

1978 BAROSSA VINTAGE REPORT

SUMMARY

A drier than average vintage followed by a wet April, produced average yields and “good, solid” reds with some outstanding quality Eden Valley Rieslings.

In 1978 there were 8,057 hectares of vineyards in Barossa and 40,980 tonnes of wine grapes were crushed in that vintage.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Barossa was now facing a serious red grape glut. In fact, a 21,400 tonne surplus of Shiraz, Grenache, Mataro and Cabernet Sauvignon existed in SA. Prices dropped and growers had no choice but to leave the grapes on the vine to avoid the additional cost of hand picking. Winemaker-manager at Saltram, Peter Lehmann decided to honour his commitment to growers and offer them some return by taking their fruit, crushing it and making wine for sale.

Further east the concept of Shiraz muffins was launched to cope with the oversupply of red grapes in the Riverland and Sunraysia regions.

Growers were showing interest in new white varieties, particularly Chardonnay and embracing cost and labour saving technology such as machine pruning. Experimental machine pruning began at Seppelts (28 ha), Penfolds (16 ha), Rex Craker (10 ha), Orlando (60 ha).

The first decanter centrifuge was introduced and wineries which still persisted with fortified winemaking faced a major brandy glut.

Sources: SA Wine Grape Crush Survey, Vinehealth Australia and *Barossa Vintages: a wine history from 1842*, Peter Fuller

