



Press Release

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Marlborough Winegrowers Loving Warm Indian Summer

Vintage 2010 in Marlborough may be running a week later than average, but no one is complaining about the quality of the fruit.

Following a cooler than normal flowering period late last year, the season is well behind, with the majority of wine companies not expected to start picking in earnest before the last week of March.

Senior Researcher at Plant and Food in Marlborough, Dr Mike Trought said while the flowering last year was one of the warmest on record, it was 10 days later than average.

“Usually we have finished monitoring flowering around the 20th of December, but last year we were still monitoring between Christmas and New Year. That later flowering is difficult to catch up on. Even if you have a prolonged period of warm weather it is difficult for it to make any impact on harvest dates.”

Viticulture consultant Dominic Pecchenino says the recent spell of hot days has certainly helped bring the fruit on, but he doesn't expect the major harvesting will begin before the end of the month.

“We are looking at hand picking a small block of Chardonnay for bubbles maybe this weekend, but the rest will be waiting round until the end of March, with the Sauvignon Blanc coming in in April.”

Dr Damien Martin of Winegrowers of Ara says the crops are a little lower than average, but the fruit is clean and the vine balance is great.

“The canopy growth hasn't been too vigorous and it is beginning to slow down now so all the vine's energy is going into the fruit. The warm days and cool nights are exactly what we want at this stage and we're very hopeful at the moment of having a top quality vintage.”

In the Awatere Valley, the cooler and wetter than normal flowering period has seen some variable fruiting levels. Allan Croker from Vavasour says some Pinot Noir yields are lower than expected but even so the fruit is looking very good. He said the recent warm period of weather is providing the perfect build up to harvest.

“I don't remember a similar run where we have had such a period of solid warmth leading into the harvest period. Long may it continue.”

Sauvignon Blanc yields are likely to be lower in 2010, when compared with previous years. A regime by wine companies and growers alike saw many of the region's vines pruned back to three canes, rather than the normal four, as the industry endeavours to lower yields to fit market expectations.

The first of the hand picking of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir for bubbles has begun, with the majority of the harvest not likely to start before the 22nd of March.

For further information:

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