



VILLA MARIA  
NEW ZEALAND

# Vintage Report

2021

## Marlborough

Summer was dry and mild with Marlborough's signature high sunshine hours and cool nights delivering fruit in the best possible condition. The early autumn in 2021 provided Marlborough with very stable weather conditions therefore fruit was able to reach optimum physiological and flavour ripeness. The fruit was impeccably clean and the lower yields meant that the grapes packed a punch in flavour and concentration.

The early autumn season provided Marlborough with very stable weather conditions therefore we were in the fortunate position to leave the fruit on the vine to reach optimum physiological and flavor ripeness.

The fruit was impeccably clean and the lower yields meant that the grapes packed in flavor and concentration. Pinot Noir punches above its weight this year, the light yield and loose bunch structure provided intense and concentrated berries. During the season the bunches developed some 'Hen and Chicken' berries. Normal sized berries and very small berries were sitting next to each other in the bunch. The pulp to skin ratio was in favour of colour, flavor and supple tannin extraction which means that our young Pinot Noir already shows plenty of complexity and depth. These wines will rest in French oak barrels over the next few months and will surely mature into something great.

Villa Maria winemakers are excited and thrilled about the season of 2021. Harvest commenced earlier than usual in Marlborough, and with the fruit safely tucked into tanks and barrels the winery team can enjoy the remaining days of a glorious Indian summer. Vintage 21 was one of the earliest harvests on record; the last fruit arrived in the winery by the beginning of April - a time when the winery would be typically at the height of harvesting.

The growing season of 20/21 was not without challenges. Severe frost threatened to kill the delicate young buds and shoots on the grapes in spring which resulted in many sleepless nights for our frost fighting viticulturalists. Frost was not the only concern during the season. The flowering period in spring was interrupted by cold and rainy weather which caused a drawn-out flowering. The adverse weather severely affected the pollination process which meant that many flowers weren't fertilized. This resulted in a light crop with some unevenness in grape development due to the prolonged time of flowering.

Summer was dry and mild which provided optimum ripening conditions. January saw temperatures rising past 30 degrees for a few days but quickly cooled down to the moderate maritime climate that Marlborough is known for. Very little rainfall and Marlborough's signature high sunshine hours and cool nights guaranteed that fruit was in the best possible condition. When winemakers and viticulturalist visited the growing grapevines throughout the season it quickly became evident that they had some outstanding quality on their hands waiting to be turned into wine.





The fruit was impeccably clean; disease pressure was not a deciding factor in this season. The lower yield meant that the grapes packed a punch in flavor and concentration. Sauvignon Blanc is displaying its signature flamboyance; zesty citrus, tropical fruits and lip-smacking herbaceous notes coupled with a vibrant acidity makes the new wines sing. Marlborough Sauvignon over delivers again on flavor and Villa Maria is excited to share it with wine enthusiasts around the globe.

Due to the stable weather conditions viticulturalists were in the fortunate position to leave the fruit on the vine until they were at the optimum point of physiological and flavor ripeness. Aromatic varieties such as Pinot Gris and Riesling benefitted from the extended hangtime. Pinot Gris hung out until the skin phenolics were ripe and aromatics were at their peak. Pinot Gris is aromatic and lush, bursting with ripe stone fruit notes and savoury spices.

Marlborough Chardonnay is zesty and mineral with a seamless and lingering texture.

Pinot Noir punches above its weight this year. The light yield and loose bunch structure provided intense and concentrated berries. During the season the bunches developed some 'Hen and Chicken' berries. Normal sized berries and very small berries were sitting next to each other in the bunch. The pulp to skin ratio was in favour of colour, flavor and supple tannin extraction which means that our young Pinot Noir already shows plenty of complexity and depth. These wines will rest in French oak barrels over the next few months and will surely mature into something great. While there might be less wine to go around than winemakers have wished for, the superior quality makes up for it. Villa Maria is proud to share our stunning selection of wines that viticulturalist, growers, winery workers and winemakers crafted during the season.

## Hawkes Bay & Gisborne

The growing season got off to a good start in Hawkes Bay and Gisborne with good early spring warmth and rainfall setting up healthy canopy growth in the vineyards.

A good summer with warm and dry conditions followed with 1633 Growing Degree Days (GDD) in Gisborne for the growing season versus a long-term average (LTA) of 1571 and rainfall was moderate with 480mm versus an LTA of 595mm. Hawke's Bay had 1387 GDD in versus an LTA of 1340 and 387mm of rain versus an LTA of 462mm. Both regions produced very good quality fruit that was able to be harvested in good condition and with lovely flavour and concentration.

In Gisborne, the McDiarmid Hill Chardonnay was a big highlight with excellent quality fruit being hand picked from the old vine Mendoza clone vineyard perched on the side of a limestone hill. The Pinot gris and Chardonnay from Gisborne which is blended into the Private Bin East Coast wines were jam packed with fresh fruit flavours and the excellent Albariño harvested proved once again why it is so well suited to the Gisborne climate with the wines displaying an exotic fruit profile and balanced acidity.

In Hawke's Bay, the vintage got off to an early start with the iconic Keltern Chardonnay being harvested on the 22nd of February, the earliest we have ever started harvesting this vineyard. The resulting wine is one of the finest Keltern Chardonnay's ever made, with incredible concentration, precision, and complexity.

As Autumn progressed the weather cooled off slightly, so the remainder of the vintage came off in an orderly fashion as the various vineyards reached optimal ripeness at different times. Good clean ripe fruit has seen excellent quality wines across the Chardonnay, Rosé and Pinot gris made in Hawke's Bay in 2021 with the wines displaying freshness and succulent natural acidity.







On the Gimblett Gravels, the moderate crop and warm summer saw good flavour ripeness in the Red wines made from Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah. The cooler Autumn meant the fruit could hang a little longer than normal and the Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot, and Reserve Syrah are both outstanding wines. 2021 also sees the first bottling of a Single Vineyard Twyford Gravels Syrah, made in a more complex style than the Reserve from a block specifically set up for high end Syrah on our stoniest vineyard. The superlative growing season also meant another vintage of the Iconic Ngakirikiri Cabernet Sauvignon was produced, rounding out a trio of legendary vintages starting in 2019. With good quality ripe fruit flavours, and a backbone made up of powdery tannins and natural acidity, the Hawke's Bay Red wines of 2021 will age gracefully and provide drinking pleasure for many years to come.

## Auckland

The 2021 vintage completed a trio of exceptional vintages in Auckland. A cool September resulted in some frost scares, however near perfect warm and dry conditions in January and February for ripening fruit without weather pressure followed, and harvest commenced a little earlier in mid-February with our first Chardonnay pick. The majority of our Ihumatao vineyard is planted in Chardonnay with riper parcels harvested in the last week of February and first week of March with clean, fresh citrus flavours balanced with bright acidity. These are the signature attributes we look for when deciding to pick. Wines in barrel are already looking exciting, another memorable Single Vineyard wine is on its way!

**HATCH MANSFIELD** 

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