



THE 2004 VINTAGE IN THE ALTO-MAIPO MAIPO VALLEY, CHILE

As is typical with a low-yielding vintage, the quality was high, especially for Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot in the Alto-Maipo part of the Maipo Valley. The winter was drier than usual (35% below the historical average), and the spring and summer were warm and dry. Overall, the vintage was an early one, with yields down in most varieties throughout the entire country.

The warm growing season was emphasized early as bud break and flowering occurred 7-10 days ahead of schedule. In the following weeks there were some frosts threats but the Alto-Maipo experienced only an early cold spell. The vines went into the summer carrying a small crop.

February and March brought much-welcomed warm sunny days and cool evenings to accelerate fruit development. After veraison, the fruit ripened smoothly with the thick-skinned varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon showing a remarkable combination of excellent flavour concentration and fruitiness.

In early February, Chardonnay began to display typical character and by mid-month was the first variety harvested. Sauvignon Blanc began to reach maturation in late February. As the last blocks of Sauvignon Gris were being picked, Riesling was moving along on schedule. The majority of Riesling was picked the last week of March.

The red varieties had winemakers on edge as the sugar levels increased rapidly. The first week of April brought light showers and cool temperatures, both of which were most welcomed. "By slowing down the ripening process of the red varieties, this cool spell just before harvest enabled the fruit to attain the balance between sugar and phenolics that we prefer," said winemaker Matias Rivera.

Harvesting of the red varieties continued block by block until the end of April. "Overall, the quality ranges from good to excellent, with the red wines revealing lush fruitiness. We were extremely pleased with the depth of flavour and structure exhibited by our Cabernet Sauvignon right after completing fermentation," summarized Arturo Cousiño, President of Viña Cousiño-Macul.

Press Contact: Ginny Mills, Mills Media
Phone USA (707) 937-2293, e-mail: winechile@aol.com