

2020

Vintage Report



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As the white wines settle bright and the new reds are pressed to barrel, a sense of pride and relief fill the cellar in equal measure, for this has been a complex and challenging harvest, under the shadow of Covid-19. For a few anxious days in March we were deeply concerned that we wouldn't even be able to even complete the harvest but with foresight, re-evaluating how we did things and mitigating all opportunities for the virus to spread in our workplace, we were able to continue. And what a harvest it turned out to be.

The story of a harvest ordinarily begins in spring as the vines emerge from their winter dormancy and the foundations laid for the forthcoming harvest. Frosts are fought, shoots are thinned and the crop size determined by weather conditions at flowering. But this was a season which will be remembered for its lack of rain and severe drought conditions that emerged over the Christmas period and continued through the harvest. In fact, as I write this in May we are still gripped by drought, evidenced in the dusty golden hills of the Hawkes Bay region.

This was a winemaker's dream harvest. Good sized crops were ripened under blue skies, allowing us to pick at our leisure. Not only that but it was a very early harvest which proved helpful as the pandemic cast its shadow over Hawkes Bay. Unusually for a drought plagued harvest all varieties seemed to prosper. When I think back to the legendary dry 1998 harvest, arguably the greatest red wine harvest of my thirty plus year career, it is easy to forget that the white varieties struggled in the heat, most lacking acidity and vibrancy. Not so this year, for while the days were warm and dry, the nights were cool enough for the vines to rest, retaining acidity in the fruit and bringing a rare freshness to the wines.

From Pinot Gris through to Cabernet Sauvignon, this has been a remarkable harvest, our cellar filled with many of our best ever wines including a legendary vintage of The Terraces. My role now is to maximise the potential of the vintage with what is now a customary slow and patient approach and providing an assurance that when these wines reach the market, they will graphically tell the story of a remarkable and very unique harvest in more ways than one.





Cheers
Gordon Russell – Winemaker Esk Valley



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