



2001 FROMM VINTAGE REPORT

The Growing Season

Marlborough experienced a very cool Spring with temperatures well below the long term average. Three late frosts in October/November caused considerable damage and crop losses to a number of vineyards including those of two of our growers. As a result the flowering of the early varieties (Chardonnay and Pinot Noir) was delayed until a sudden change to warm, dry weather, offering perfect conditions for all varieties to flower almost at the same time.

This was the start to a long dry summer, moving into Autumn without any significant rain. The region was declared a drought area with water tables, soil moisture and rainfalls the lowest ever recorded. Many wells dried up and we too had to buy in water to support the younger plants, converting a swimming pool into a holding pond for irrigation water. Just after Christmas the biggest fire since the white man arrived in the South Island destroyed over 6000 hectares of mainly farmland in the southern hills of Marlborough, leaving us with a constant reminder of the extreme fire risk the region was facing.

On the bright side we had practically no disease pressure in the vineyard. We had a dream harvest with beautiful weather whenever picking was required and interestingly, despite the drought, the crops were slightly above expectations. It seems that in very dry years the grape vines tend to preserve all the liquid they can and together with an excellent flowering, the bunches were full, juicy and ripe.

The Wines

In 2001 we harvested 97 tonnes of grapes, our biggest vintage ever. Nearly half of it was Pinot Noir, followed by Chardonnay, Merlot and Riesling.

Even though we had a drought year, it is not comparable with the dry and hot 1998 season due to the cold spring, late flowering and regular cool nights during the ripening period. For the Pinot Noir this means a combination of cool climate expression and elegance with full flavour ripeness. This shows particularly well in the Clayvin Vineyard Pinot Noir. The wine is dense yet open and approachable with vibrant pure fruit and fine tannin support. The Fromm Vineyard Pinot Noir is again more backward, structured and multilayered but very promising too. We feel we have refined our style a step further in terms of achieving ripeness in the vineyard without excessive alcohol and fruit-sweetness.

Syrah, Malbec and Merlot all look very good too. They all have genuine flavour ripeness, which allowed us to leave them longer on the skins after fermentation. They also have good ripe tannins and considerable depth. Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc have just been pressed and clearly show above average qualities.

Of the whites the Chardonnay was picked at perfect ripeness and so were the different selections of Riesling. The ideal picking conditions allowed us to do a Riesling Beerenauslese (single berry selection), picking only botrytisfree shrivelled berries to produce about 100 litres of a low alcohol sweet wine, requiring well over 200 working hours. Besides that we will have a dry Riesling and again a delightful sweet, low alcohol Auslese.

In summary the vintage 2001 promises to be very, very good and well above average. How the wines will develop only time will tell. At this point there are no stand-out wines but rather a solid healthy quality across every variety. While some have the potential to mature into outstanding wines, we can already say that the 2001 vintage will provide a very fine range of Fromm wines with sound structure, ripeness and excellent drinkability.

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