

TWO HANDS WINES: VINTAGE 2020 REPORT

Leading into the 2020 harvest, drought was our biggest issue with Barossa Valley experiencing its driest winter since 1912. In 100 years of record keeping the Barossa had never had two consecutive dry vintages like the 2019 and 2020.

I believe this is down to the Indian Ocean Dipole: <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/iod/>

To combat the extremely dry conditions, in October 2019, we were the first in Australia to install a Sap Flow monitoring system in partnership with french agri-tech company, Fruition Sciences. In the vintage 2020 growing season on our Holy Grail vineyard, we reduced our water use by 28% and we're hoping to get our water saving to 50% for the 2021 vintage.

The summer of 2020 started out with a very hot January. Luckily, a lot of the heat events transpired before the grapes reached Veraison (the process of the bunches colouring, ready for ripening). The weather cooled in early February and we were met with soft ripening conditions, where we had to sit and be patient and to wait for the grapes to fully mature and by the end of February we started to see some excellent flavour development. Making a picking decision on a light crop is incredibly difficult, as with a good canopy the grapes can ripen quite fast and every block in each vineyard is completely different.

2020 was very disparate from region to region and even within each individual vineyard in our quiver. This meant we had to be in vineyards early in the morning, walking and tasting berry and tasting even more berries. Our decision on when to pick is a gut decision and you have to take into account many, many attributes of the vine's cycle, flavour development and the on-coming weather.

As we reached further into the ripening season, the weather continued to be as close to perfect as I could ever imagine.

My new weather app, Morecast, greeted me each morning with a 14 day forecast, of no rain, moderate temperature, good sunlight hours and slight winds - perfect! On two occasions I was ready to rally the troops and to have a few larger picks arranged due to large amounts of rain predicted from the north, but on both occasions these did not eventuate, and we could resume at a more normal and slower pace.

A thrill this vintage was to have our Holy Grail vineyard in full production. This provided us with 132 tonnes of incredibly valuable and high-quality fruit. A huge credit for this success must be given to our Head Viticulturist, Travis Coombe, and his team of John and Alex, who have worked tirelessly throughout the growing season.

In the winery we were led by our new Chief Winemaker, Richard Langford, who brought a new level of professionalism to leading our team. We modified a number of attributes in our wineries before vintage and it was great to see these new efficiencies come into effect. Richard's deft skill and knowledge backed by excellent communication and management skills created a very even flow to our ferment management and fruit intakes. The quality of the juice post pressing is as good as I can remember at Two Hands.

Now that all grapes are in we have time to reflect and I would have to say that the ripening conditions were the best I can remember in my career. Sadly, the Barossa yields were down by more than 50% across the last 10 year's average, so as great as the wines will be, there simply won't be a lot. 2020 marks a run of three very high-quality vintages following 2019 and 2018 and we have a lot to look forward once this Covid time in our lives is behind us.



by Michael Twelfree, Proprietor

