

2018

Vintage Report



In many ways this is a rewrite of what I wrote last year regarding the 2017 vintage. A story of an autumn attempting to steal the glory from another glorious summer. In fact the 2018 growing season was the third hottest recorded and as I noted last year “you can taste the summer in the wines”.

The season began with a warm spring, soils charged after a wet autumn and winter. Unusually there were no frosts through the winter and vines were well set up for the season. Spring was warm and the growing season through December and January was drier than usual with January receiving just 30% of its usual rainfall. Things were less settled in February and March when remnants of tropical cyclones found their way south to New Zealand bringing unwanted rain. Our hand was forced after the remnants of a cyclone deposited 65mm of rain on the 8th March and picking began in earnest from 14th with both our Chardonnays and Pinot Gris being brought into our new winery on the Gimblett Gravels.

The ability to now get fruit off the vine and into the winery within minutes has been a revelation and the wines, although picked at lower brix, show a rare purity and testify to the quality of the summer. The indestructible Verdelho followed and then our Rose from our two outlying Merlot blocks. The quality of these wines is evidenced in the fact that both the Pinot Gris and Rose were crowned Champions of their respective classes at our Hawkes Bay Wine Awards, the Verdelho also picking up a gold medal. The chardonnays, still maturing in barrel exhibit a Burgundy-like nature. Pure, elegant and ultimately delicious.

The red harvest began with our Gimblett Gravels Merlot parcels on the 22nd March and ended on The Terraces on 20th April. Our new concrete fermenters, manufactured by Nobelet in France to the same dimensions as Esk Valley’s historic tanks were christened along the way, continuing our artisanal approach to winemaking. The unique nature of our wines, rooted in the vineyards and our winemaking techniques, seems to have transposed itself to our new site.

The final harvest of the season was at our famed Esk Valley home block, Heipipi The Terraces. Dry farmed and farmed organically for the past 10 years, the fruit had hung in well and was in excellent condition. Yields were light, down close to 30% on historical average, the Cabernet Franc especially light due to poor flowering. Harvested by a crew of 50 pickers over the course of the day, this was a satisfying end to a complex harvest. One that was full of



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