

## **Harvest Report 2010**

Stellenbosch, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

The build-up to the 2010 vintage has been an interesting and challenging one. Winter cover crops of Triticale and Rye were sown in near-perfect conditions with 47.4 mm of rain and average temperatures of 18.2 °C in April encouraging steady, even growth, helping to minimise any erosion on even our steepest slopes. Good winter rains (462 mm at Jordan Estate between May and end August) ensured that dams were 100% full and running over relatively early in winter.

### **Budbreak:**

Budbreak was 2 weeks earlier than usual, but cool September temperatures delayed shoot growth (minimums of less than 6 °C being recorded, with the average temperature for the month a relatively low 12.7 °C).

Downy mildew outbreaks were common throughout the wine regions, but a combination of good luck and good planning ensured that crop losses were minimal, although mildew spores were regularly seen on the tops of the young shoots. Our weather station paid for itself ten times over this season, as the vineyard spray programme could be planned in advance of any cold fronts that seemed to hit the Cape with monotonous regularity. Early summer canopy management had to be planned with predicted wind speeds in mind, and while Jordan Estate was spared the phenomenal wind damage that hit vineyards in other wards of Stellenbosch, September and October wind speeds were almost double the average for the summer months and this delayed early vineyard growth.

### **New vineyards:**

Only 21.8 mm of rain was recorded in October, and this enabled newly prepared soils to dry out sufficiently for us to plant a new N-facing medium potential Glenrosa soil to Cabernet Sauvignon as well as a more cooler-sited vineyard to Chardonnay. The latter area had been strip-mined during the tin mining days of the late 1800's, and it has taken many years of earthmoving and many hundreds of tonnes of compost to re-establish this. A small area adjacent to the Cobblers Hill vineyard was planted to Petit Verdot. Who knows, from 8 years time we may consider adding a tiny percentage to the Cobblers Hill.

### **Conditions during early summer:**

Record rains in November of 102.8 mm (compared to 66.6 mm in November 2008) ensured that this month was one of the wettest November months in many decades. Relentless rain caused significant damage to graded vineyard roads, and staff had to spend valuable time fixing the damage when we could least afford it.

Cover crops were allowed to grow for longer than usual before being cut in an attempt to dry out soils and encourage fine-root growth. Three additional teams of contractors had to be hired to help sucker and remove unwanted vineyard shoots. Dense canopies were avoided by topping and tipping later than usual in the season and therefore minimizing any extra side-shoot development growth. Foliage wires

were also carefully positioned so that shoot tips remained undamaged in windy conditions.

**Farming for flavours:**

Shoot positioning, suckering and leaf removal in the fruit zone seemed to take much longer than usual for this vintage, but was essential to ensure ripe flavours, particularly on red varieties. Virtually no rain (5 mm) fell in December, with an average temperature of 19.1 being recorded for the month. Warm days were tempered by cool nights, with very little irrigation being needed. A total of 736.8 mm of rain was received between January and December 2009, roughly equal to the long-term average for this area. Verasion, the onset of ripening, appears to be a week later than usual, although Cabernet Sauvignon is slightly more advanced. This may be a logistical challenge later in the vintage as Cabernet Sauvignon harvest dates may yet again clash with white varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay.

Time will tell how the 2010 vintage pans out. Provided we don't have any serious early-harvest heat waves, in hindsight 2010 could end up being an exceptionally good quality vintage, but one where the number of hours spent in one's vineyards will directly correlate to the optimally ripe fruit flavours of the wine.