



## 2006 HARVEST REPORT

### Maipo Valley

The 2006 harvest in Chile's Maipo Valley was late getting underway and stretched out well into the first week of May. According to Matias Rivera, Cousiño-Macul's Head Winemaker, "2006 was a very good year, but not an easy one. It was a year when we had to wisely use almost every viticultural tool available, such as water monitoring systems, canopy management, deficit irrigation, leaf pulling, shoot removal, and green harvesting. It also required a great deal of patience to delay the harvest until the fruit became physiologically mature."

#### **THE GROWING SEASON**

The season was preceded by an extremely wet winter which was followed by a cool spring. Frosts were absent throughout the Maipo Valley; but because of the wet winter and cool spring, the vines experienced rapid vegetative growth.

Early in the season, the vines demanded quick and attentive responses to control vigor and regulate crop size. At Macul and Buin, the vines were carefully trimmed and leaves were pulled. Canopies were opened to allow greater sunlight penetration within the fruiting zone to mature the fruit.

The summer months were generally warm and the vines experienced "veraison" toward the end of January. There were two extremely warm days during the third week of January in which the temperature reached 36C. During this critical time, the vineyard team at Cousiño-Macul carefully monitored the vines' water needs and judiciously irrigated only when needed.

After a normal February, March was one of the warmest months recorded in the Maipo Valley over the last fifty years. The warm weather advanced sugar levels ahead of phenolic maturity, and this necessitated delaying the beginning of harvest for both white and red varieties.

#### **THE WAITING GAME**

Among the white varieties, Sauvignon Gris and Chardonnay were harvested one week later than normal. Riesling was not completely harvested until April 18, two weeks later than usual. But according to Rivera, "As it was fermenting, the Riesling juice displayed high-toned aromatics, as did all the 2006 whites."

The red wine harvest began in late March, but was stretched out over several weeks. Waiting for the phenolics to develop, Cousiño-Macul began picking Merlot on March 25, and moving through the vineyards block by block, finished on April 16<sup>th</sup>. The Cabernet Sauvignon harvest ran from April 10<sup>th</sup> and continued into the first week of May. The harvest weather remained dry and the fruit was healthy and fully mature. Coming out of the fermentors, Cousiño-Macul's Cabernet showed rich fruit and ripe tannins without any signs of over-maturity. Overall, quantity varied from site to site; but yields were similar to previous years.

#### **THE RESULTS**

Rivera comments: "By delaying the picking, you risk encountering harvest rains which could damage this soft-skinned varieties like Merlot. But for us this risky delay paid off handsomely. During the fermentations and macerations, our Merlot showed spectacular varietal expression with great fruit, good concentration, smooth tannin and deep colour."

