



HEATHCOTE SHIRAZ VINTAGE 2019

Below is an account of the 2019 vintage through the eyes of our Chief Winemaker Robert Ellis



2019 VINTAGE REPORT

2019 was one of those hot and dry years. Years like these have their pluses and minuses. On the plus side we don't have to worry about things like diseases. It's very easy to run a vineyard organically in a year like this (which we did). There's also plenty of sunshine to ripen the grapes, so the resulting wine has plenty of intensity, complexity and fruit flavour. On the minus side our vineyard is dry grown. When the water doesn't come from the sky the vines are reliant on the stored soil moisture to see them through. It's years like this that we're eternally grateful that we're growing grapes in Heathcote. Even though we had little to no rain during the growing season, thanks to the amazing, ancient, Cambrian clay soil and good rainfall in the lead up to the growing season, there was enough moisture in the soil for us to ripen 7.5 tonne of fruit off the 20 acre vineyard, not bad, all things considered.

ATHOL'S PADDOCK VINEYARD

The Athol's Paddock Vineyard is an extraordinary plot of land we own on the foothills of the Mt Camel Range. It is one of few vineyards in Heathcote that can authentically claim to be grown on the ancient Cambrian soil. In order to truly lay claim to this soil, the vineyard must be within a 1.2km wide and 30km long stretch of the Mount Camel Range where the soil emerged from tectonic activity 500 million years ago (when the Earth itself was middle-aged). This historic soil therefore provides the perfect example of terroir where you can literally sense the wonderfully rich and potent tastes and aromas of the vineyard in the wine.

To exacerbate these characters our vineyard is dry-grown; however, this brings with it the risk of poor cropping and potential issues with vine health. To ensure the longevity of the vineyard, we adopted some new vineyard management techniques in 2016 with the aim of lowering vine stress at the expense of lowering the potential crop level. Because of this, we picked 7.5 tonnes of fruit off our vineyard in 2019, higher than the average of the previous decade. The grapes were picked on 20th February, the Baume was 13.5 and the pH 3.40. Remarkably these numbers were almost exactly the same as 2018 and near perfect for the style of wine I look to make!

WINEMAKING

The grapes came in great condition looking very ripe and full of flavour. I was very wary of accentuating that to the point that the wine would be out of balance and a little over the top. There were a couple of little winemaking tricks that I employed to make sure the wine would be complex and well-structured whilst also being balanced and approachable. Some of these included:

- Fermenting 100% of the fruit as whole berries. This means we get a small amount of carbonic maceration (where the juice starts fermenting inside the berry). The result is a softer, smoother wine, with less extractive characters.
- Fermenting 50% of the berries in new oak barrels. This imbues the wine with complexity, rich, creamy flavours, delicate and integrated oak characteristics, better ageing capabilities, along with a more engaging palate structure, texture and a longer finish.
- Fermenting the other 50% of the berries in open fermenters using heading down boards instead of our traditional fulage (foot stomping). This means the skins of the fruit are submerged the whole time, so you get great fruit and colour extraction whilst avoiding the extraction of too many aggressive tannins

After fermentation had finished the wine spent 21 days soaking on skins followed by 19 months in new and used French oak barrels.

This being my 9th vintage of Heathcote Shiraz, and having the wealth of experience of my father behind me I feel as though I'm able to use vintage variations as an advantage, rather than treat them as challenges. The variations in growing conditions each year are what makes wine exciting. Being able to harness those variations and let the wine show its true self is our job as winemakers.

Chief Winemaker

To watch a video of Rob discussing our acclaimed Heathcote Shiraz, visit this exclusive, En Primeur only link on our website
<https://www.hangingrock.com.au/heathcote-shiraz-2019-en-primeur>