

Miceli Newsletter

Autumn 2011

Opening Times:

We will be open for Easter Weekend and Anzac Day Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon, Tues, 22-26 April.

If the weather continues warm and dry you might even see the winery in action, though vintage dates are still uncertain in probably our latest vintage since about 1999.

Following this we will be doing tastings first weekend of each month (ie 7/8 May) and available, for sales only, almost every day.

Season Report:

The weather here, as you would expect has continued wet over Summer with mild maximums and debilitating humidity. Since the end of February the trend has been drier, though not warm.

Again, I can still report that we live in the most ideal part of Australia, having missed out on the worst of the drought, fires, and heat, we have also missed the worst of the rain. Our rainfall has been above average but by nowhere near as much as the unfortunate people in Central Victoria, North West Victoria, Adelaide Hills, Clare, or indeed Queensland (what an awful situation for the whole state !). When 190 mm fell in SE Melbourne we had 28 mm, when 120 mm fell in Mildura we had 6 mm and the enormous floods in the Bendigo/Loddon/Swan Hill area only gave us 39 mm.

We have had only about 3 hot days so the tomatoes, capsicums and pumpkins have been very poor, but thankfully we mainly grow grapes!

Vineyard Report:

We were lucky enough to get a couple of weeks of mild calm weather at flowering in late November and early December, and have set a fairly large crop. This of course is a mixed blessing, particularly in a cool year, so we have had a very concerted thinning program, removing as much as half the grapes, particularly in the Pinot Noir, in search of top quality and ripeness.

Most of the vineyard has also required 3 passes with the trimmer (hand held by Tony), as well as 2 passes of leaf plucking, an initial pass in

Summer followed up by a heavier removal after the risk of extreme heat and sunburn had passed.

Certainly this year has required a lot of extra work brought about by the vigour of the vines, maintaining sunshine exposure and air flow to maximise flavour in the grapes and also prevent rotting. Currently the vines have had their "seasonal clock" triggered by the recent cool weather, and have stopped growing despite the moist soil. The rows are neatly trimmed, leaves and fruit are in perfect condition (only the grass is really long under the nets), we just need some more heat!

Mildew:

Virtually every rainfall brings more news on the TV and papers of mildew, which is alarming, eventhough the details of Downy Mildew and Powdery Mildew are not known to many.

Whilst there is some "crossover", particularly with botrytis which is just about a universal pathogen, grape downy and powdery are largely specific to grapevines. Both of these diseases originally came from North America, where they affected the native American grapes (as did phylloxera). The American species have considerable resistance to these diseases, but European grapes (which includes all important winemaking varieties) have little or no natural resistance. Powdery mildew in roses and grapevines are unrelated, dispelling a common belief.

Downy mildew spores sit dormant in the soil and require specific conditions to "hatch" before infecting vines (24 hours of moisture, more than 10 mm of rain, temperatures above 10 degrees C, and a sufficient intensity of rain during darkness to spread the spores to the leaves from the ground). In a dry year there may be no Downy at all. But if such an "event" occurs then a small number of "oil spots" of infection will appear, say one spot per 50 vines, 5-10 days later. But once these spots appear, and produce their downy-looking spores on the underside of the leaves, each spot can cause 50,000 more, per day of suitable conditions- all that is needed then is a slight dew. Thus within another 2 weeks a whole vineyard can be totally defoliated, and that includes the flowers and the stalks of the grape bunches.

If the vines are covered by a protective layer of spray, such as copper, they would be protected, but in the growing part of the season, any leaves that have grown since the last spray would not be protected.

Once the Downy infects the vine it enters the tissue of the plant and is not affected by sprays that only cover the surface and don't enter the tissue of the vine. Penetrating, eradicant, sprays are very expensive, and have been difficult to get due to unprecedented demand.

Powdery Mildew is quite different.

Spores start from the vine trunks and canes and buds, and then also leaves, as the fungus gradually builds up, they "hatch" routinely through the growing season under any mild (>about 10 deg C), even dry, conditions, and grow in proportion to the temperatures, though very high temperatures and direct UV exposure can kill them. Thus the amount of powdery mildew is proportional to the number of spores from the previous season and has to be routinely controlled by sprays. Because the fungus grows across the outside of the leaves it can be controlled by fungicides such as sulphur which do not penetrate the plant tissue. It then grows slowly and almost invisibly but will eventually destroy the leaves, and more importantly, causes off-flavours by tainting the grapes. Lots of mild cloudy weather and dense shady canopies encourage it and so this year was also potentially severe for powdery.

We have successfully passed through the season without any problems from either of these diseases because of firstly, luck (with the weather), but secondly, being small and self-sufficient, we can react quickly and spray our whole vineyard in about 4-5 hours in the narrow window of opportunity when the weather is fine just before the rain events come. We also have a really well drained site that we can drive our tractor over very soon after rain. It has been a lot of effort but we have done a lot better than most, with zero losses to these diseases.

Now we are in the desperate race to ripen the fruit before we run out of time, or rot eventuates from new falls of rain. The life of a farmer is not easy, but there is no other way of achieving the ultimate quality wine.

Newsletter Special:

Again, why should we discount our already good value superb wine? Only because we love our loyal followers (as they love us). So this time we offer our Pinot Grigio and Rose at 30% off case price. Our youngest lolanda needs more sales to boost her secondary career! So help her while you enjoy great wine!

website: www.miceli.com.au.

Email: sales@miceli.com.au.

Tasting Notes:

lolanda Pinot Grigio 2008

A distinctive, dry, flavoursome white wine with clean acid finish.

Pale greenish yellow. Full-bodied, but fine, with typical Pinot Grigio characters- mineral/flinty, brown pear, lemon, honey and floral. The palate is fresh and clean, and it has great persistence of flavour. Alc13.5%

Olivia's Chardonnay 2007

An powerful yet elegant wine with complexity and subtlety.

Brilliant pale straw. Peach, cashew, citrus, vanillan oak with some butteriness and struck match. Smooth mouthfeel and fine acid balance, with great length of flavour. Alc 14.0% 1Gold

Dry Pinot Rose 2006

This is a serious rose, totally dry, with great depth of fruit and a clean acid finish.

Brilliant strawberry pink, with plum, strawberry and a hint of vanillan oak. Intense and full bodied with palate freshness, smooth mouthfeel, good acid and great length of flavour. Wine Wise Highly Recommended (Best of Category) Alc 13.5%

Lucy's Choice Pinot Noir 2007

Serious pinot noir, a full bodied red with elegance, richness, and complexity

Brilliant deep red. Dark morello cherries, gamey, earthy with some spice, and subtle, well integrated oak. Rich and complex with delicious pinot fruit, full palate weight, depth, and balance. Alc 14.0%

Michael Brut 2004

Aperitif style- dry, fine, flavoursome, complex with refreshing acid finish.

The flavours are "fine" and intense, with toasty/vegemite yeast, strawberry and hints of melon, pear and honey. The palate is very creamy, long, with cleansing acid and a fresh dry finish. Alc 11.0% 2 Gold 2 Silver

Rose Methode Champenoise 2001

A flavoursome, delicate, and complex dry sparkling rose, with a fine bead.

Brilliant pale salmon pink. The palate is rich and flavoursome, with creamy and toasty yeast, strawberry pinot noir fruit, great length, and a clean dry finish. 12.5 % alc./vol 1 Gold 2 Silver 4 Halliday*

Satisfaction Guarantee:

Any wine that is spoiled will be credited or replaced. Any wine that you wish to return that has been well looked after and still in saleable condition will be refunded. Specials and museum releases excepted.

Pauline & Anthony Miceli