



COOL CLIMATE | HIGH ELEVATION | HAND CRAFTED

## 2014 Vintage Notes

The vineyard and winery team at Cumulus Estate Wines have had a bit of everything this season; frost in October, sunshine and warmth in November and December and even a 3.3 magnitude earthquake in January.

Viticulturalist Marty Gransden comments 'It was a very early start to vintage on 29<sup>th</sup> January – probably the earliest ever for our vineyard – a combination of low crop levels, coupled with warm and dry weather conditions. Chardonnay for the sparkling base was the 1<sup>st</sup> block harvested, followed by Pinot Grigio (the earlier picked style) for still table wine, both with nice high natural acidity levels, which is what we want with these styles of wines.'

'We are very lucky, as our vineyard position near Molong has meant that the Cumulus vineyard has received far less rain compared with some of the other vineyards in Orange. Also because we are that bit lower, the majority of our white fruit was ripe and picked before the rains hit,' said Marty.

General Manager, Patrick Auld comments, 'This is my 41<sup>st</sup> vintage in the Australian Wine industry and Marty and Russell certainly make one of the most formidable teams I've ever seen in the vineyard.'

Winemaker, Debbie Lauritz has spent hours between the vineyard and winery, working with Marty to ensure the grapes are picked at optimum levels. Here are some of Debbie's mid-vintage updates from the winery:

'All the Chardonnay has finished ferment now, so we have started some yeast lees stirring in both tank and barrel, to gain some extra palate weight and complexity.

Next was Pinot Gris (the later picked style) which has great flavour and texture. Half the block went to old French oak, half the block stayed in tank, both kicked off a wild ferment. These parcels are just coming to the end of ferment now and will also undergo yeast lees stirring in tank/barrel.

Working closely together, Marty & I agreed to an early pick of Sauvignon Blanc to get a grassy component for the final blend. We then had to wait for a few rainfall events to pass and the flavours to build back up in the fruit before we picked the remaining Sauvignon Blanc blocks. As the vineyard team picked at different ripeness levels we have a good combination of different flavours for the final blend, from grassy through to tropical. This all bodes well for our flagship Rolling SBS 2014 blend.

With rainfall threatening, Marty & I made the decision to pick the Semillon a little earlier than previous years. The wine has now finished ferment and come off yeast lees and although light bodied, it has nice clean lemon citrus characters and crisp acidity.

We have found that flavour has developed at relatively low sugar levels (or Baume) this year which will result in 2014 wines that will have terrific balance between aroma, weight and flavor.

With all the white varieties harvested, the Cumulus team turned their attention to the reds; we started seriously getting into harvesting Shiraz blocks early in the last week of February.

Flavour development came quite early, so we harvested all of our best Orange GI Shiraz blocks in this last week of Feb – blocks 16, 19, 17 and 51. All had a small volume drained off for Rose and were cold soaked on skins prior to going into ferment.

On Block 51 we also did some hand picking so that we could incorporate up to 30% whole bunch portion into our small open fermenters destined for the Cumulus Shiraz product. This parcel was also pressed off skins just prior to finishing ferment and transferred to barrel, so that the ferment would finish off in newly purchased 225L and 500L French oak.

Along with the juice drained off our best Shiraz blocks, we also harvested some Shiraz fruit directly for our Shiraz based rose wine, the Rolling Pink. This fruit was held on skins in the press for 6 hours to ensure we picked up the desired colour and flavour for our award winning Rose wine.

The following week, the first week of March, we continued to harvest Shiraz. We moved into our Central Ranges GI blocks, with these parcels been destined for our Rolling wines, the fruit was kept warm and went straight into ferment.

All the Shiraz wines are now finished malolactic fermentation and are medium bodied with soft tannins and bright lifted berry and plum fruits and hints of spice typical of this region.

We then moved on to Merlot, with all our Merlot blocks being harvested in the second week of March. In the vineyard the Merlot fruit looked the best, with well balanced crop to canopy, healthy canopies, plump well filled out bunches and even individual berry ripeness. All we needed to do was wait for the tannins in the berries to ripen up, ensure the flavour development was there, and then start picking.

The Central Ranges blocks destined for the Rolling Cab Merlot blend came in first, followed by the Orange GI blocks destined for the Climbing Merlot. A small parcel of block 34 was kept separate and fermented in small open fermenters with hand plunging.

The majority of Merlot wines are now through malolactic fermentation, again they are medium bodied and are characterised by bright lifted varietal fruit. Fairly obvious fruit tannins at this point in time, that will soften and integrate with a combination of oak maturation and time.

We breathed a sigh of relief, because at this point we were hit with some significant rain. Cabernet is known to be fairly resistant to the splitting that can occur after heavy rain events, so we were fairly confident it could withstand this rain and associated effects. But Shiraz and Merlot are more susceptible, so we were extremely happy that we had all our Shiraz and Merlot fruit picked and in the winery tanks.

The season definitely broke from Summer to Autumn in late March and we started seeing cooler temperatures which slowed ripening down to a more typical cool climate pace. This allowed the cabernet tannins to ripen up and any green characters to disappear.

We needed to allow a few days of good sunny ripening weather for the dilution effects of the rain to dissipate, deciding to harvest the first of our cabernet blocks in late March. We got 3 blocks picked and were then hit with further rain, so again needed to wait for the dilution effect of the rain to pass. Once the flavours in the fruit had returned we got picking again in the first week of April. With further rainfall threatening, we decided it was time to get all the Cabernet harvested and into the winery, so this was a very busy week! But we managed to get all the Cabernet harvested and even our Grenache and Mourvedre blocks. And just in time, we finished harvesting on the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, only to have a big thunderstorm come through that same afternoon.

Our best block of cabernet, 52North is still on skins, having some post ferment maceration time, to help build and develop the palate weight and tannins in the wine. Our other cabernet blocks have all been pressed off skins and are medium bodied with good varietal fruit and lift. Like the Merlot, the tannins are fairly obvious and will take some time to come together with the wine.

All in all, despite some tough weather conditions and some big rain events, the vineyard and winery worked together as a team, putting in the long hours when required to ensure all the fruit was delivered clean, ripe, with good fruit flavours. These are always the vintages that highlight the advantage of having estate grown fruit, running your own vineyard and harvesters, owning your own winery – decisions can be made and acted upon very quickly, before it rains!

By Debbie Lauritz & Marty Gransden