



Vintage Report 2014

2014 will definitely go down as the most complex and challenging vintage we have had since we started working with Swartland fruit back in 2004.

After 3 very dry winters (2010 to 2012), we had above average rainfall in the winter of 2013 and this was a great relief as it meant that after 3 super low-yielding vintages, our dry farmed vines would have enough soil moisture to ripen a decent crop. Unfortunately we did have a few spells of rain through spring and early summer, and we had to be extra vigilant in the vineyards to protect against Downy Mildew, a fungal disease that did a lot of damage to leaves and grapes of many vineyards in the Western Cape throughout the 2014 growing season.

Fortunately most of our vineyards were treated adequately, and we were mostly unscathed. We did however lose the entire crop from 1 vineyard where we were not able to spray in time, and another vineyard only yielded about 20% of its crop as the remainder was infected with Downy Mildew.

On the up side, the growing season was relatively cool, all the way through to mid February and this meant an extra long ripening phase for the vines, retaining a good acidity and building complexity of flavours. On average we harvested our early vineyards 2 to 3 weeks later than normal, though there were some warm spells in mid and late February that did speed up the ripening process that put the later vineyards spot on time.

In the cellar, fermentations have also been different this year. Probably due to the extra spraying against Downy Mildew, the naturally occurring yeast populations were lower, so the ferments have all taken about 7 to 10 days longer than normal to start, but once they are going they are moving fast!

We are only about mid way through pressing the reds, so it is far too early to tell how the wines will end up. So far though, it looks like we have some particularly exciting Chenin and Syrah from the decomposed Granite soils of the Paardeberg and great Syrah from the Schist based soils of Kasteelberg.

Time will tell!

Chris Mullineux

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