Le Riche

STELLENBOSCH | SOUTH AFRICA

HARVEST REPORT 2012

The season started with an early and even bud-break due to a cold and dry winter.

Spring was cool and dry helping the vineyards to grow slowly and without pressure from disease.

A cool October and early November had high rainfall levels (70mm) with intermittent winds that damaged the Cabernet flowers resulting in a smaller than usual crop due to weak fruit set.

Mildew populations were prevalent and their pressure remained until mid – December.

For some of the farmers this created viticultural challenges and the following Afrikaans saying was sung a few times: "Daar's witroes in die blaar, dis finish en dis klaar. Miskien is daar 'n moerse oes die een of ander jaar." The period after flower set to veraison was good with a warm and less windy December. This is the most important time for flavour development.

We were able to open up the canopies and expose the berries to early sunlight, helping them to develop their own "sunscreen" for the summer with higher tannin production.

Low water levels persisted throughout the vintage, reducing the vine vigour and berry size. January had two heat waves with temperatures of over 35°C, but it was early enough in the season for the Cabernets to recover.

This warm weather also helped to reduce green flavours. A cool February slowed the berry ripening and resulted in a harvest that started 1-2 weeks later than usual. This assisted in developing good fruit and tannin ripeness at lower alcohol levels with good acidity.

All in all it was an outstanding season resulting in wines with elegance, vibrancy and freshness. Definitely a contender for vintage of the decade.

Christo le Riche
Cellarmaster