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napa valley vintage overview

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The 2022 vintage in Napa Valley began with ideal conditions, but a dramatic heatwave late in the season created significant challenges that required bold decisions in both vineyard management and winemaking. According to Winemaker Jean Hoefliger, this vintage became one of the most surprising and transformative experiences of his career.

For white wines, the early season's mild temperatures and adequate winter rainfall gave the vines a strong foundation. The fruit developed with bright acidity, fresh aromatics, and a well balanced structure. When temperatures soared above 110°F for 12 consecutive days, the team took unconventional steps to protect the vines. They applied 35 gallons of water per vine in a single pass, more than the typical total for an entire season, followed by an additional 10 gallons ten days later. This proactive approach preserved the whites' freshness and elegance, resulting in wines with vibrant fruit expression, crisp acidity, and refined complexity.

For red wines, the intense heat presented a different set of challenges. The extreme conditions accelerated ripening and stressed the vines, producing smaller, concentrated berries. The protective wax layer on the fruit, crucial for shielding against sunburn, rapidly degraded, leaving the grapes more vulnerable. Despite this, the strategic irrigation helped maintain fruit integrity. One unexpected development was malolactic fermentation occurring before alcoholic fermentation, indicating a strong presence of lactobacillus, which Jean and his team addressed early in the winemaking process.

Initially uncertain about how the vintage would evolve, Jean was continually surprised by the wines' development. While many in the valley struggled with angular tannins and volatile acidity, his wines emerged with remarkable depth, density, and balance. Jean describes 2022 as one of his greatest surprises: a vintage that demanded risk taking and creative thinking yet ultimately delivered wines of elegance, richness, and unexpected finesse.