



Mal's Vintage Report 2008

What a season! A snapshot of the conditions:

- *A very cold 2007 Winter getting down to -9C.*
- *A dry Spring with constant east-nor east winds that continued all season.*
- *A very wet Summer with too much rain at the wrong time in January and February including 177mm in a 24 hour period in January - felt like we were in Tully!*
- *A cool Summer with not one day reaching 30C.*
- *A reasonable Autumn and picking season although a few early frosts at the end of March and April saw early leaf drop so we missed most of the beautiful autumnal colours.*

The challenging conditions (one can think of other words but this is a family website) meant that the spray schedule required precision to avoid diseases such as botrytis, powdery and downy mildew.

Budburst was first observed on 19 September 2007, interestingly the same day as the previous two years. Although we sustained some early shoot damage from the strong winds, flowering and fruit set were good.

In late January we replanted 600 Graciano vines to replace those lost to early heavy frosts in the Autumn of 2006. The planting went well and the new vines, in banded pots, took off like rabbits (of which we also have plenty). Unfortunately, the early frosts in March stopped their progress, but we hope and think that the temperatures were not low enough to kill them again.

Our biggest setback this vintage was the loss of the Tempranillo. The heavy rain in January-February caused the berries to swell and the skins to split, resulting in the loss of nearly three tonnes of fruit with only 300kg being picked in the end. We think that the drought-resistant root stocks lapped up the water.

The heavy rains also recharged the dam. The spring is flowing again and the dam is still overflowing at this time (May 2008).

The cool Summer, rain and prospect of disease, made the decisions as to when to pick quite interesting. The baume and pH levels were good but the titratable acidity was high. This meant that flavour ripeness in the grapes took longer to develop.

Our first pick for the Pickpocket rose was on 20 March 2008, with the Old Block on 3 April, and the remainder of the Millennium Block on 10 April. Picking went well and we believe that the resultant wines will be of good quality.

Another aspect of the vintage that was good was reduced bird pressure and damage to the grapes. The rain created an abundance of food for them and a great deal less problem for us.

Now for pruning to start in July. Viva le Grape!