

Torlesse Sauvignon Blanc

Kym Rayner:

I'd just like to talk a little bit about our Torlesse Sauvignon Blanc. It's, I guess, an icon wine style from New Zealand, and we think our Sauvignon Blanc shows the same fresh, fruit-driven characters that have made this wine style catch on around the world. The thing is, because we have different vineyard sites and we have Sauvignon Blanc on different soil types, we still believe in trying to add complexity to the wine. To do this, we handpick some of the Sauvignon Blanc, either off the younger vines or on my own vineyard situation I have some grafted wines and I worry that the machine may damage the graft. So we prefer to hand-harvest those grapes.

Once we have hand-harvest ... hand-harvested those grapes, the next process would be to barrel-ferment those particular grapes. The reason for barrel fermentation is to add complexity. We're not really looking for oak flavors, we don't want the wine to look like a Chardonnay; but we're looking for middle-palate, and one of the ways that we get a creaminess and a richness into the wine is by stirring the yeast lees at the end of fermentation.

So the wine doesn't spend a long period in oak; but there is no question in my mind that by barrel fermentation, we get a whole range of different flavors, and we definitely get some complexity into the wine. By blending the fruit-driven style with a percentage of hand-harvested and barrel-fermented wine, we achieve the complexity and another dimension that we're looking for in the Torlesse wine style.

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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.