

# Info from Amietta: Riesling



## Riesling – only from South Australia?

Perhaps because Australian Riesling production began in South Australia's Clare and Eden Valleys, many consumers have the misconception that these are the only regions which produce quality Riesling. But in fact, many Australian wine regions capable of producing quality cool-climate Shiraz can also grow excellent Riesling. The best sites for this double act of Shiraz and Riesling might be described as 'cool-but-warm'. There are numerous examples: Howard Park (SW Western Australia), Jim Barry (Clare Valley), Henschke (Eden Valley), Mt Langi Gihran (Southern Grampians), Best's (Great Western), Knight's Granite Hills (the warmer part of the Macedon Ranges) and Amietta (Moorabool Valley, Geelong).

## Riesling at Amietta

At Amietta we have a world-class vineyard site of limestone and black volcanic clay soils on the edge of the Moorabool Valley, about 30 km north of Geelong. Our valley-side neighbours are *Bannockburn*, *by Farr and Clyde Park*. Amietta vineyard is a 'cool-but-warm' site, where the warm midday temperatures are moderated by afternoon sea breezes blowing from the Otway coast to the southwest. The grape growing microclimate of our Riesling block (expressed as Mean January Temp. of 19° C) is cooler than Clare, Barossa, Mt Barker (WA) and Great Western, (MJTs from 20°C - 22°C).

**Viticulture and Winemaking:** Our main Riesling block was planted nearly 20 years ago (Geisenheim 198 clone) and is unprotected from the prevailing cool southwesterly winds. Yields are kept painfully low (1.5 tonnes per acre) to ensure concentrated, intensely flavoured fruit and *Botrytis* is allowed to develop on 5-10% of the vines to add spicy notes to the wine. The fruit is hand-picked, then whole-bunch pressed to extract only 550 litres of juice per tonne of fruit – in short, we treat the fruit as befits a premium wine. This is, unfortunately, not what happens to most Australian Riesling fruit where pressing to extract 750-850 litres (of bitter juice!) per tonne is the norm.

For the 2008 Riesling we adapted a suite of German Riesling techniques to what we were already doing. In the vineyard this involved removing the vines' shoot tips at *veraison* to divert vine energy to the fruit rather than having the energy go to the shoot tips and small leaves, as well as additional canopy management to avoid direct sunlight on the ripening fruit (so preserving delicate floral aromas and avoiding sunburnt-fruit phenolics). In the winery we used a mix of protective juice handling (getting bright green coloured juice from the press which is very fruity) and oxidative juice handling (for the last 1/3 of the juice from the press) – which means the juice is left to turn a brown-apple colour which allows the phenolics to precipitate out of the juice. This juice is not so fruity but very nice for texture in the finished wine. In fermentation we used a mix of different yeast strains to emulate 'wild' ferment but without the spoilage risks. The wine was left 6½ months on lees (normally 3-4 weeks!) to provide a rounder, fuller mouth-feel.

## 2008 Amietta Riesling

The wine bursts onto the palate with minerally, zingy lemon and lime, opens into sweet jasmine/honeysuckle with hints of cinnamon and then powers on to a very long grapefruit skin finish. The wine has excellent balance and terrific length. It is a very distinctive wine that combines European structure with Australian fruit expression. Only 150 cases of this wine were produced in 2008.

Amietta is a hands-on, family owned and run micro-boutique winery. All Amietta wines are grown, hand-picked, hand-made and bottled at Amietta Vineyard and Winery, on the edge of the Moorabool Valley, Geelong. Winemakers: Janet Cockbill and Nicholas Clark.