white's harvest.

During this period, the season's regular dry, sunny days provided a natural impediment to any development of disease which can thrive on humid, cloudy days. Marri trees blossomed extensively, keeping the birds away from the vineyards.

A weak, cold front brought approximately 35mm of rain in late February to early March and daytime temperatures moderated in mid-March which was very beneficial in slowing things down and allowing softening and ripening of tannins and great flavour development. The small amount of rain was also considered a positive by those who own dry-grown vineyards.

By the end of March to early April most of the region had finished their Cabernet Sauvignon harvest, the latest ripening varietal in the region.

YIELDS

The 2020 yields are below the long-term average due to several factors, rather than a specific incident. There were colder than average spring conditions in 2018 when the fruit load is determined in developing buds for the next season. In the spring of 2019, isolated patches of hail, widespread winds and rain caused damage to vine shoots and impacted flowering and fruit-set with varieties which were at a sensitive growth stage on exposed sites in the region, creating low bunch weights. The dry growing season also contributed to lighter than average bunch weights across most varieties.

FRUIT PROFILE

It has been a sensational Chardonnay vintage, with wonderful complexity, balance, concentration of flavours and clean, pristine fruit. With the accelerated ripening, there is incredible retention of natural acidity, texture and loads of energy.

Sauvignon Blanc is showing excellent early floral characters while the Semillon shows richness and roundness. The other whites have also been sensational with fruit displaying purity, freshness and excellent varietal expression.

Shiraz loved the warmth with good depth of flavour, a bright fruit spectrum and lovely tannins with medium weight.

Cabernet Sauvignon is showing excellent potential, with loads of colour, concentration, dark fruit vibrance and the standout feature of lovely fine soft tannins.

Across the board the quality is outstanding.

- ENDS -

Click [here](#) for Images:

Credit: Russell Ord Photo

Vineyard: Juniper Estate, dry-grown Cabernet Sauvignon vineyard planted in 1973

Who: Ianto Ward, Viticulturalist and Margaret River Wine Show 2019 Viticultural Excellence Award Winner.

For further information contact:

Amanda Whiteland – Chief Executive Officer amanda@margaretriver.wine 0417 948 736

Pip Heaford – Communications & Events Manager pipheaford@margaretriver.wine 0409 160 113

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The Margaret River Wine Association is the peak body for Margaret River grape growers and winemakers, established in the late 1970's as the Margaret River Grape Growers & Winemakers Association and was incorporated in 1982. Now MRWA has more than 185 industry members and 50 associated Grape Grower and Commercial members.