

Last cherries of the season

IT IS still cherry time at Ashbourne Valley Orchards. This highly diverse fruit-growing property, run by the Boag family – David and Inese and their sons Andrew and Ross – produces a wide range of fresh seasonal fruit.

The growing year actually begins in December with peaches ready for picking until the end of January, the cherries ripening through until March along with other types of stone fruit, followed by apples, pears and quinces from February until June. Then it's time for the endless pruning.

The property was almost completely destroyed in the first of the Ash Wednesday bushfires, which necessitated complete replanting of most of the fruit trees, but their effort and persistence has paid off.

The district's rich alluvial soil is ideal for fruit growing and the cool climate ensures a good 'set' of fruit such as cherries and apples, which do not do well if the weather is too warm.

The orchards now have 12 hectares under permanent netting for maximum protection from thieving birds.

The Boags grow many of the popular varieties – Royal Gala, Pink Lady and Sundowner apples – as well as favourites such as Granny Smith, plus the more unusual Braeburn and Bonza. Some of their pears are exclusive to Ashbourne Valley Orchards, including the Charles Ernest, Comice, Belle, Durondeau and Beurre Hardy.

The Boags sell some of their fruit to Sydney, but prefer to market their product, along with fresh fruit juices, through the farmers'



Harvest time at Ashbourne Valley Orchards.

markets at Willunga, Mount Barker and Adelaide Showground.

Meanwhile, it's almost the end of cherry season, so the next cou-

ple of weeks may be the last chance to buy until December.

**• Need to know more?
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