



MT DIFFICULTY CHARDONNAY 2009

2009 was a vintage with excellent flavour definition – intense cool varietal flavours were evident in all the wines, with excellent concentration and typically high acidity providing lovely focus on the finish.

A cooler vintage; the volume of the 2009 harvest was down 15% on average. Climatically there was a good start to the season, but December was slightly wetter than usual which impacted negatively on bunch numbers. A typically turbulent January was followed by a cooler and wet February which slowed down vine growth. Good canopy management was essential, with canopies left as open as possible to minimise the detrimental effects of the weather. Central Otago provided its usual long, fine, warm autumn but a week into vintage a very cold spell brought on a cold response in our vines. This hurried the ripening process considerably, shortening and intensifying the season.

VINEYARDS:

The grapes for the wines that carry the Mt Difficulty Estate label are subject to two strict criteria: they are managed under the umbrella of the Mt Difficulty viticultural team and must be sourced from vineyards in Bannockburn. Mt Difficulty Estate Chardonnay is blended from three Bannockburn vineyards – Mansons Farm, Long Gully and Templars Hill. Mansons Farm is made up of fine Bannockburn soil and Molyneux gravels. They are drought-prone, but are suitable to deep-rooted crops. Long Gully consists of Lochar soils which have very weakly developed, thin and wavy clay pans which are deep enough to cause no impediment to roots or drainage. These are well-drained, high pH soils ideally suited to viticulture. They generally have a 30 cm depth of top soil over fine to moderately coarse gravels. Templars Hill consists of a mixture across the vineyard of heavy Scotland Point clay soils alternating with the drought-prone coarse gravel Bannockburn soils. This vineyard is by far the most difficult to manage from an irrigation perspective of all the Mt Difficulty vineyards.

WINEMAKING CONSIDERATIONS:

The fruit was harvested in peak condition between the 14th and the 28th April. The grapes were harvested cool and handled in an oxidative fashion. We fermented 100% of the juice in barrel with full solids. Barrel fermentation was controlled by holding the barrel room temperature at 10 to 12°C - restricting peak temperatures during fermentation to between 21 and 25°C. The barrel fermented wines were stirred initially fortnightly, then monthly over winter and then weekly again over summer. The wine went through partial (about 60%) malolactic fermentation. The wine was racked from barrel in the middle of February, lightly fined with Isinglass and filtered before being bottled in March.

TASTING NOTES:

This Chardonnay pays homage to a lovely balanced season, with focussed citrus aromas backed by a toasty minerality. The palate starts with a clean citrus focus, moving into an elegant mid-palate with lovely flow and precision. The wine finishes with a flourish of minerality and a lovely citrus based tang.

CELLARING POTENTIAL:

Mt Difficulty Estate Chardonnay will improve for 5-7 years given optimal vintage and cellaring conditions.

ALCOHOL: 14.5%

PH: 3.4

T/ACIDITY: 6.8gL⁻¹

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 3.3gL⁻¹