From vine to wine – five years of benchmarking 20 Pinot noir vineyards on the Mornington Peninsula, VIC., Australia

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Poster Abstract

Vine to wine benchmarking projects were introduced in Australia in 2004 with Shiraz and extended to many other varieties. Benchmarking cool climate Pinot noir in the Mornington Peninsula started in 2005 with initially GWRDC support and is ongoing with MPVA and winery funding.

Sites were chosen to have only mv6 clones on own roots. Vine measurements consisted of veraison assessments of active leaf area per shoot, ratio of young to active leaves, degree of cane lignification, leaf cover over bunches differentiated by side of canopy, leaf health, fruit load per shoot and vine balance calculations. Vines were photographed and reassessed pre-harvest for levels of fruit exposure and canopy conditions. Bunchzone temperatures were recorded hourly from veraison to harvest by Tinytag data loggers (Hastings, Port Macquarie) inserted close to representative bunches. Grape samples were collected for berry sensory assessment (Winter et al. 2004) and standard chemical analysis by Vintessential laboratories. Five month old wines were chemically analysed by Vintessential and anonymous sensory assessments were carried out according to 14 criteria by a panel of five local winemakers. A group wine-tasting was organised after data had been reported to all participants.

Over successive seasons the proportion of vineyards achieving high percentages of their ripening period in the beneficial bunchzone temperature range of 15-26°C increased through the adoption of differential canopy management. In cooler seasons open canopies to the east/south side were helpful, so was more leaf cover over the N or W side for colour formation and preservation in warmer years, in particular 2009. Time in the beneficial temperature range statistically correlated with wine scores in 2007, 2008 and 2009 (Winter et al., 2010 a,b). The study has proven bunchzone temperature management to be one very important tool to improve Pinot noir wine quality.

References