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Granite Belt - Vintage News

Vintage - the annual wine grape harvest - is about to get underway in the Queensland wine capital. White grapes will be the first to be harvested on the Granite Belt and the process gets underway this month in and around the town of Stanthorpe.

With more than a dozen qualified winemakers in the region, the Granite Belt is home to the state's most awarded wines. A blind tasting of 10,000 wines produced *Winestate* magazine's "Wine of the Year" for 2008.

With 550 hectares under vine, the Granite Belt produces more than half of all of Queensland's wine grapes. In 2008 the region produced 72% of all Queensland red wine grapes and 68% of the state's white wine grapes.

While crop volumes vary from season to season, Granite Belt crush will be between 2000-2500 tonnes of fruit. Each tonne converts to approximately 900 bottles of wine. A crush of 2000 tonnes will create almost 1.9million bottles of wine.



Typically eight out of every ten bottles of Queensland wine is sold through the winery cellar door, but distribution is growing as consumers demand the product closer to home.

Granite Belt Wine & Tourism's chair of wine, Leanne Gangemi provided an insight into the 2009 vintage: "Conditions on the Granite Belt look good for vintage, thanks to substantial rain in November, which helped growers to establish good vineyard canopies with plenty of leaves to ripen the crop.

"More recently some properties suffered crop loss from hail storms before Christmas and on Christmas day itself. However the hail came early enough in the season so that the quality of most of the remaining crop should not be greatly affected."

Winemakers and viticulturists are pacing their vineyards each day, looking for signs of veraison. This is the stage in the development of the grape when the fruit changes colour, and this has happened in most of the Granite Belt whites. Merlot is amongst the first of the reds to show signs of veraison this week.

The majority of wineries crush their grapes and bottle on-site, however a mobile bottling unit from the Hunter Valley is also used by some Granite Belt producers.

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To learn more visit www.granitebeltwinecountry.com.au or phone 1800 SO COOL or (07) 4681 2057.

NOTES:

1. More information about the Queensland [wine capital click here](#).
2. The Granite Belt is three hours drive southwest of Brisbane and the Gold Coast on the New England Highway.
3. **Contacts:** Leanne Gangemi GBWT Wine Chair: 07 4684 1226. Craig Rutledge Principal Regional Development Officer, Department of Tourism, Regional Development & Industry: 07 4698 9825. Tony Hassall Wine Industry Development Officer (Viticulture) Department Primary Industry & Fisheries: 07 4681 6100.