



2003 FROMM VINTAGE REPORT

The Growing Season

The 2002/2003 growing season was marked by widespread frost damage over much of the country with Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Martinborough and Marlborough worst affected. At Fromm Winery we encountered two major frosts. The first one hit on Monday morning, October 15, about 2 weeks after bud burst, totally devastating the entire Clayvin Vineyard and the majority of 2 other grape sources in the Brancott Valley. There was no damage at the Fromm Vineyard surrounding our winery. The second frost occurred exactly 4 weeks later on November 14, affecting significant parts of our Fromm Vineyard, mainly Merlot, Malbec, Syrah and Viognier. Luckily our flagship Pinot Noir only suffered moderate damage.

The main challenge now was to prepare these damaged vineyards for the following year to ensure quality canes for the new season. In a very labour intense exercise we completely defoliated the earlier frosted Clayvin Vineyard and after the second bud burst around mid November had a team of 5 to 6 people shoot-thinning the whole vineyard over a two month period. The result was a beautifully manicured vineyard and a bonus crop of about 1 tonne per acre of Pinot Noir and very little Chardonnay.

The damage in the affected parts of the Fromm Vineyard was irreversable as the vines were already too advanced and all second set fruit fell short of the minimum quality standards. Still a lot of extra work was required for little return but again a necessary investment for the future.

Besides the frosts, the season was generally quite cool and dry and crops in most vineyards were below average.

The Wines

There are two ways of looking at this vintage. You can be upset and feel sorry for yourself about losing half the crop or be grateful for still harvesting half a crop, particularly at Clayvin. If a totally frosted vineyard at the end of the season provides you with an almost 50% crop of remarkable quality, you have to be genuinely thankful, and we are.

In summary, we do have some fine Pinot Noir in the cellar including both single vineyard wines. They appear to be solid and well structured with fine, generous tannin support and a firm but subtle, more classic look. The Syrah is excellent but there is very little and no Viognier. The frost-free blocks of Merlot and Malbec produced very deep coloured and expressive wines, some possibly of Reserve quality. The Chardonnay looks good, but there is so little of it. The same situation applies to the Gewürztraminer, beautifully flavoured but the crop is down by about 2/3. Finally the Rieslings, they are firm, light and racy with delicious purity and elegance.

All in all we are very happy with the quality of these young wines and we hope the best of them will be as memorable as the vintage as a whole, although for other reasons.

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