

Torlesse Riesling

Kym Rayner:

I'd like to tell you a little bit about Waipara Riesling. One of the interesting aspects is, whenever winemakers get together and start talking about favorite white wine styles, invariably it will be Riesling. I guess the reason for that is that Riesling can be quite dry, flinty, has some austerity, have some mineral character. It can be off-dry, it can be medium in the German Spatlese and Alsatian styles, or in good years it can be left on the vines and you can make a sweet, luscious, late-harvest Riesling style that is just quite unique.

Although there are a number diverse styles of Riesling, I guess my favorite is what I'd call a drier style. Perhaps my background in Australia, where I used to make Riesling in the Clare Valley, has pushed my preference down this pathway. But I think there's two key functions or characters that -- that typify Riesling. One is the very distinctive citrus fruit flavors that with time develop into a lovely, almost honey-like richness with bottle age; so that gives you the option of drinking them young, fresh and fruity or allowing them to develop and take on these wonderful bottle-age characters.

I think the other key factor with Riesling is, it has that inherent background or backbone of acidity, which gives the wine structure. It gives the wine freshness; even with an older bottle-age style, that backbone of acidity always shows up on ... on a Riesling. I think this also allows the wine to be a very food-friendly wine.

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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.