

After last year's vintage was hit by bushfires, Raising a glass to our 'cracker' year

2021 is shaping up to be something special

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Jared Stringer

CAMERON ENGLAND

THE 2021 wine vintage is shaping up to be a banner year for the industry, with superb quality and good yields coming as a blessing following a harvest last year blighted by bushfires and smoke taint in many regions.

A mild, even summer across the wine regions of South Australia and the eastern states presented perfect conditions for grape growing, industry figures say, with a lack of heat-waves and good rain at the right time allowing grapes to ripen at the right pace.

This has been in contrast to recent vintages, during which heat events and generally hot weather have, in some regions, severely compressed harvest times, leading to bottlenecks at wineries and a need to closely manage grape quality.

Jared Stringer, who is chief executive of The Lane Vineyard and president of the Adelaide Hills Wine Region, said it was the best vintage in perhaps 20-30 years.

"It's been a phenomenal vintage," Mr Stringer said.

"Coming off the back of two horrendous years, we had the bushfires last year wiping out a third of our crop and a really low-yielding, 50 per cent down, on 2019.

"(This year) both quality and quantity has been phenomenal.

"There are definitely still vineyards in recovery mode, but we have had a year now to rejuvenate some of those vines and so a lot of those guys that were affected have managed to get a crop off this year. As far as the Adelaide Hills is concerned, it's a vintage which will go down in the ages. We're incredibly happy and it's exactly what we needed."

Mr Stringer said the chardonnay



Steven Trigg, of Randall Wine Group, with executive chairman Warren Randall, at the National Wine Centre. Picture: Tom Huntley

this year was looking superb and the winemakers in the region were very excited about what was going into bottles.

Randall Wine Group managing director Steven Trigg said across their vineyards, in the Barossa, Clare Valley, McLaren Vale, Fleurieu Peninsula, the Coonawarra and the Riverland, the vintage had been outstanding.

"Everyone who you speak to across the state seems to be of the same mind that it's been an outstanding vintage," Mr Trigg said.

"Across all of our areas I'll generalise by saying yields were up 40-50 per cent on the year prior.

"That doesn't mean that it's 40-50 per cent above average. It's been marginally above average based on long-term yields, but the last couple of years have been so poor that it's 40-50 per cent up.

"More than that, we had such an extraordinary finishing season. It was mild to warm, right through

"simply exceptional, the best in 20 years... a vintage for the ages".

Primo Estate Winery general manager Matteo Grilli said their winemakers could hardly stop smiling.

"It's been a record year for yields and quality. If you walk into the winery while the reds were fermenting you could just tell from the smell of the ferment that it was going to be a cracker," Mr Grilli said.

"We're thinking it might be the best vintage since 2014, a really classic year for a number of reasons.

"We had a wet winter last year... and as we were going into picking we had those really cool days, mid-20s days with hardly a cloud in the sky, long, slow ripening, which is the stuff that winemakers dream of really."

NSW Wine Industry Association president Mark Bourne said the 2020 vintage had been challenging, with many of the premium regions affected by smoke from the bushfires.

This caused the loss of about 40,000 tonnes of grapes.

"It's been a very pleasing turnaround in 2021 with some reasonable yields," Mr Bourne said.

"A nice, even growing season where there was rainfall at the right times in most of the regions and some people are reporting the best vintage in a decade."

Wine Victoria chair Angie Bradbury said in 2020, it seemed that everything which could go wrong, did go wrong. But this year was the polar opposite.

"Pretty much across the board all of the regions are reporting really good quality and actually really good yields, which is great after 2020 being quite a low-yielding vintage," Ms Bradbury said.

Mr Angove said the vintage in their McLaren Vale operations was

January, February and March, so it allowed a nice, even ripening and what the winemaking team are calling one of the best vintages in the past 20 years, so it's been a good result."

Angove Family Winemakers joint managing director Richard Angove said the white wines being produced in their Riverland operations were excellent.

"In our certified organic vineyards we had a very good year," Mr Angove said.

"It was a cool and mild season so fruit could be harvested at optimum ripeness and flavour. Very cool nights meant that natural acidity was excellent.

"The white wines are some of the best in recent memory, aromatic and fresh, whilst the reds have good flavour and lovely ripe tannins. Colour is exceptional. It is hard to remember such a fantastic year."

Mr Angove said the vintage in their McLaren Vale operations was



The Lane Vineyard chief executive Jared Stringer with a glass of the 2021 pinot noir rose. Picture: Mark Brake