

Jordan Estate Harvest Report – 2009

Build-up to 2009 Harvest

Autumn 2008

April 2008 was fairly dry although the 21mm rain that fell on the 6th (10mm) and the 19th April (11mm) was just enough to prepare the soil for planting the Triticale cover crop between the vineyard rows.

Winter 2008

In May it rained weekly and usually less than 10mm per time, with the maximum of 24.4 mm being recorded on the 21st May. May, June and August received similar rainfall (approximately 80mm / month) with July having an unusually high 225 mm for the month with minimum temperatures of less than 8 deg C often being recorded for the period between May and August. This resulted in dams overflowing early as well as enough cold units being recorded during vine dormancy, with the result that budburst was even, although about 3 weeks later than usual.

Spring 2008

Average maximum temperature during August was around 15 degrees C, which continued into September, delaying growth even further. A low of 4.2 degrees C was recorded as late as the 19th September. September was also incredibly wet, with 174mm being recorded at the Jordan weather station. This meant that soils were too wet for planting new vineyards, and to avoid water-logging and compaction, new vineyards were only planted in late October / early November. Despite the fact that young vines had to be kept in the Nietvoorbij cool rooms till then, almost 100% of the vines grew successfully once planted.

Summer 2008

October was dry, with only 15.8mm being recorded, and while the cool weather persisted in November and December, so too did the fairly dry conditions. Less wind than usual was recorded at Jordan, which meant that soils didn't dry out as quickly. By December and into January, average high temperatures were into the mid 20's, with the 19th and 20th January just touching 30 degrees C.



Harvest 2009

February 2009

Three days of warm temperatures between the 5th and 7th February were mitigated when night-time temperatures dropped considerably lower than usual – a low of 11.3 degrees C was recorded on the 20th February 2009 with average low temperatures of 17 degrees C generally being recorded for the month. Fires raged throughout the Winelands from the 4th February, with the worst fires being recorded in the Stellenbosch, Helderberg and Jonkershoek areas. Many hectares of Fynbos were burnt, and many vineyards in these districts were damaged. Harvesting at Jordan started on the 10th February, about 14 days later than usual, with most of the Sauvignon Blanc coming in in about the 3rd and 4th week of February. Flavours on the grapes were more intense than usual, not just due to smaller berry size, but also due to the cooler growing season.

March 2009

March hit back with a vengeance – from the 4th March for a week, most days recorded temperatures of greater than 30 degrees C with a few minimums being recorded in the high 20's. This meant that ripening dates of red varieties caught up very quickly in the vineyard, and for the first time in history at Jordan, all the Merlot vineyards had been harvested before the best Chardonnay. High acids, low pH's as well as concentrated flavours meant that one could easily just sit back and wait for full ripeness on many varieties. Luckily Jordan was spared the smoke and fire damage so prevalent during the first part of the month. An extra picking team had to be brought in to harvest some of the best Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon vineyards, just to make sure that grapes didn't lose flavour or acidity in the heat. Harvesting reds and whites together on the same day was no longer an exception, it was the rule!

By the 26th March, the last Cabernet Sauvignon was in the cellar, harvested as we landed in London for the launch of High Timber Restaurant.

Summary of the 2009 vintage at Jordan:

A wet spring (174 mm in September!) continued to replenish underground water reserves, but wet soils meant that young vines had to be stored in a cold room for an extra month so that soils could dry out, before being able to be planted. In addition, vines required more canopy management than usual because of the high vigour conditions. There was very little fungal pressure, however, as temperatures remained low and budburst took place between 2 and 3 weeks later than usual.

Harvest started on the 10th February, two weeks later than usual. A heat wave in early March meant that red varieties had to be harvested before many whites!

Sauvignon Blanc:

In 2009, Sauvignon Blanc was still the first variety to be harvested. Fruit quality and intensity was exceptional though, probably due to dry, cool weather and longer ripening and therefore far less sorting than usual was necessary. Sauvignon Blanc quantity was slightly up on 2008, but 34% higher than 2008 if younger vineyards is counted in.

Chardonnay:

Chardonnay ripened much later than usual, due to much later bud burst and cooler conditions. Quality was exceptional, with very good acids and low pH's being common. Quantity was substantially up on the very low crop levels of 2008 (a 49% increase) and a 7% increase in tonnage over the 2007 vintage. 2009 will be a high quality and quantity vintage for us.

Chenin Blanc:

Dry, cool growing conditions meant that very little sorting of Chenin was necessary and we had a 95% increase in crop level of the 2009 over the 2008 vintage!

Cabernet Sauvignon:

Very small berries were characteristic of the 2009 vintage, and ended up with a 3.4% higher tonnage than 2008. Vines shut down during the extreme heat between the first and second week of March, but luckily Cabernet is one of the varieties that can handle hotter conditions. By the Easter weekend, most of the Cabernet Sauvignon will have been pressed already.

Merlot:

Extra effort was spent in the Merlot vineyards this year and an extra team had to be brought in to pull leaves in the fruit zone to avoid greener pyracine characters. So far so good – I don't think we've ever had it so good for the Merlot in general before! Crop load

was down 9.8%, partly due to lower bunch weights, but also due to rigorous green harvesting and crop thinning.

Cabernet Franc:

Similar comments for Cab Franc as for Merlot – we had to cut off more Cab Franc than usual this year, as this was the only variety at Jordan with some (unusual) uneven ripening. Crop level was down about 10.4 % on 2008.

Shiraz:

Shiraz was down 4.5% in 2009. Harvesting took place during the March heat, so some shriveling of berries took place. Quality-wise, at this early stage though, the Shiraz looks great, and with pH's much lower than usual, we look forward to barrel aging the concentrated wines.

Noble Late Harvest:

Very little botritis developed in the Riesling to concentrate the sugars at an early stage, so as at the 7th March, the Noble late still hasn't been picked. pH at this stage though is still exceptionally low (<3.30) and the grapes seem healthy, so we'll wait till after Easter!

In general the 2009 vintage at Jordan may be classed as exceptional, with a 19.3% increase in volume (particularly whites) over the low crop levels of 2008.

Feedback from Jordan

Winter 2009

- Pruning
- New developments in vineyards
- Weather over winter – effect on 2010 harvest

Cellar feedback:

- Wines in barrel
- 2009 SB
- Tank wines
- 2009 MF

New Developments at Jordan

- Restaurant
- Flyfishing