

# National Vintage Review – 2013

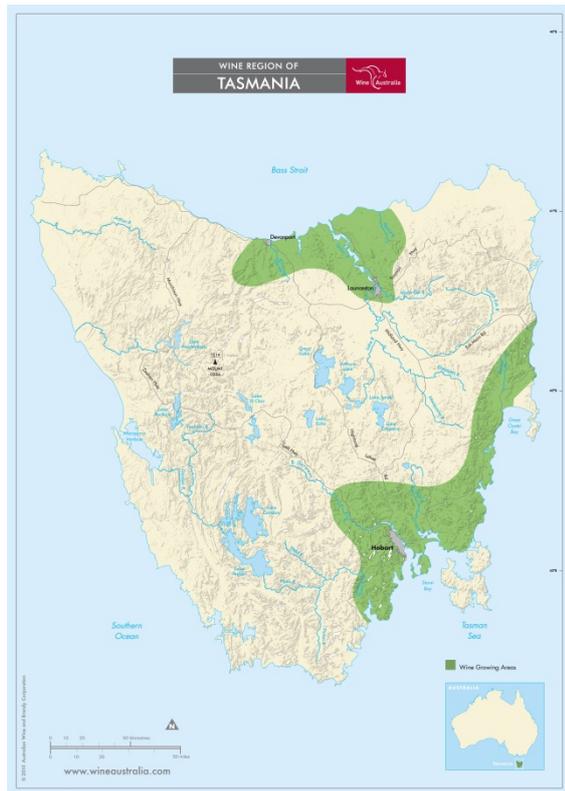
June 2013



## Regional summaries for 2013 vintage

*The following summaries were created using information provided to Wine Australia by the regional associations. We thank them for their input.*

### Tasmania

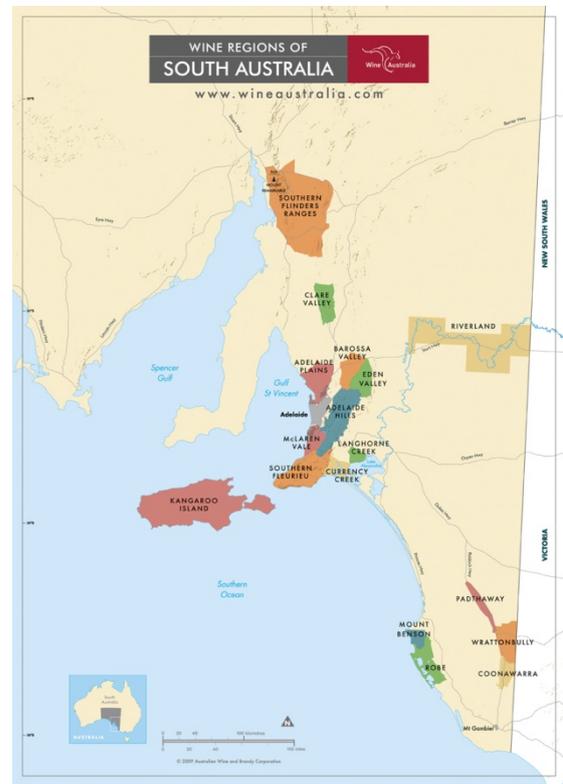


Tasmania experienced an extraordinarily good season, contributing to great quality and yields across varieties and around the island. Vintage started with good soil moisture, supported through rains in Spring, followed by a warm, dry Summer and Autumn.

This weather took the strong fruitfulness and produced a grand crop of very high quality fruit. Yields were 20-30% up on the previous season (which produced 7,400 tonnes). The warmer, drier weather promoted an earlier start to the season for sparkling wines, whilst vintage for table Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Riesling and other varieties ended up being up to two weeks later than normal due to the heavier crops.

The weather held up, though, and wine producers are very happy with another great Tasmanian vintage.

### South Australia



#### **Clare Valley**

2013 was a solid vintage and there is a general feeling that the overall quality rating may be as good as 2012. Yields were generally slightly down on long-term averages, although some varieties were exceptions. Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache were the most consistent bearers. There are early indications of excellent quality, particularly flavour intensity, in the reds, while the region's major variety, Riesling, produced an above average crop.

#### **Barossa Valley**

This was the earliest and quickest vintage in memory, and the fifth driest on record. Almost all vineyards were picked by the end of March. The growing season was extremely variable, with a particularly volatile flowering period featuring violent lightning storms. Yields were generally below average, but the

quality of both reds and whites looks strong. Grenache may prove to be the real standout, with Shiraz not far behind.

### **Eden Valley**

The dry, early and quick vintage was also experienced in the Eden Valley. Nine days above 30° (the third longest run ever days in March) meant that much of the Riesling and Shiraz ripened early and was picked in the first two weeks of March. Yields were generally below average, but quality looks strong. Riesling harvested early retained both natural acidity and great flavours, while Shiraz is probably the standout red variety.

### **Adelaide Hills**

The region experienced one of its driest ever growing seasons, and the need to irrigate meant large berries, high bunch weights and higher than expected crop loads. Warm and dry conditions resulted in rapid ripening and an early start to harvest, with all varieties appearing to ripen at once. Where yields were controlled there are excellent flavours, with occasional high yielding vineyards producing wines lacking in intensity. Wine quality is generally above average.

### **McLaren Vale**

The warm, dry summer presented some challenges, but also had some advantages; disease levels were the lowest for many years and fruit was very clean. Harvested yields were 10-30% below expectations, leading to high demand, especially for Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon. There was also interest in Grenache and Mourvèdre, which are suited to warm, dry weather. Wine quality looks very promising, with the reds having excellent colour and flavour.

### **Langhorne Creek**

It was a frantic vintage (kicking off in the first week of February) with some lighter crops, but the fruit has been well received by wineries. White varieties have performed well and we can expect some outstanding reds amongst the Cabernet, Shiraz and – though in lower amounts than desired – Malbec. There was little disease pressure, but unusually high

numbers of vine moth were noted during spring. This reduced by early December, leaving no significant impact.

### **Currency Creek**

Ideal Mediterranean winter then summer conditions resulted in a well-balanced vintage, with above average winter rainfall compensating for a very dry spring and summer. Whites benefited from the cooler climatic conditions and the region's maritime influence, with good fruit ripeness and naturally balanced acidity, while the reds enjoyed the mild finish to the ripening season. Prolonged hang time resulted in great varietal character and colour.

### **Coonawarra**

After a warm, fast flowering period, Coonawarra saw an even set with high berry numbers per bunch. A late "Indian summer" afforded winemakers the opportunity to steadily pick the grapes without the pressure of an early season break. These conditions have been optimal for the region's reds (primarily Cabernet and Shiraz). As a result there are strong wines with high colour density, fruit concentration and tannin structure.

### **Robe**

Robe experienced a dry, warm growing season, with the highest number of growing season Heat Degree Days on record. Yields were higher than forecast due to high bunch weights caused by a very favourable flowering period and, therefore, a high number of flowers set into berries. Fruit quality is good but not quite up to the level of the 2012 vintage.

### **Wrattonbully**

The 2013 vintage was a fast paced event and grape growers and winemakers needed to be nimble. But it is also expected to rank as one of the best in Wratttonbully's brief history. The standout white varieties are Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Gris. Among the reds, Tempranillo and Merlot are of their usual high quality but the true stand outs are Cabernet Sauvignon

and Shiraz. Both achieved full physiological ripeness at lower potential alcohol.

### **Mount Benson**

Nature was kind, providing an effortless growing season and filling winemakers with enthusiasm. Cropping levels were below average for reds but not whites. Consistently positive messages are coming through about flavour intensity in Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Gris – varieties that until recently have been overlooked in the region. Many reds are looking stylish, alluding to ripe tannins and excellent structure and colour intensity.

### **Mount Gambier**

Vine development proceeded nicely, with good fruit set and no disease pressure. The lack of rain in spring and early summer allowed growers to get onto soil moisture control earlier than normal. Fruit quality was high. Yields were probably average to just below average for most varieties. Winemakers have expressed positive vibes about the developing wines, though reluctant to choose between this vintage and last year.

### **Southern Flinders Ranges**

The Southern Flinders was hot and dry during vintage, with an extremely dry spring. Harvest started earlier in a number of areas, but was on time on the coastal plains. Yields were down by 10-30%, particularly in the ranges. One producer in the area did not pick due to unviable yields. However, overall fruit quality is good

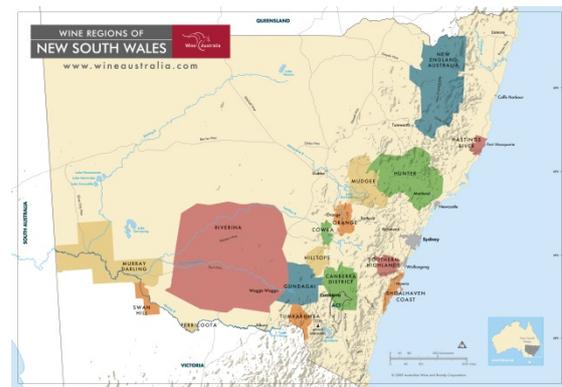
### **Riverland**

Above average temperatures caused some varieties to mature earlier than usual and the subsequent congestion at intake points led to some losses. However, yields were generally solid, with an estimated total crush of just over 400K tonnes, slightly down on 2012 (411K). Chardonnay was a little lighter than expected but less than 5% below estimates. The heat meant very few pest or disease pressures.

### **Padthaway**

Early reports are that this vintage will be even better than 2012. Yields were slightly down on LTA, due to the weather and a focus on premium quality fruit. The dry conditions allowed growers to manage vine health by irrigation. Warm weather leading into the red harvest allowed for some excellent varietal characters to develop in Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon in particular. Chardonnay will produce some typical premium wines again.

### **New South Wales**



### **Canberra District (including ACT)**

Good soil moisture levels combined with mild and dry conditions led to excellent, healthy growth. Substantial February storms created some concern, but conditions dried out again very quickly. The resulting crops provided one of the best quality harvests the region has seen for many years. Quality was excellent all round and the local industry is excited to monitor the wines as they develop.

### **Cowra**

The growing season started later than previous years, with some frost during bud burst. Spring weather was optimal. Most varieties were able to withstand disease pressure, but post-veraison rain caused some minor botrytis incidence in high density canopy white vineyards. Some reds also were affected. White wines are considered high in quality, with pure flavours. Reds are showing promise, with good structure and weight.

### **Tumbarumba**

Following two years of very high rainfall, 2013 provided perfect growing conditions, with

warm days, cool nights and low disease pressure. Winemakers are confident the vintage will rival those of 2004, 2008 and 2010. There have been some outstanding parcels of fruit, with the Chardonnay producing fine acids with great complexity in fruit flavours. Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Sauvignon Blanc also thrived in the warmer conditions.

### **Mudgee**

The growing season was drier than previous years, allowing vineyards to better manage crop and canopy balance. Mudgee has had an excellent vintage, with all white varieties showing expressive varietal fruit, and red wines showing great concentration and ripeness. Chardonnay, Riesling and Shiraz are the standouts. Yields were 15-30% lower than previous years, but winemakers are adamant this has been one of the best vintages in a long while.

### **Hilltops**

Hilltops enjoyed a long, but productive vintage in terms of both quality and yield. Unlike the two previous vintages, 2013 was also productive in terms of the drier season reducing the resources committed to disease management. Very hot temperatures in December and January saw an early start to harvest in February with white varieties, but reds were generally slow to ripen with some still being harvested towards the end of April.

### **Hunter Valley**

Vintage began earlier than expected in mid-January. Crops were down about a third on average as a result of a dry growing season. Most whites were harvested prior to the first vintage rain event, and there are some fantastic Semillons emerging. Reds were harvested throughout February, with three rain events totalling 150mm. Despite the rain, colours and baumes were both very good and there is a quiet confidence about Shiraz quality this year.

### **Riverina**

The overall grape intake of 300KT fell just 8KT short of the record set in 2009. But the red

intake of 136KT was a record – by almost 2,000 tonnes. Winemakers reported a vintage of good quality and sound fruit, 17.5% higher than the rain-affected 2012 vintage. The intake of sound fruit was up 20% and met 99% of wineries’ anticipated intake. The only significant weak spot was Chardonnay, which at 54KT was 6% less than winemaker requirements and 9KT less than 2012.

### **Victoria**



### **Murray Darling / Swan Hill**

The return to a traditional warm, dry vintage saw an estimated 375KT crushed, up 15% on last year. Quality was high, with some fruit matching the outstanding juice quality of 2012. All varieties appeared in supply/demand balance except Cabernet (in particular) and Shiraz, which were lighter supplied than winery requirements, and Gordo, which was in oversupply. Merlot yielded heaviest of the major reds. Chardonnay crop was average to slightly above average.

### **Macedon Ranges**

There is a feeling across the region that 2013 may go down as the vintage of the decade. Low rainfall and plenty of heat from December onwards meant winemakers could obtain beautifully ripe fruit, which can be a challenge in parts of this very cool region. Yields were typically down although a couple of growers reported increases of around 30%. Legrein, a variety originating in Alto Adige in northern Italy, appears well suited to the region.

### **Mornington Peninsula**

Vintage began in the first week of March in the foothills (where happy vines saw a wet pre-flowering and mostly dry post-flowering) and ran through until early April in other areas. Chardonnay yields were below average with small berry numbers, but quality was excellent. Pinot Noir was around average quantity with moderate berry number but full and strong clean bunches of excellent quality. Pinot Gris was around average weight and performance.

### **Goulburn Valley**

After one of the driest growing seasons on record, it was a relief to pick the first whites and see that there were fresh, crisp and delicate flavours in the fruit. 25-50mm of rain in the third week of February facilitated steady sugar and flavour accumulation of remaining fruit and reduced the risk of over-ripe characters. Most parcels were picked near optimum ripeness and in great condition, and it has the potential to be a very good year.

### **Beechworth**

Crop levels were down a little due to the dry conditions and in some cases a lack of available water, but generally it was a very good vintage. Some growers are excited about their Chardonnay, reporting good flavours and a good balance of acid – surprising for a hotter than average year. All are excited about the reds, with Cabernet Sauvignon and Nebbiolo in particular showing great intensity after a long, dry autumn.

### **Strathbogie Ranges**

2013 saw little of the usual differentiation between vineyards in the foothills and those at elevations of up to 500m. Dry is dry! Many vineyards reported sugar levels ahead of fruit intensity, but patience was rewarded, with powerful Shiraz showing that lovely Strathbogie perfume. Whites at higher elevations are more robust in aroma and flavour than is the norm, and there are reports of some outstanding Cabernet.

### **Geelong**

Winemakers are genuinely excited after a trouble-free vintage. Fruit quality has been excellent and varietal intensity impressive. Yields were around the long term average, and vines progressed to full ripeness while maintaining good natural acidity. Earlier picked varieties, such as Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris, presented well in terms of complexity, while bold varietal intensity is apparent in later ripening reds such as Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon.

### **Upper Goulburn**

This vintage, the dry pre-harvest conditions have promoted excellent ripeness in all varieties across the region. There has been very little disease and the harvest was a little earlier than is usual, while crop levels have been average to a little higher than the previous two vintages. Excellent fruit quality and varietal flavours have been observed, while the natural acidity was also at good levels.

### **Grampians**

The lasting impression is of how dry vintage was, with less than half the average rainfall received over the season. January heat sped everything up through February until the cool weather returned to complete the harvest at a more civilised pace. Yields varied according to management practices, mainly irrigation management. Shiraz quality is very good and, as we have seen in recent vintages, Riesling and other whites seem to relish warm conditions.

### **Bendigo**

The growing season was the driest on record, with subsequent lower yields, but the fruit shows great intensity and is expected to produce outstanding wine. Ironically, yields also were affected by a hangover from the catastrophic wet conditions of 2011. Most vignerons are predicting 2013 to be the best ever for Shiraz. Ph. and acidity levels are both very good and the colour of the Shiraz juice is exceptional.

## Pyrenees

The 2013 vintage will be remembered as one of the better years for the Pyrenees. Early indications are that white, sparkling and red wines are of above average quality, with some exceptional wines Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz. The dry and warm spring of 2012 provided little disease pressure, while record summer heat prior to veraison did not prove detrimental to final wine quality, given the milder weather post veraison.

## Alpine Valleys

The growing season in the region was dry, in stark contrast to recent years, but well-managed vineyards with good canopies and access to water were able to keep up with water demand without significant effect. Most fruit was picked prior to Easter, something of a novelty for Alpine Valleys. Stand out styles are most red varieties, in particular Shiraz and Merlot which have achieved good ripeness compared to more recent cooler years.

## Yarra Valley

Vintage 2013 receives an overall rating of "excellent". While yields were down, the wines are showing full and balanced flavour with a great depth of colour. Bright colours and perfume aromas seems to be the consensus. All varieties have performed well in the excellent conditions, but the standouts are Pinot Noir, Shiraz, Cabernet and Chardonnay. Cabernet is bold, in the blackcurrant fruit spectrum, with the willing tannins that small berries produce.

## Rutherglen

Vintage was not perfect, with extreme heat in early January desiccating some fruit, particularly in the dry land vineyards. However, losses were minimal as most vineyards are irrigated. Wine quality is quite promising compared with the past four vintages, with extreme heat in 2009 at harvest and the wet vintages of 2011 and 2012. Red wines, particularly Durif, show great potential.

## Henty

Henty experienced a very dry growing season following on from a wet winter. For many growers, particularly those with early varieties, the vintage was compressed, whereas later varieties were close to normal harvest dates. Winemakers are very pleased with the clean flavoursome fruit with early indications that Chardonnay and Riesling are standouts, along with Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon. The harvest is about 20% up on last year.

## Queensland



## Granite Belt

Good early rains saw whites harvested without problems, and showing good varietal character, but unseasonal heat followed by continuing rain and cloudy conditions meant some reds were harvested 1-2 Baume less than desired. As such, whites are showing excellent flavours, while many reds are lacking intensity, and some will require blending to improve structure and body. Pinotage, Fiano, Saperavi and Sangiovese are the new welcome varieties for 2013.

## South Burnett

South Burnett was able to take advantage of a fantastic early growing season and some fortunate timing through vintage. Whites were picked in haste just before a tropical rain depression hit in late January, and despite fears of heavy losses the reds survived and prospered. The wines are showing exceptional quality and are amongst the best we have produced. Perhaps we are becoming better at managing difficult seasons!

## Western Australia



## Margaret River

A hot, dry summer leading into a noticeably cooler March provided ideal growing conditions, particularly for white varieties that displayed intense varietal flavours typical of Margaret River. Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Chardonnay are all outstanding. The cooler conditions allowed Cabernet Sauvignon to ripen steadily, in sync with the fruit character, so 2013 should exhibit wonderful balance in the resulting wines.

## Great Southern

A generally dry growing period, hail in some areas during November, and a warmer than usual summer produced an early and condensed harvest period for the whites, and some great wines are expected. Rain put the red harvest back a little, but no damage was done and the fruit benefitted from extra time on the vine. For the reds also, then, a small but quality vintage. There was little disease or pest pressure during harvest.

## Swan Valley

Vintage began in late January and, apart from a few fortifedies, concluded in the first week of April. Ideal weather conditions leading up to and during harvest resulted in grapes of high quality and intense flavour. Low summer rainfall meant disease was non-existent. Verdelho, Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay are looking sensational, while Shiraz, Cabernet, Petit Verdot and Grenache are showing intense colour with deep and complex flavours.

## Geographe

Heavy rain in early summer and again in March led to a longer vintage than in 2012. Low volumes of white grapes were harvested early in February, with the fruit displaying intense flavours and excellent acid retention. In contrast, the red harvest was delayed by the rain, despite the hottest summer on record. The subsequent warm, dry weather and cool nights saw clean, good quality fruit with excellent flavours coming into wineries.

## Blackwood Valley

Yields were down across the board by around 30% due to a number of factors, including seasonal influences in spring. However, this meant an increase in quality in the resulting fruit. Despite the reasonably quick ripening time, quality in the whites was outstanding. Unseasonably wet weather during the growing season ensured healthy vine growth and bunch development. Harvest of reds was delayed by a cool spell in late February.

### **Peel**

Peel saw its earliest start to vintage ever, thanks to the state's hottest ever summer. White yields were down about 20% on average, but quality was excellent despite the heat. An early flowering of "red gum" kept birds busy elsewhere! Red production was at usual levels, although there were occasional issues with uneven ripening, possibly due to heavy late spring rain. However, the overall quality this year was outstanding.

### **Mount Barker**

While tonnage is slightly down across the region, intense, fruit-driven wines are expected from the 2013 vintage – one of the quickest ever. Some growers reported picking their whites in just 10 days. While some yields are down, quality is up, and winemakers expect intense flavours, especially for reds.

### **Perth Hills**

Vintage was almost three weeks early but it proved to be a very sound year. Yields were consistent with a normal season, which was pleasing. Conditions were very good early, with moderate and consistent temperatures, resulting in good acid levels for the whites. A heat wave in mid-February knocked acids around in early ripening reds such as Merlot but helped push later reds such as Shiraz and Cabernet to full ripeness.

### **Pemberton**

A dry winter led into a wet spring then a hot, dry summer, which saw fruit picked up to 10 days earlier than usual. Overall, quality was exceptional, with Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling and Pinot Noir among the standouts. The region's first crop of Pinot Gris also was harvested, and the variety shows promise. Some crop levels were down on 2012, but not significantly. In all, a season of great fruit and few issues.

### **Reviews were not submitted from the following regions;**

Adelaide Plains, Ballarat, Gippsland, Gundagai, Hastings River, Heathcote, Kangaroo Island, King Valley, Manjimup, New England, Orange,

Perricoota, Shoalhaven Coast, Southern Fleurieu, Southern Highlands, Sunbury,