

Torlesse Pinot Noir

Kym Rayner:

I'd like to talk about our Pinot Noir styles now. Over the last five years, we've taken Pinot Noir winemaking far more seriously. I've mentioned that we have five different vineyard sites within Waipara that do produce Pinot Noir grapes of quite different texture and structure and flavor. Now, if this was just blended into one big tank, it would be a complete waste of that ... the diversity of this region. So our philosophy on making Pinot Noir is to batch-process in 1,500-kilo lots. This includes the grape skins at this stage, so when we are fermenting in our 1,500-kilo tub, we hand-plunge those skins each day. The fermentation lasts for four to six days, and then we leave the wine in contact with the grape skins for at least another seven days. So our average time on skins is between 14 days, and on some batches we do extended skin contact.

Next step is traditional basket pressing, which involves basically pumping the wine out of the tub, and then someone hops into that tub and literally hand-shovels out the skins into a basket press, and then it's pressed in our very traditional manner. The result of all this is about four barriques; that's a French barrique holding 225 liters, so at a one tub of our Pinot Noir fermentation, we get approximately four barriques of new wine.

The next philosophy we have is to place that one batch of wine into barrels, and usually we would use one new French barrique, a one-year-old barrique, and the other two barrels would be older. So we are looking for new-oak flavors to complement the fruit flavors, and we are looking for some of that wine to be more fruit-driven in style.

By the end of vintage, we might have 20 to 30 of these 4-barrel batches. We tag every barrel, and then that wine will sit in those barrels for at least 12 months. The wine goes through malolactic; we don't induce malolactic, it just occurs naturally, usually in spring, when the temperatures get up to over 15 degrees C in the cellar.

Now, you can imagine that we have basically every barrel of Pinot Noir has taken on its own particular flavor and character. So instead of having 20 batches of full barrels, we now have 80 different barrels of Pinot Noir; this is about 12 months after harvest. So the next step would be what we call a barrel selection, and depending on the style we are trying to make, it will either be a bigger, heavier style with more new oak showing some secondary flavors and some complexity, or it might be a fruit-driven style, and that will tend to come from the older barrels. But we basically have a lot of blending options, and each site is kept separate for as long as possible so we can investigate and study and learn what each site can do.

I think to summarize the Pinot Noir style, we say that our wines are hand-crafted, and I think with the small-batch fermentation, the hand-plunging, the traditional basket-pressing and then the individual barrel selection does definitely fit this criteria and it does allow us to show the unique Tairua of Waipara.

Ron@NewZealandFoodWines.com 720 233 5565

Ron McFarland 221 South Garfileld Street #209 Denver Colorado 80209



The Rayner Vineyard
Waipara

Kym Rayner:

The first vineyard site I'd like to talk about is my own vineyard. My wife Maggie and I bought this vineyard in 1991; but some of the vines were planted in the mid-1980s. This makes us one of the oldest vineyards in Waipara. And the other interesting aspect is that these vines are planted on their own roots, as opposed to much of the newer plantings that are on ... where the vines are grafted onto resistant rootstock. My wife Maggie and I planted the rest of vineyard, and we do all the vineyard work ourselves apart from harvesting.

The soil is heavier clay with a few stony ridges. The topography is sloping, which helps with cold air drainage, and that avoids the spring frosts.

We have the key varieties of Riesling, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir, and we also have two other interesting varieties, being Pinot Gris and Gewurztraminer. We harvest the Chardonnay and Riesling by machine, but handpick the other grape varieties.

We have drip irrigation on the vineyard, which is used primarily for establishment and in the hot years. The advantage of older vines and heavier soils means in most years, we do not have to irrigate the older vines.

Our vineyard is run on sustainable practices. It's in our own interests, obviously, to do this. We also drink vines from this vineyard on a regular basis. So we use the minimum number of sprays that we think is acceptable to produce grapes of superior quality.