

2007 - the official view from Marlborough, NZ

16 Oct 2007 by JR

In view of yesterday's [forecast of rising prices](#) from Marlborough, I thought you might be interested in the official report on the 2007 vintage there, headlined 'Reduced crop and Indian summer produce intense flavours'.

- Crop levels down by about 15 percent due to a late November frost and the second coldest December on record.
- Drawn out summer provides winemakers with the enviable position of choosing just when they wanted to pick fruit.

Marlborough's vintage of 2007 may go down in history as the one that produced some of the most intense flavours ever and could be accompanied by lower alcohol levels. Winemakers are extremely excited by the flavours coming through in all wine varieties, especially in the Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir.

James Healy from Dog Point Wines says he is more upbeat about the vintage than he ever expected to be. "We don't often get bad years in Marlborough, but every so often, for one reason or another, the year is better than you expected. 2007 is one of those years." He describes the flavours as being lifted and very characteristic of Marlborough's unique style. Dave Edmonds, Drylands Winemaker says he can't rave enough about the fruit quality. "I could go on all day about the Sauvignon Blanc. It's the best I have seen in the five years I have been in Marlborough."

Pinot Noir fruit has also got the winemakers talking, with Spy Valley's winemaker Ant Mackenzie claiming this year will go down as the one that produced an "iron fist in a silk glove" style of wine. "The great thing about the Pinot Noir flavours is that they are in the soft berry fruit spectrum, but the colour is so dark and intense." The smaller fruit that has been apparent this year has also seen a lifting in the concentration of flavour. Last year's Marlborough Pinot Noir had winemakers excited, and James Healy says he didn't think they would be able to come close to that this vintage. "I thought '06 would be very hard to beat, but I have to say I think the '07 Pinots will be very special."

Many are putting the quality down to the drawn out summer, which provided winemakers with the enviable position of choosing just when they wanted to pick fruit. Dave Edmonds says that hasn't been the case in other years, when weather has often been the dictator. "There has been a return to the diurnal temperatures we haven't seen for a couple of years. We have had cold nights, followed by warm, but not hot days. As for the last weeks of ripening, they were perfect conditions. They allowed the sugars to climb and the flavours to intensify."

Those weather conditions may also impact on the eventual alcohol levels of the '07 wines, according to Ant Mackenzie. "We were getting full flavour ripeness but at a lower sugar level, which should see us able to produce lower alcohol wines. I don't think we will see the big wines we have seen in the past, this year's wines are likely to be far more delicate."

Perhaps the only disappointment of the 2007 vintage is yields are lower than hoped for. Across the board wine companies are saying crop levels were down by around 15 percent on earlier predictions, due to a late November frost and the second coldest December on record. That will be partly countered by the considerable amount of fruit from vineyards coming on stream for the first time this year.

Other varieties to have winemakers salivating are Riesling, described as "very pure and concentrated" and Gewurztraminer described as "stellar".