



2008-09 Season Summary
By Rosie Thomson
Chair of MWGGAI Viticulture Sub-Committee

After vintage 2008, I think we all thought we deserved a nice, easy season, & things certainly started out that way. Decent winter rain meant little irrigation was required pre-budburst, & a cool start to Spring had spray carts mostly serviced & ready to roll when the buds started to swell. It was good not to see bud movement in August as has been the case in the last 2 years.

Chardonnay had generally quite an uneven budburst, but shoot growth was catching up well until the predicted frost on the 23rd October hit, & hit hard. A large number of blocks across the region were damaged, from vines that were flowering at Gulgong to shoots that were barely 5cm long in the cooler spots around Mudgee. This frost had the widest affect throughout Mudgee for quite some years, with traditionally frosty areas & better draining hill blocks alike equally damaged.

Post-frost, growers across the region tried many different 'remedies', & we will be holding a "Frost Field Day" next month to share information on what different strategies did or did not aid in recovering shoot positioning for coming seasons.

Downy mildew pressure was the next challenge for the season, though I think the combination of more advanced berry development & the extreme pressure of the previous season that scared everyone into spraying aggressively, meant very little yield loss occur due to downy in comparison to the previous year. Pressure was constant though, with most people using their quota of Cabrio or copper up in the period leading up to Christmas.

And then when most people were packing up for a few days rest over Christmas, a nasty hail storm ripped through the region on the 23rd December. Damage was again widespread with Rylstone, Gulgong & Hill End Rd feeling the brunt, though there were very few vineyards that escaped without some hail damage.

Fortunately the season turned in our favour for the business end of the season, with a virtually dry January, & only a couple of rain events in February & March. We escaped the bushfires & extreme heatwaves felt down south & west of the country, with perhaps only Shiraz showing some heat stress & dehydration following a couple of days at 40°C.

In the vineyard, early ripening shiraz & most cabernet sauvignon appeared to be the standout varieties for the season, with some really lovely chardonnay picked at higher baumes.

Almost all fruit has been harvested, with only a couple of people absent today as they are still picking. On the whole, it appears all contracted fruit was taken in, with little issues with the purchasing wineries in comparison to vintage 08.

Once again some larger wine companies appeared late in the piece to buy fruit at low prices, thus I am not aware of much fruit grown that did not find a home.

There are some major issues facing Mudgee wine grape growers & indeed the national industry as large companies pull out of regions they nurtured with contracts in the mid 90's. Unfortunately I don't have the miracle solution for Mudgee, but I believe through the help of the association & the viticulture sub-committee, those who continue through the hard times can work "smarter" to achieve a viable wine business.

2009 Vintage Climate Review

Brian Thomson, Porosity Services

The review can be downloaded from the Viticulture webpage on www.mudgeewine.com.au

2009 Vintage Summary – Winemakers Perspective

James Manners, Robert Oatley Wines

Viticulturists had a tough time with extremes in weather events but the fruit that did survive was not compromised. "The chardonnay this year produced excellent flavours and good intensity and the reds are showing great colour and power. "Essentially the weather was in our favour during harvest with very little rain. On top of that, we had good rain last winter at the right time." Mr Manners said it was up to both viticulturists and winemakers to work closely together to look at yields and targets for each vintage. "If that happens, Mudgee is poised to produce some very interesting wines."

As a region, Mudgee already does that quite well. "I find wine producers here are moving more toward wines with less alcohol and more European in style and that seems to be what consumers want," he said. He agreed NSW is showing a surge in wine sales and now accounts for one third of the nation's \$5 billion industry. "There is no reason why Mudgee cannot be an integral part of that growth if we continue to concentrate on producing high quality wines.

"Great wine is made in the vineyard so it is imperative that viticulturists and winemakers work closely together to monitor variations in conditions for each vintage," he said (taken from Mudgee Guardian 26/4/09)

Winecause

Peter ("Ralph") Scott

Winecause aims to "provide fully managed ecommerce solutions for the wine industry". Winecause run the MWGGAI website & are providing 4% of all wine sales through the website to the Winecause Environmental Trust. This trust will provide financial support for environmentally based projects, to be administered by the MWGGAI Viticulture Sub-committee.

Ralph commented that there was already over \$200 in the kitty, & encouraged all Mudgee Wine Businesses to support the initiative & make their wines available through the website.

Growers then voted on what environmental projects they could see most benefit from, & these results will be available soon.

Central West Catchment Management Authority

Colleen Farrow, CMA catchment officer

Report can be seen on the viticulture webpage at www.mudgeewine.com.au

New Viticulture Page and Forum on the MWGGAI web site was launched by Julia Conchie & Thea Ridley, Viticulture Committee Members.

Through this page and forum, viticulturists will be able to join on-line discussions and seek advice.

Winemaker at di Lusso Estate Julia Conchie outlined how the forum will work to nearly 40 members of the association attending the event. "People can register to be involved in the forum and over the next few weeks there will be familiarisation sessions on how to use it. "It's like an interactive chat-room and a positive way for the smaller producers to bounce ideas off their peers.

"Issues such as spray timetables and post-harvest ordering can sometimes be challenging for those viticulturists working in isolation. "Through the forum, we will be able to build up a knowledge base of frequently asked questions, "The forum will help to unify the whole Mudgee viticulture industry," she said.

She said it also marked the beginning of a relationship between the Mudgee Wine Grapogowers Association and the Central West Catchment Management Authority.

"The CMA has sponsored the creation of the viticulture page on our web site at a cost of \$1600 and the association is matching it via in-kind volunteer contributions," she said.

Colleen Farrow of the CMA said the forum would provide viticulturists with valuable information on how best to manage their land and water resources (taken from Mudgee Guardian 26/4/09).