

## Marlborough Vintage Review 2015

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While Marlborough basked under blue skies throughout summer, the fruit on the vines was developing into some of the best seen in a number of years. Week after week of warm, dry weather followed on from a cooler than average start to the season.

Frosts were the order of the day during the spring, but despite there being 15 in total, there were only small pockets of damage throughout the region.

It was the first day of summer, December 1 that created the biggest impact. Temperatures plummeted, impacting on those vines that were flowering at that time.

Villa Maria's Marlborough viticulturist Stuart Dudley said; "The blocks that flowered later or even earlier than that did well, however the middle flowering blocks were impacted."

Those cooler than expected temperatures carried on into the first half of December, with many Sauvignon Blanc blocks affected. The end result was variability in yields throughout Marlborough. Some were bang on average, others well up to 30 percent below – with all less than the 2014 yields.

By late December, the weather in the region hit the hot and dry buttons. Temperatures began to climb and the rain stayed away. So much so that the region was declared a drought zone in late January, having received the lowest amount of rainfall over a seven month period since records began.

Vines might like it dry, but the continued drought, which saw water rights being withdrawn for periods of time, began to impact in February, just as the fruit hit veraison. The end result was smaller berries, and while that impacts final yields, it does help produce concentrated flavours.

There were predictions that vintage would begin earlier than normal, although this didn't eventuate. With dry conditions and a lack of disease pressure, wineries were able to let their fruit hang longer. Flavour, acidity, texture and sugar levels all benefitted from the increased hang time, and the fruit that was delivered to wineries has been lauded by winemakers throughout the region.

At this stage there is no word on just what the final yield count for Marlborough is, but it is expected to be well below 2014 and below the long-term average. Sauvignon Blanc was the hardest hit, with Pinot Noir and Chardonnay also expected to be well down.

With the first of the 2015 wines about to be bottled, Marlborough winemakers are expressing excitement and looking forward to drinking the fruits of their labour.

