

Marlborough Vintage Review 2012

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The summer of 2012 is one the Marlborough wine industry won't forget in a hurry, mainly due to the fact that it never really arrived. Instead the region went from a cold and damp winter, to a cool and cloudy summer. These conditions, particularly during the all-important flowering period of December, meant yields were greatly affected. There was almost double the amount of rain during December, very low sunshine hours, and maximum temperatures were almost 2 degrees below the long-term average (LTA).

Initially it was thought yields would be down by 10 – 15 per cent. But that was later deemed a little conservative, and in reality yields were down by up to 35 per cent, depending on the sub region. The cooler flowering period and cool conditions in January and February meant vintage was well behind the previous few years – although it has to be remembered that those were warm years and vintage had been much earlier than the LTA. The variety affected the most was the region's flagship Sauvignon Blanc. However Pinot Noir and Chardonnay and Gewürztraminer were also much lower than had been hoped.

However those low yields were the saving grace when it came to ripening the fruit in less than normal climatic conditions. Just as summer officially ended, the sun came out and the region experienced weeks of beautiful sunny days and cool nights, which is exactly what growers and winemakers long for.

The fruit was clean, disease free and able to hang on the vines until the flavour profiles reached optimum levels. There has been much excitement among winemakers at the quality of the fruit and the flavour profiles shining through. Many are predicting it will be a stunning and very strong vintage for all varieties, in particular Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir.