

CULLEN WINES

WILLYABRUP & MARGARET RIVER



QUALITY • INTEGRITY • SUSTAINABILITY

Vintage Conditions

Year	Vintage Report
1974	Good Season, but the birds were extremely bad and caused a lot of damage. 0.5 tons of Cabernet Sauvignon was harvested from 19 acres. The vines were three years old.
1975	A very hot and dry vintage, good Marri flowering and therefore no bird damage. First drinkable wine made. 8.2 tons of Cabernet Sauvignon. (Just under half a ton per acre).
1976	A very cool season. Long slow ripening. An excellent year for Cabernet Sauvignon. 14 tons of Cabernet Sauvignon from 19 acres. The Cabernet Sauvignon received a gold medal in the Royal Hobart Wine show.
1977	Good winter rains. Due to bird problems the harvest was early. 14 tons of Cabernet Sauvignon.
1978	A very mild summer. Still having bird problems. Very tannic reds produced. Some problems during fermentation due to the effects of cyclone Alby. As a consequence the electricity was cut off for three days. Alby hit Cullens and caused defoliation of the vines after harvest. One ton per acre of Cabernet Sauvignon was harvested.
1979	An excellent season with good crops, however due to the defoliation of the vines by Cyclone Alby, the buds regrew again before pruning. The Cabernet Sauvignon had lower acids. Whether this was due to the defoliation remains to be seen. Rain caused splitting in the semillon. No bird problems. 48 tons of Cabernet Sauvignon. The wine won a gold medal in the Perth and Melbourne Shows.
1980	A very hot dry summer with good winter rains. Good crop levels.
1981	Another hot and dry vintage.
1982	Excellent rains during the growing season in December. Long and cool ripening period gave another great season for Cabernet Sauvignon.
1983	Very hot and dry. Low acid levels and high tannins. Lots of bush fires. Poor winter rains. The decision to make only one red wine Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot instead of the varietal Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot. It took us three years to sell!

Year	Vintage Report
1984	It was a long ripening season, no birds and good crop levels. The first trialling of the lyre trellis on Sauvignon Blanc. This trellis gave riper fruit with better flavour development. There was crop thinning on the Semillon.
1985	Hot and dry vintage. Rain in March. Excellent flavours in the red wines.
1986	Good season. Wines with great depth of flavour. Cool and slow ripening period. Introduced Malolactic fermentation into the red wines.
1987	Drought year with very low cropping levels.
1988	Another drought year. Very hot and dry. Low yields of less than one ton per acre. First trial area of Scott Henry trellising on Cabernet Sauvignon. First of the reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Merlots produced.
1989	Good winter and unfortunately summer rains. High cropping levels produced for the first time, wines that are better drunk young. (Except for the reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot.)
1990	Good winter rains and good cropping levels gave wines of great stature. All Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon put onto Lyre Trellis system.
1991	Very hot and dry. Good crop levels. Fantastic red wine vintage with ripe tannins and good acidity. Wines for cellaring.
1992	Classic season with good crops. First year that malolactic fermentation was introduced into the Chardonnay. Good for both red wines and white wines.
1993	Cool and dry. Some powdery mildew even though there was no rain. The conditions were overcast and temperatures moderate. Hail in November halved the crop levels in Sauvignon Blanc Semillon and Chardonnay. This produced a small amount of wine with great concentration and higher than usual natural acidity.
1994	First of the drought years. Hot and dry with very low yields. Fabulous for red wines.
1995	The 1995 vintage came after the hot and dry season of 1994. Like the previous year, little significant rainfall was recorded between October and the harvest which occurred in late March. Crops were quite low, as the vines had regulated themselves following the hot season. Similarly to 1994 it is in these conditions, if the vines are in good health and not carrying too much crop load, that they produce their greatest fruit concentration. Such was the case at Cullen in 1995, one of the fastest ripening seasons ever. The harvest finished at the end of March. That is when we normally start harvesting the Cabernet Sauvignon. One of the greatest vintages ever for Cullen, both for red and for white wine. This was the last year that the Reserve wines were made. They were replaced by the four flagship wines .i.e. Sauvignon Blanc Semillon, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot.
1996	Following the drought conditions of the previous two years, 1996 saw the weather return to normal conditions. It was a warm and dry season, leading into the harvest, and vines across the region had good crops which did not stress due to the clement conditions. Many fine reds and whites were produced from this excellent harvest.
1997	This year saw ample spring rainfall in the region, however damage to the Chardonnay from strong winds in October just as the vines were budding caused drastic crop reductions. We enjoyed a mild, warm ripening period, but were hit by unwelcome rainfall early in March. Crops of Chardonnay were once again reduced to pitiful quantities due to high winds in October and hail in December. Generally speaking

	crops were low and the vintage started, then stopped. Being an older, lower yielding vineyard, the rain did not affect the crop and the Indian Summer which returned in late March (so typical of Margaret River), provided excellent final ripening for the Cabernet Sauvignon.
1998	Unpredictable elements yet again caused the usual stresses and strains associated with harvest time. A promising start to picking of the Chardonnay was dampened by two particularly poorly timed downpours of rain. The first, in March, delayed picking by a week, and the second in April, heralded the earliest break to the season. Fortunately at Cullen, neither rains had much effect on fruit quality, in fact for the Cabernet Sauvignon it was beneficial in terms of vine health and physiological ripeness of the fruit. After the rains the grapes were left on to ripen and the fruit was harvested at desired sugar and flavour levels.
1999	One of the most unusual harvests on record. The early summer was cool with southerly winds dominating. This gave the vintage a late start and the whites attained ripeness with the lower sugar readings. Cyclone Vance, which created havoc around Australia, threatened the vintage just as the whites were harvested and the reds were approaching ripeness. Fortunately Vance diverted eastward and the reds were saved. After this, nature turned on the most glorious Indian summer which lasted for weeks. Excellent vintage for reds and whites.
2000	
2001	
2002	It was a cool harvest with fantastic natural acidities and flavour. Ripening was very uneven due to the warm winter in 2001. This particularly affected the early ripening varieties such as Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. It is the first vintage that Cabernet Sauvignon was harvested before all of the Chardonnay had been removed from the vine. Due to this uneven budburst our vineyards suffered yield losses of at least 50% for Chardonnay. The winemaker was in the vineyard sampling the grapes to get the flavour profile right at the time of harvest as history was not a good guide for ripening order of different varieties in 2002. In general the quantities of whites were down and the reds were average yield. Heavy rain in April meant that it was a good vintage to harvest early. There will be some great wines but you will have to look for them particularly for the red wines. As a general comment the wines from 2002 vintage will be very fine and elegant with the whites having great potential to age well.
2003	A classical Margaret River vintage with vine showing good health leading to excellent physiological ripeness particularly in Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec. Yields of white grapes were generally down especially Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. Rainfall throughout the growing season was less than average but did not cause any problems in terms of vine stress. In fact, vine health was so good that they kept on growing after veraison, which is unusual. Flavour and tannin ripeness was great for Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec. The Cabernet fruit showed a beautiful balance of flavours that should show well when the wines have finished their fermentations. The grapes that were harvested before the rain in April will be of a better quality than those harvested after the rain and at Cullen Wines all the grapes were harvested before the rain.
2004	There was an excellent growing season with good rains finishing in November. As a consequence there was outstanding vine health and above average crops. The cool summer temperatures slowed ripening a little with fruit condition staying intact due to the dry conditions throughout January and February. Varieties such as Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc showed good balance and flavour as a consequence of these cool and dry conditions. This was until the heat wave in mid March, which ripened all the grapes at once. There was then a sprint to the end of harvest with the heat producing some outstanding red wines. Best varieties, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot.

Year	Vintage Report
2005	<p>The dry and cool growing season produced fruit with very good natural acidities, good colour and flavour. This was especially true for the Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. Yields were slightly below average due to smaller bunch weights rather than less bunch numbers in both red and white varieties. The abundance of Marri blossom kept bird damaged fruit to a minimum. Harvesting was completed before the rain fell on the 30th March. We forecast outstanding red and white wines with elegant flavours and composition with the Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon varieties starring. This was our second biodynamic vintage and we are very pleased with the perceived increase in fruit brightness.</p>
2006	<p>The exceptionally cool weather that prevailed during the growing season in December 2005 extended through the following months to vintage in 2006, which turned out to be the coolest since 1982. Although ripening was consequently delayed by more than a month beyond when it typically occurs at Cullen Wines, the fruit still developed perfect physiological ripeness. The wines produced in 2006 are thus outstanding, and particularly so in the case of our Chardonnay and the two Sauvignon Blanc Semillon blends.</p> <p>Most of our wines in 2006 were fermented using natural yeasts and required no addition of acid, which has allowed the wines to express the individuality of the vineyard. Phenological and physiological ripeness were achieved in the red grape varieties at lower sugar levels than normal and thus the red wines have lower alcohol levels than in the past, a characteristic we aim to continue in the future. The red wines made from Cabernet Sauvignon will be especially elegant.</p>
2007	<p>The 2007 vintage commenced with the harvesting of the first Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes on 26 January, which was the earliest start ever recorded at Cullen Wines. This contrasted markedly with the previous year, when vintage did not commence until 12 March, which represented the latest recorded start to a vintage at our winery!</p> <p>The early 2007 vintage was brought on by more rapid growth of the vines than is usual in the spring growing period. Although the warm weather during this period was reflected in temperatures that were 2.5° C above average, the temperature during the day never became excessive.</p> <p>The strong health of the vines at the end of winter in 2006 enabled them to capitalise on the stimulus provided by the warmer spring weather, ensuring a good start for their growth in the 2007 vintage.</p> <p>In addition, the two bursts of good rainfall at the peak of the growing season in November were accompanied by lightning. This electrical activity had the effect of converting nitrogen to nitrates and gave the vines a highly beneficial shower of natural liquid nitrogen fertiliser at just the right moment and thereby boosting their growth.</p> <p>The period immediately leading up to vintage was blessed by moderate temperatures and very few really hot days.</p> <p>Overall conditions during the 2007 vintage were good and Margaret River's famed climate for producing grapes shone through yet again. From the above, it can be seen that Cullen Wines are confident that the 2007 vintage is destined to produce very good red and white wines.</p>
2008	<p>The substantial rainfall and moderate temperatures that prevailed during the spring and early summer of 2007 were ideal for encouraging growth and fruit development. However, the excessive rains and winds that were experienced on occasions during September and October did lead to some splicing of the vine leaves and a reduction in the volume of fruit.</p>

	<p>The warm temperatures in January, which only advanced the time of harvest slightly from the norm, proved ideal for optimising the final development of the fruit. The berries of all varieties were small and produced highly concentrated juices. Although there is every indication that 2008 will be an outstanding vintage for both white and red wines, the relatively low yields of some varieties will mean that production of some wines will be below average.</p> <p>Update from September 2008: We have now had the opportunity both to taste the first of the 2008 white wines after they have been bottled and the range of red wines from the barrels in which they are maturing. These tastings confirmed our earlier view that 2008 is a very good year for all grape varieties at Cullen Wines.</p> <p>Excellent rainfall in the late winter and early spring of 2007 provided the perfect spring board for the vines as they came out of dormancy. Although brief periods of heavy hail and rain in October and early November led to some reduction in the volume of fruit, and particularly of Chardonnay, this had no detrimental influence on the quality of that fruit.</p> <p>The vines started to grow very well in late November as temperatures started to rise and some varieties had even developed berry sets. The biodynamic activity in the soil encouraged the vines to perform very well and, as a result, the canopies of all varieties were in great condition.</p> <p>Although temperatures rose around the end of the year and they remained high through January, they were not excessive and merely served to accelerate grape development slightly beyond the average at Cullen Wines. However, the dry warm weather did encourage parrots, magpies and silver eyes to start seeking moisture from particularly the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir grapes, and thus it became essential to erect bird nets over these varieties.</p> <p>Vintage began on 5 February, with the picking of the Pinot Noir, the grapes of which had outstanding flavour and acid. This was soon followed by those of the excellent Chardonnay, which were harvested within five days. All of the Sauvignon Blanc had been picked by 8 March and all red varieties by 20 March, just one day before Easter! Harvest finished with the last of the Chenin Blanc entering the winery on 15 April.</p>
2009	<p>The 2009 vintage at Cullen Wines was so outstanding that Vanya has referred to it as the Mozart vintage because all of the white and red wines produced in this year are in perfect harmony and balance. Good rainfall in the Spring of 2008 resulted in excellent development of the vines and the provision of underground moisture for the lead-up to vintage. A small amount of rainfall in January 2009 was followed by little or no rainfall and no unduly hot weather in the following two months, during which the vast majority of fruit was harvested. A dream vintage for a wine maker!</p>
2010	<p>The Cullen Wines Team couldn't believe their good fortune as the weather conditions in late 2009 and early 2010 began to unfold and it became clear that 2010 was going to produce the fourth outstanding vintage on the trot. The good rainfall that fell in November helped the vines through some hot weather and prudent shoot and foliage trimming, aided by the numerous benefits of biodynamic viticulture, resulted in an increase in yields, but without any loss of quality.</p> <p>The Marri blossom in the late summer and early autumn of 2010 was profuse and consistent, which kept the silver eyes occupied and thus only some of the most vulnerable vines needed netting. The summer was slightly warmer and drier in 2010 than in 2009, resulting in the production of slightly richer wines in the more recent of those vintages. The Cullen family are delighted that quality has spread itself across all white and red grape varieties.</p>

Year	Vintage Report
2011	<p>The very dry and warm Spring (only 111mm of rain from September 2010 onwards) combined with the consistently hot Summer led to the fruit of all grape varieties ripening within a relatively short period of time, and thus to harvest extending only from 1 February to 9 March. This was the earliest finish to vintage on record. It was also a vintage of super moons! The vintage conditions in 2011 are resulting in the production of white wines that have great flavour and elegance and to red wines with marvellously concentrated fruit flavours.</p>
2012	<p>The growing season for the 2012 harvest had good rains followed by the hottest January for many years. Yields were classic and we started on January 31 and finished by March 11 2012. The Cabernet Sauvignon Diana Madeline block was hand harvested with stunning quality on the full moon fruit days of 7 to 9 March. 2012 was a particularly great vintage for Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. With sensational expression and power of fruit across all varieties.</p>
2013	<p>2013 Another great vintage.</p> <p>We acknowledge that the above heading will lead to us being accused of sounding increasingly like a well-worn and predictable record! It is absolutely true, however, that 2013 has turned out to be yet another great year for Cullen Wines, following the tradition of each vintage since 2006, and that it is likely to rank among the greatest of all of our vintages. The only problem is that the yields were particularly low, which means that each of the wines from 2013 will be in short supply.</p> <p>Although hail and storms during flowering in 2012 greatly reduced the potential size of the crop in 2013, the following weeks were ideal for early fruit development. As in 2012, the subsequent period leading up to vintage was warm to hot during the day and warmer than average at night. Yet again, however, the fruit of all varieties was in superb condition when it came into the winery and this reflects the fact that the vines are now several years old and are not irrigated and thus have deep roots. The vines are therefore able to adapt very well to higher temperatures. This augers well for the future as it implies that these vines will still flourish with any further increases in temperature that may be brought about by climate change.</p> <p>Harvest commenced on 6 February around the new moon and flower days, rather than on the full moon and fruit days as in previous years. None of the harvesting was undertaken on super moons. In view of the reduced yields, we breathed a sigh of relief when the birds stayed away and thus did not further reduce the size of the crop.</p>
2014	<p>Good rain during growing season with no rain at all during January, February and to the end of harvest in March. Low yields and extraordinary compositions with low ph and good acids and flavours just building and building as the grapes continued to ripen. The result is wines across the board which are big in flavour and style. A vintage with long lasting wines of larger than life character.</p>
2015	<p>Strikingly similar harvest to 2014 in terms of weather and yields. Similar rainfall, dry from October to March. One difference was the Marri blossom which did not flower until after harvest, this created a lot of bird pressure.</p> <p>The time of harvest was almost identical to 2014, finishing mid-March, however the wine styles will be different. 2015 wines are characterised by lots of perfume, purity and great elegance whereas the 2014 wines are about fruit power and purity.</p> <p>This was only a few millimetres which fell – and this instability somewhat dictated and made the difference between 2014 and 2015 more stressful with the birds. We had 6 people each day checking the nets, getting the birds out and sewing up the holes.</p>