



VINTAGE REPORT

We are in the depth of our McLaren Vale winter and delighted to see the wines of the '07 release open up fully after bottling in late January. The Annual Easter release was a wonderful day; the skies were blue and the wines showed well. Most importantly we had the chance to catch up with so many wonderful people who have discovered our place on top of the hill here at Samuel's Gorge over the past five years (can you believe it?).

Now that the wines have hit their straps I can put pen to paper to interpret with some confidence my understanding of the 2007 season and the resulting wines. It takes a little while to get to the core personality of a wine; several glasses (bottles) have been consumed since Easter and much discussion at the cellar door over that time.

I will endeavor to write the next edition of "The Goss" in the very near future...over a fine glass of wine of course!

Let us not misunderstand drought, light, heat (temperature), sun burn and stress. This is message for the last three years. In a horticultural sense the last three years have been tricky to navigate, but not impossible. The wines of this release are a testament to growers and their understanding of plant function and horticulture.

In the winter 2006 (preceding the Harvest of 2007) the rains never came. In June, August and October we experienced the driest months in 20 years. The spring and summer were bone dry. Even vines which are reasonably resilient in arid conditions struggled to set leaf area to drive flavour. The vines flowered under duress and failed to set many berries. Then there was no available moisture to fill the berries that did set. The crops in many cases were reduced to 30 % of a typical year. Our house style at Samuel's Gorge is built around a concept of fine structural tannins supporting the flavour concentration given to us from the bright McLaren Vale Sunshine; balance by the relatively fresh acid profile allowed us by the gulf breezes. Small berries and bucket loads of mature seed and skin tannins meant we had to be on guard with our usual practice in the winery. In hind sight I am glad we backed off on our hand plunging of the skins and used less than usual new oak. Both of which contribute to further structural extract. The resulting wines all have fabulous balance; a huge relief to all of us at Samuel's Gorge. I am sure you will all agree when you get the Shiraz and Grenache in your mouth.

After a few years of observing the quirkiness of Tempranillo, both in the paddock and in the pot, I truly believe we have laced together all the charm of the previous three releases at Samuel's Gorge. The Summer of 2008 ended with a heat wave that made the tail end of the season very tricky. I have to say that this turn was probably delivered by the gods as a result of all the bragging about the incredible quality of the season until then. The 2008 Tempranillo, being the first off the paddock certainly shows the depth of quality of wines harvested in the first two thirds of the season. Once again lower yields (with a focus higher quality) and best practice (with a true understanding of horticulture) meant we had most of our fruit off before the carnage of the heat wave hit. Our endeavors to embrace the best technology (soil moisture monitoring, satellite imagery, measures of chlorophyll reflectance) in the vineyard coupled with our micro management of the estate block on a vine by vine basis really paid off in such a dry year.

The more the years challenge us the more in tune we seem to get with our work in the vineyards and our approach in the winery.