



Misha's Vineyard 2023 Harvest Report 17th Vintage ***Bendigo, Central Otago***

Summary

The 2023 Season (*Bendigo, Central Otago*)

Overall, it was an excellent season in Central Otago with warm temperatures and very little rainfall although it did have a few unusual features and surprises. Early in the season, some cool and cloudy weather impacted flowering which had us thinking it might result in a poor fruit set but that wasn't an issue. The warm and settled conditions throughout the season enabled excellent canopy growth, there was much less impact from the usual seasonal winds, and we had some well-timed rain at the end of the season. All these factors resulted in above average berry weights, particularly in the Pinot Noir. Bunch numbers were also high from the previous season's ideal conditions, and this resulted in a record total crop. Whilst positive, the conditions meant an extra level of vineyard management was required with multiple row passes, especially in the Pinot Noir, to ensure quality was maintained.

An early harvest was expected due to above average growing degree days (GDDs) but the cooler weather late in season was a welcome relief and resulted in a more normal picking window. Rain at the beginning of harvest provided early challenges for the picking crew but it had limited impact on fruit quality. We also experienced a near frost at the start of harvest but again our slopes prevented any significant canopy loss. Chipping ice out of harvest bins on the last few days of harvest also confirmed both the fruit and pickers were ready to go. GDDs this season were 1167.

Winemaking comments *

Olly Masters (Winemaker)

Our normal challenge at the end of the season is waiting for peak phenolic and flavour ripeness while avoiding excessive sugar accumulation, i.e. higher alcohol levels. This season would be the best we've seen simply from a numbers (pH/TA and Brix) point of view with everything lining up nicely and requiring minimal intervention in the winery. It's early days from a final call on quality but generally we're pleased. I certainly think there will be some very good Pinot Noir and also both of the Rieslings (Lyric and Limelight) already stand out. Our Rosé fans will also be very happy.

Detailed Season Report *

Michelle Dacombe (Vineyard Manager)

Budburst was a week later than our long term average due to a cold snap in early October with snow flurries, so it was a slow start to the season with cooler temperatures and spring winds. By the end of the month, conditions changed rapidly and with increased temperatures and some rainfall, there was rapid shoot growth. To try and keep on top of the shoot thinning we quickly recruited more people into the vineyard team. Flowering began in late November and went through to mid-December, so it was quite a protracted flowering period and a week later than usual. The conditions were also cloudy and wet so not ideal. The result of these conditions means there were some areas of the vineyard which had stuck caps which seemed to be a common issue this season in the Bendigo sub-region. With our regular spray rounds, we were able to dislodge most of these stuck caps. Although our initial bunch count numbers were promising, we assumed the bunch weights would be lower than normal due to the stuck cap issues.



By January, we had some real heat with 30C degree days and light winds which saw an immediate improvement in canopy height especially with our Pinot Gris and Sauvignon Blanc. Across the vineyard the canopy and fruit were looking excellent and with the heat and a heavy irrigation program, the small bunches, due to fewer berries, started to increase in size. There was a very low incidence of powdery mildew in a few bunches in our top block, but this just required some additional leaf plucking to expose bunches and enable better spray coverage. We increased our vineyard team at the end of January as véraison was imminent which requires us to cover the vineyard in bird nets.

We had ideal conditions in February with warm temperatures and finally a little beneficial rain at the end of the month. The ideal conditions continued into March. Crop forecasts were increased as there was more fruit than anticipated at flowering and there were no issues with ripening our larger than usual crop. A cold snap in the last week of March raised concern about the final ripening but the canopy held on nicely.

We started harvest on the 27th March picking Pinot Noir for our Rosé. We continued picking right through April and it was the wettest harvest we have ever experienced. The fruit across the vineyard was in excellent condition and came in even heavier than our updated forecasts.

Overall, it was an excellent season with very warm temperatures and low rainfall. There was very good canopy growth but some uneven flowering in some blocks which had us thinking it might result in poor fruit set, but this was not the case. It was a very good fruit set, and although some bunches had fewer internal berries, it made more room for the external berries to grow. The ideal weather conditions enabled us to ripen the larger than usual crop without any significant issues so very few concerns about quality and very low disease incidence.

Staffing during this year's harvest was much easier than last year. We had repeat pickers from the New Zealand Motor Caravan Association along with backpackers. It was the calmest, most relaxed harvest despite the size of the crop.

From a management perspective, we have been working hard to increase canopy size year-on-year. During winter pruning we have been reflecting on each block's capabilities and taking appropriate actions i.e. laying more cane, increasing spur counts, and ensuring we are planning for better nutrition around flowering and bunch initiation. This year, it seems all of our efforts have paid off. We had been used to seeing 1-3 bunches per spur in some areas which this season had 2-4 bunches. We anticipated increased bunch numbers, but bunch size was the determining factor in the crop load this season.

- Season GDDs (Misha's Vineyard): 1167 (1 Oct–5 May 2023). Heat summation above average
- Minimum temp during season: -1.6C
- Maximum temp during season 34.3C
- Average temp during season 15C

* * * * *

MEDIA NOTE

** Any information in these sections can be attributed to winemaker/vineyard manager as appropriate*