

Marlborough Vintage Review 2014

Tessa Nicholson

Marlborough winemakers are extremely positive about the 2014 vintage in spite of some challenges from late season rain, Wine Marlborough General Manager Marcus Pickens said today. “The common theme that runs through the reactions we’ve had from Marlborough growers and wineries is the earliness of the season and the impact that had on the final result,” he said. “When you combine an early season with a long run of early and mid-season dry weather, you lay the foundation for a good harvest.

“When the rain came in mid-April, harvesting was already well advanced. We don’t yet have any definitive figures for the proportion of the crop picked before the rain arrived, but anecdotally it seems to have been around 80 to 85 percent.” “As a result, we can characterise the vintage as very positive for most vineyards, in spite of the late curve ball the April rain threw at us”.

Marcus Pickens says he’s heard some stories of growers being caught by the wet weather and having to leave grapes on the vine. But he says the majority of growers had their grapes in before the rain arrived and these cases appear more the exception than the rule. “We have heard good reports about the quality of sauvignon blanc grapes and in particular, chardonnay and pinot noir. There have also been encouraging reports about the quality of pinot gris.

“From what we know at this stage, we can be confident that Marlborough will produce some outstanding wines this vintage.” “Marlborough is obviously best known for its sauvignon blanc wines. Wineries are reporting wine with characteristics which will have a great range of passion fruit and tropical fruit flavours.” “That encourages us to believe that wine quality will exceed expectations.” Marcus Pickens says that despite the late season rain, the crop is likely to be Marlborough’s biggest yet.

“That obviously produces challenges of its own but our wineries are telling us they are in a much better position to deal with a big crop than they were back in 2008. The signals were clear early on in the season that we would have a big crop this vintage.

“Since 2008, wineries and growers have become much better at yield estimation – and as a result are getting yield estimation more precise. Being aware a big crop is expected allows them to intervene early through grape thinning which has had a beneficial impact on wine quality.

“They have also had time to work on their marketing and distribution strategies. As the world moves past the global financial crisis that was just making its impact felt in 2008, the market has been expanding rather than contracting.