



## 2011 VINTAGE REPORT



A great year for ducks!!

Finally after 7 years the drought broke in South Australia.

Winter and Spring rainfall meant we did not have to irrigate until well into December when the weekly showers started to ease and we saw a return to warmer and sunnier weather. January was no different with slightly less rain and continuing temperatures under 35C, until the last few days of the month when we saw a warm patch which helped the grapes mature. Temperate weather throughout South Australia meant we were facing a cooler than average season, which boded well for aromatic whites and Cabernet especially.

As we headed into the mild summer the vines developed well producing good canopies and well set fruit. As cooler weather began to set in just prior to harvest our vineyard managers and growers needed all their expertise and planning skill to ensure the vines received accurate and adequate protection against an increased disease pressure.

In our vineyards across South Australia we spent hours walking the vine rows checking for any issues, and quickly reacting to any problems we found. As a result of this extra care and attention most of our blocks came through with good quality fruit. Any fruit that was not up to our standards was rejected at the vineyard.

We started picking in early February bringing in Sauvignon Blanc and other aromatic varieties, including some outstanding parcels of Riesling and Gewürztraminer from our own vineyards. These classic white varieties really excelled this year showing all the perfume for which they are renowned. The early picked chardonnay also showed some fantastic varietal characters.

It was not until March when we moved into the red varieties starting with Shiraz and Merlot and then in late March moving onto the first Cabernet vineyards. Cabernet and Merlot showing marked varietal characters due to the cool season and there are parcels of Shiraz with fantastic spicy, fruit driven characters.

This was the first year 100 acres at our Nanya Vineyard became certified Organic. This block was to surprise us this year. All our Organic blocks both in the Riverland and in McLaren Vale, performed amazingly well in the trying conditions leading up to harvest. They produced clean and intensely-flavoured fruit, the vine health was exceptional. Products we used on the Organic blocks to prevent disease were so effective that we started using them on the conventional blocks. Organic Shiraz Cabernet and Merlot were all good, with the Organic Chardonnay showing lovely white peach flavours and nice minerality.

Clare unfortunately was heavily infected with botrytis and we will not declare a wine from our vineyards this year as part of our philosophy to only put the best wines from the best regions under our Vineyard Select label. It is disappointing but we are at the mercy of Mother Nature and need to deal with hand she deals.

The Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc was picked early with some unbelievable aromatics and stunning tropical fruit expressions in the free run juice. The wines are looking just as luscious and will be a great follow on from previous vintages.

This was the 3rd vintage since we moved into our McLaren Vale vineyard and every year things have been so different; from drought to deluge. The Biodynamic management continues and we are now 12 months from organic certification. This was the year we had dreaded wondering if our viticultural practices would stand up to the punishment of wet weather, and thankfully we have to say – Yes. In fact we saw the vines show great resilience and great flavoured fruit. Some green harvesting just after veraison kept crop levels at a judicious level, and close attention to the fruit during ripening meant we could ensure that the crop we received into the winery was of good quality. Shiraz showed maturity at slightly lower sugar levels than normal, and Grenache eventuated in low crops. The small patch of Cabernet produced some exciting wine. The wines rest in barrels until allocation next spring.

Coonawarra Cabernet again shows nice intense fruit with striking blackcurrant and mint flavours. The harvest was smaller than expected and the wines will be in limited supply but for those lucky enough to snare a few cases they will be rewarded accordingly with a great wine showing fantastic regionality and varietal definition.

We finished picking on the day before Easter, looking for a well-earned rest, as the wines settled down in the cellar.