



COONAWARRA MERLOT 2007



The defining aspect of the 2007 growing season in Coonawarra was frost. The old Merlot vines in the Evans Vineyard received 24 frosts during the season, surely a record. After the severe frost of 1983, we installed sprinklers in the Evans Vineyard to protect the vines. This paid off in the Spring of 2006 and we handpicked a small crop of Merlot on the 17th of March.

The vineyard received 1809°C days of heat, significantly more than the long term average of 1414°C days. However the fruit was picked before the final burst of heat in late March and April, so the numbers are slightly misleading.

The handpicked grapes were gently destemmed and crushed at our Piccadilly winery, before a cool two week fermentation on skins, using a cultured yeast strain. The fermentation was conducted in a heading-down-board Potter fermenter.

Once per day the fermenting juice was drained away from the skins and then pumped back up, gently macerating the skins and breaking up the cap. This helps colour and tannin extraction. At the end of the primary fermentation, the wine was left on skins in fermenter for a further seven days, completing extraction of high quality tannins.

The wine was then drained off skins and the skins pressed in a Willmes tank press. This wine was then gravity fed straight to barrel and seeded with malo-lactic bacteria. At the completion of malo, the wine was racked out of barrel, given a dose of sulphur dioxide and then returned to new French oak barrique. Our favoured cooper is Dargaud et Jaegle, and the 2007 Merlot remained in barrel for a total of 19 months. During this extended maturation period, the wine was racked and returned to barrel four more times, helping clarification.

The wine was then pumped out of barrel, allowed to settle in tank and then given a light egg white fining, before light filtration on the way to bottle in December 2008.

The 2007 Petaluma Coonawarra Merlot is a ripe fruit, structured elegant medium bodied dry red. It has upfront dark fruits and a lovely touch of dusty cedar oak, and a hint of aniseed. The palate has some delicate spice, some chocolate, but is driven by soft red fruits and lovely supple tannin, long and fruit sweet. The 2007 Coonawarra Merlot is approachable now having had two years in bottle before release, and will age gracefully for decades if cellared carefully.

WINEMAKER

Andrew Hardy