



2008 Wirra Wirra Vintage Report

'A vintage of two halves' has been the general consensus for many South Australia producers. This was also the case for Wirra Wirra, with a small half-time drama thrown in for good measure.

Vintage in Wirra Wirra's McLaren Vale vineyards started 7 February – one of the earliest vintages on record, following near perfect mild, dry conditions during berry ripening. Flavours had matured rapidly and sugar/acid/pH balance in all varieties were described as 'textbook'. In particular, there were a number of parcels of very high quality shiraz and cabernet harvested, with high natural acid and intense colour and flavour.

Ideal vintage conditions were rudely interrupted by a record 15-day heatwave, with maximum temperatures above 35 degrees causing the most condensed harvest in the region's history.

The prolonged heat placed pressure on all wineries in the region to process fruit quickly, none more so than Wirra Wirra who on 6 March suffered the additional set back of experiencing a significant structural set back in their winery. 2008 became a logistical exercise of military proportions for the winemaking team with grapes were diverted all over the district to be crushed at all hours of the day and night.

By the end of March the bulk of the harvest was complete, which was exceptionally early, with vintage normally persisting until the end of April.

There was some berry shrivel and high baumé levels caused by the heat, and approximately five percent of fruit was left on the vine as it was unable to be processed in time, however the fruit harvested prior to the heat looked exceptional.

Wirra Wirra's white varieties from the Adelaide Hills commenced harvest in the last week of February and all fruit picked prior to the start of the heatwave displayed strong varietal character and crisp acidity.

Despite the challenges the region's leading winemakers and grapegrowers are confident that the resulting wines branded McLaren Vale will be of the award winning standard the region has become known for.

"All of the whites and some of the shiraz will be the best produced from McLaren Vale in a number of years. There was some fruit that had to be picked at high baumé levels, but anything that doesn't meet our standards will not be branded as McLaren Vale," said McLaren Vale Grape Wine and Tourism Association Chairman Jock Harvey.

For further information, please contact:

- Hazel Macrae at Liquid Ideas on T: 02 9667 4211, M: 0423 615 147 or E: hazelmacrae@liquidideas.com.au
- Samantha Connew on T: 08 8323 8414 or E: sconnew@wirra.com.au

Wirra Wirra is an aboriginal name meaning "amongst the gums". The winery was established in 1893 by Robert Strangways Wigley (RSW). In 1969 the winery, by then virtually a derelict building and the surrounding seven acres were bought by cousins Greg and Roger Trott and the Wirra Wirra renaissance had begun. Today Wirra Wirra Vineyards is one of Australia's leading wineries with a reputation for intense, beautifully crafted red wines and expressive and fine whites. The Wirra Wirra ironstone cellars in McLaren Vale also features the Angelus – a $\frac{3}{4}$ tonne bell that is rung to signal the start of each vintage in the region and also to celebrate other noteworthy events. www.wirrawirra.com.