

# akitu

## Central Otago, New Zealand - Akitu 2015 Season Notes

Budburst commenced at the end of the first week of October, which was a little optimistic as the month turned out to be both unsettled and unusually cool. Not that November was to prove any better; it was one of the coldest on record and offered little encouragement that summer was remotely close.

Spring frosts were disturbing our sleep until the 2nd of December when the last one hit but that also heralded the arrival of more normal and meaningfully warmer weather. Fortunately, good soil moisture and warm temperatures for the remainder of the month ensured rapid growth that went some of the way to compensate for the slow spring start.

Flowering started in the Christmas week, unsurprisingly later than usual, then rain struck just when it wasn't needed interrupting ideal flowering and causing an uneven fruit set especially in the earlier clones. A less than ideal start by any reckoning.

Thankfully most of January and all of February were hot and dry providing much-improved conditions heading into veraison. We adjusted crop levels in this period by thinning fruit back to an average of 4-4.5 tonnes per hectare. Mild temperatures and some welcome rainfall in the first part of March kept canopies in excellent condition but then a cool spell in the middle of the month checked ripening. Fortunately, things quickly warmed up again for the critical 3 or 4 weeks we need over the March/April cusp.

A series of severe frosts in the middle of April threatened to end this troublesome season early and grimly but with extraordinary effort and a little vintners luck we managed to slither through with a canopy beat-up but still functioning. The remainder of April was thankfully mild and dry and presented little problems in terms of disease pressure.

Harvest was late, running from the 30th of April until the 5th of May. The result are wines that are similar to our 2012; a little lower in alcohol and lighter in colour than 2013 and 14 but which show a refined elegance and well-balanced acidity consistent with the cooler growing season and in spite of the challenges. A year like this is all about site and the Hawkesbury Vineyard did not disappoint.

