



## CLARE VALLEY, SOUTH AUSTRALIA – KILIKANOON

After a very wet and typical Clare Valley (and Barossa) winter, the rain stopped in late July and we had a very warm and dry spring, with well below average rainfall. These conditions brought on budburst and flowering earlier than in most years with the season tracking at nearly three weeks ahead of the average. The dry soil conditions also raised the risk and incidence of frost that caused some problems in certain vineyards.

Thankfully, the high winter rainfalls had provided a very solid supply of ground water that the vines accessed over the later growing season and generally, the vines went into Christmas with solid crops across most varieties in all regions.

Generally cooler conditions throughout December and January prevailed lowering the water stress on vines despite it being so dry. January, in particular, was very cool and half way through the month, we were looking at one of the best vintages in a decade, the cooler days and almost autumnal weather patterns, slowing down the ripening process and keeping natural acidities very high.

Despite the cooler January, things hotted up in February and fruit ripened rapidly. We started picking at our Mt Surmon vineyard around the end of the first week in February and for the next four weeks, harvested fruit as fast as we could fit it into the winery. In most years, the harvest takes a usual pathway of early Shiraz first, then later Shiraz, Riesling, Cabernet and Grenache but this year, many varieties crossed over and it was nothing to be harvesting Shiraz, Riesling and Cabernet over the same day.

Despite the hot February, the Rieslings this year have been outstanding, the higher acids from the cooler January has preserved their natural concentrations and has given us terrific parcels of modestly ripened, higher natural acidities, perfect for long ageing. Despite the challenges of much of our Shiraz being ripe at the same time, the better home blocks along our Golden Hillside look fabulous with terrific colour, fine natural tannins and excellent acidities. This augers very well for our Reserve Shiraz such as Attunga and Oracle. The later Cabernets look very good, having been allowed to ripen a little more slowly and the Grenache and Mataro look gloriously perfumed, elegantly supple with terrific spines of natural acidity.

In summary, a challenging vintage, one of the shortest, most compressed in memory but through great teamwork, hard work and a bit of good fortune falling our way will go down as being a very fine vintage.

