

2006 Jordan Harvest Report

Cool, dry and windy growing conditions, views of smoke-covered mountain peaks, lower than average yields, concentrated wines and the throaty roar of our generator are all reminders of one of our most interesting vintages to date at Jordan.

Pre-harvest growing conditions:

Our vineyards were in remarkably good condition for having received only 591 mm of rainfall in 2005. Late winter rains ensured that all our dams overflowed, and soil moisture was replenished, although a slightly waterlogged root zone in early spring meant that roots couldn't actively grow until a bit later in the season, by which time the strong SE and SW winds had dried out the vineyard soils. Thank goodness for drip irrigation! We had to drip-irrigate our vineyards a few times during the season, not to increase berry size, but just to keep vineyards from stressing unduly.

Bud burst was a week later than average and this delay continued up until the start of harvest. Cool weather conditions during the growing season ensured a slow build-up to harvest. The weather prior to the vintage was cooler than average due to the steady breezes that blew off False Bay between October and December, reducing vineyard temperatures and extending grape hanging time. This was also one of the most disease-free vintages we have ever experienced at Jordan, with virtually no signs of downy and powdery mildew in any of our vineyards.

February began with hot weather as temperatures soared into the high 30's on the 1st & 2nd of February. This hastened the ripening process considerably, and sugar accumulation in the berries sped up dramatically.

Harvest:

Harvesting started with Sauvignon Blanc on the 3rd February, and ended with the last Cabernet Sauvignon being harvested on the 28th March, over 7½ weeks later. Light rain of 6mm on Monday 20th February, 14mm on Monday 28th February and 4mm on Sunday 12th March only delayed harvest for a maximum of a day each time. Extremely hot temperatures of over 40 degrees Celsius on Monday 6th March caused little sun-burn as we had harvested our most sun-exposed vineyards the weekend prior to this. This was followed by cool, misty conditions on Tuesday the 7th March. On average, the 2006 Jordan harvest is down 25% on the 2005 vintage.

Sauvignon Blanc:

Cool winds during flowering reduced the Sauvignon Blanc crop considerably (by 39% compared to last year), but a smaller than average berry size has resulted in concentrated flavours on the young wines. In general, our idea of optimum ripeness and full flavour coincided with sugars that were about 0.5 degree brix lower than previous years.

Chardonnay:

The Chardonnay grapes were the healthiest we have ever experienced at Jordan. Crop levels were good. Berries were smaller than average, but there were more bunches per vine than last year with the result that our total Chardonnay crop was less than 2% lower than last year. Wines appear to be full and concentrated. Ph's are lower than previous years, and some vineyards had slightly higher acids at similar sugar levels than previous vintages, which will add to the ageability of the barrel fermented wines.

Syrah:

Small berries, concentrated flavours and inky colours on the young wines, indicate great potential for the 2006 Syrah. Although it initially visually appeared (after cluster counting in December) that the 2006 vintage would only be slightly down on last year's crop, our sample bunch weights confirmed that bunches were lighter than average. In total, the 2006 Jordan Syrah is down 25 % on last year.

Merlot:

Strict green-harvesting of all our Merlot vineyards at veraison has certainly paid off. We may have been too strict with this as bunches were lighter than we had envisaged, but the smaller than average berry size has resulted in even darker colours and a bigger concentration of flavour at slightly lower alcohol levels. It is going to be difficult to choose our best Merlots this year – they are all concentrated and full of flavour. The 2006 Merlot crop is down 29% on 2005.

Cabernet Sauvignon:

A lighter than usual crop has meant that our 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon will unfortunately be in short supply. This was one of the few years where maximum potential extractable colour measurements coincided with our idea of phenolic ripeness! Berries were smaller and vines had fewer bunches per vine, resulting in the 2006 crop being 38% down on last year. Hopefully the extra concentration makes up for this volume loss!

All in all, the 2006 vintage, our 14th at Jordan, was small in yield with concentrated flavours, one of our most enjoyable and easiest vintages to date.