



2018 FROMM VINTAGE REPORT

Following on from the difficult 2017 vintage, 2018 proved to be even more challenging. It started off very promising with even bud burst, no serious frosts and good, early flowering, resulting in a potentially generous crop. All the signs were for a hot, dry summer, with the Wairau river getting very low and the Southern Valley irrigation scheme was only a few days away from being shut down. Even though that would not have affected us directly, the fact was that we were dealing with a very dry and hot (drought-like) summer with unusually warm nights. This all resulted in enormous growth throughout the region, so we committed to regular trimming and leaf -plucking in order to moderate the overall vigour and to ensure a sensible crop level.

At 9am on January 4th the looming drought was broken by a significant spell of rain, building to the wettest January to March period in Marlborough since records began in 1930. It was also the warmest and the usually drying winds were well below average. The early ripening fruit became increasingly fragile, but thankfully we left enough fruit on the vines, as a bit of buffer, that took up the extra moisture and enabled us to scrupulously select - retaining the best fruit and generously cutting anything substandard to the ground.

Picking became a very slow and expensive, deciding when to pick according to the condition of the fruit and with the impact of the next cyclone in mind. With some Pinot Noir clones, we cut up to 65% on the ground, others performed very well, but every bunch still had to be checked. Picking was all done within 4 weeks compared to 5 to 6 weeks in a normal vintage.

As for the quality, we are quietly optimistic. We're confident that all the time and effort we put into this vintage will reward us with some fine wines. It was a matter of maximising the potential and respecting the limitations of the season. Harvest is only one part of a vintage and a lot of good was accumulated in the fruit between flowering and picking. In fact, some of the whites already look very exciting, particularly our first Sauvignon Blanc from the Churton Vineyard and our first ever Chenin Blanc. Interestingly, the Pinot Gris seemed not at all bothered about the wet season and provided us with a generous, ripe and clean crop. The reds we will understand better after malolactic fermentation in spring, but early signs seem positive, showing wines with good balance, clarity and energy.

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