

Harvest culmination of the yearly cycle



THERE is an old joke about the only things that are truly inevitable in life: the answer being death and taxes. Winemakers might also answer: the next vintage. Ignoring severe weather events that can decimate the potential crop on the vines: every year sees a new grape harvest.

Many consumers are puzzled by the term vintage, perhaps confused by the five-, 10- and 20-year-old designations on bottles of Madeira or tawny port, or by bottling dates listed on some wines. Quite simply, the vintage is the year in which the grapes that made that wine were picked. The grapes picked earlier this year, whether they be young sauvignon blancs flooding the shelves now, or cabernet sauvignon destined for years in the barrel and bottle before release, are entitled to be labelled 2016.

The grape harvest is possibly the most visible aspect of grape farming, but is just the culmination of the yearly cycle that makes up growing season. As the last grapes are picked, winemakers and viticulturists will already be thinking to the year ahead. Cover crops may be sown between the rows to return nitrogen to the soil and reduce soil erosion. The winter dormant period will see the vineyard pruned, after which any new or

2016 Villa Maria Private Bin Sauvignon blanc
Price: \$16
Rating: excellent

Pungent nose at first sniff with passionfruit, capsicum, tropical fruit and a hint of sweat. Fresh and zingy on the palate, almost a touch of spritz, bringing in ripe gooseberry to the appealing mix of grassy and tropical notes. This builds in weight with a lovely carry of flavours on the long, zesty finish. Just delicious.

www.villamaria.co.nz



2016 Allan Scott Sauvignon blanc
Price: \$18
Rating: good to very good

Quite shy at first with juicy fruit gum and a perfumed note before tropical fruits hold sway. Textural on entry with a richly vinous mid palate, citrusy acidity and an undercurrent of grassy, gooseberry notes that hang on the long finish. The acidity more marked here, like savvies of old, giving a more bracing style.

www.allanscott.com



replacement plantings will be undertaken. After budburst in spring, the growing vines will be trained and trellised, with bud-rubbing and shoot thinning employed to remove superfluous growth. The vines may be leaf plucked to open up the canopy to sunlight, and spray programmes put in place to mitigate against fungal infections, while excess crop may be “green harvested” and dropped on the ground. These tasks, and many more, will be repeated again and again until harvest.

The wine in the bottle is the fulfilment of all the decisions made in the vineyard and winery, along with the particular weather conditions over the course of that year. Here are three wines, fresh out of the blocks, showcasing the 2016 vintage.

2016 Graham Norton Sauvignon blanc
Price: \$19
Rating: very good to excellent

Hints of gunflint and wet stones lead the way, with passionfruit, tropical fruits and perhaps pear. Rich on the palate; a fruit sweetness here with hints of musk and red capsicum before crisp apple brings in a juicy freshness. A tangy and rather appealing sweet/sour note with gooseberry and citrus on the long finish. Rather tasty.

www.invivowines.com

