



Wineries' 2012 vintage ripe for classic

By LEAH HUMPHRYS

LURID green and pungent smelling, this grape-studded sludge is the first stage of one of Griffith's biggest exports.

Vintage has begun – a little bit earlier than usual – and wineries are abuzz with anticipation for what promises to be a copious crop.

Casella is one of the first to begin and the trucks came rumbling in yesterday morning with up to 20 tonnes of sparkling, pinot gris and chardonnay grape varieties in each one.

Every truck is weighed upon entry and a sample of grapes is extracted for testing.

From there, they are dumped into the crusher – which has the capacity to crush 400 tonnes an hour – where the juice is extracted for the next stage of wine-making.

Casella's has employed an extra 170 people for the four-month vintage which takes their total number of employees to 660.

Last year, the family winery crushed 160,000 tonnes of grapes – which was close to 10 per cent of the entire grape crush in the country.

This year, with near-perfect weather conditions so far, they are expecting an even stronger vintage.



IT BEGINS: Casella's cellar shift manager Scott Goldman supervises tonnes of chardonnay-base grapes being poured into the crusher on the first day of vintage.