

Winemaking Philosophy
Torlesse Wines

Kym Rayner:

I'd just like to talk a little bit about the winemaking philosophy at Torlesse. My original winemaking background was with larger companies, so I always made a range of wines; quite often, these wines are coming from different regions, different areas. The move to Torlesse allowed much more focus on vineyards and the resultant wines. But it has some similarities to the larger companies. As opposed to coming from lots of different regions, the wines are now coming from unique vineyard sites, all within Waipara, but quite often showing markedly different characters.

So the different sites with same grapes has changed the winemaking philosophy. The free-draining, lighter soils produce wines with good aromatics. The heavier soils produce wines with more middle palate, texture and fruit weight.

This gives Torlesse plenty of blending options. Over the years, we have developed some Reserve wine styles; for instance, we do a fruit-driven Sauvignon Blanc and -- which is fermented in stainless-steel tanks, and we also do a barrel-ferment, lees-stirred wine from the same grapes.

Riesling lends itself to a drier style, showing some mineral characters, but is equally happy in an off-dry or medium style; and when the season permits, we do a light harvest or sticky Riesling style. So, again, Riesling is a very versatile grape, and we are very fond of Riesling in Waipara.

Pinot Noir is another variety that Waipara is becoming well-known for. We make two styles of Pinot Noir. It can be fruit-driven, or it can be made with what we'd describe as secondary flavors that show savory, spicy, oak, extended skin contact and various winemaking techniques, all designed to add complexity to the wine. So we are looking for a ... a wine with texture, structure and complexity.

Torlesse is in a fortunate position that we batch-process all of our grapes. So we have lots of blending options at the -- in the vintage, and this allows us to show the diverse nuances of Waipara.

Chardonnay is another grape variety that is very happy in Waipara. We make an unwooded or lightly oak style, but we also do a ... a more complex wine showing barrel-fermented characters, lees stirring, and then a component goes through malolactic fermentation. The idea or philosophy with this wine is to add lots of secondary flavors and make it quite a complex wine, large range of blending options we get by small batch-processing of each load of grapes.

Over the last few years, it's allowed us to produce a Reserve range of wines that we call Omihi Road, and these wines display particular characters from Waipara that we want to share with wine enthusiasts.

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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.