

# Te MATA

ESTATE 1896

## VINTAGE 2013

Spring of 2012 was cool and very dry. November warmed up nicely, with many days around 25 degrees. By late November, there were signs of things to come. Grass on the hillsides and the drier parts of vineyards began to die off early, due to less than half the normal rain falling over the three months of Spring. December was warmer again, with eight days into the 30s, and again, less than half the usual rainfall. The timing of flowering was normal, starting with chardonnay late November and finishing in red varieties mid December. Drier vineyards were receiving some irrigation early in December.

January was very warm, with most days hovering around 30 degrees and two over 35 degrees. Nights were warm and there was only one rain day, giving a third of the monthly average rainfall. The exceptional run of fine and dry weather showed every sign of continuing all season. Exceptional responses were called for in the vineyards. We left a lot more leaves than usual in front of the white grape bunches in order to keep fresh flavours and soft textures. Irrigation began a month earlier than usual to ensure that we established full sized vines. Invariably, in these reports, we point out the date when soils dried out and the red vines came under stress. This condition is critical for growing high quality red grapes. In 2013 this point was reached very early in the season and the difficulty then became maintaining a fine balance of soil moisture for each vine for a much longer period than normal. This was achieved through a lot of detailed work, operating and fine tuning our irrigation systems.

February continued warm and dry. Most days reached 25-30 degrees and the single rain day yielded 16mm. There were reports of wells running dry due to record drops in the level of the water table. Fortunately our bores performed and we were able to keep all of our vineyards healthy. March maintained the pattern. Highs averaged 25 degrees and the few rain days mid month added up to only 20mm, a third of the usual.

Picking began on 7 March and got into full swing on 11 March, which is about normal timing. As expected the gloriously warm and dry summer gave us fruit in immaculate condition. There wasn't a blemished berry to be seen in the Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. We resisted the temptation to over ripen the white varieties and as a result the very young wines are full of flavour with fresh and floral aromas. Diary notes in March and April are peppered with comments about warm to hot temperatures, no rain and blue sky days. On 5 of March, there is a note stating that "we have never seen Hawke's Bay this dry".

Gamay Noir was harvested on 25 of March and Merlot began two days later. As with the white varieties the reds were in pristine condition which made the picking rapid and a pleasure for our crew of 80 pickers. Harvesting finished with Syrah on 15 April, just before a week of rain and cooler temperatures. It would have been too easy to over ripen of our red crops in 2013. However, we know that the attractive, vibrant flavours and aromas we are seeing as we press each tank of grapes is due to a very fine degree of ripeness; neither under ripe nor over ripe. Colour in the young red wines are the darkest we have seen. Colour isn't everything in a red wine, but it is a good sign. The other promising aspect of the 2013 reds is the tannins. There are a lot of them but, more importantly, they are rich, round and fine grained.

The 2013 growing season was the driest in recent memory. Water stress in the vineyard is one of the factors leading to wine quality, particularly with red grapes. The other main quality factor is heat. The 2013 season in Hawkes Bay was exactly average in heat summation. Our vineyards thrive in these conditions. Flavours, tannins and colours develop steadily to the best potential instead of the headlong rush which can happen in hotter climates.

A year like 2013 can be a leveller. It was not hard to make good wine.

Perhaps, as always the great wines will be made by those who know their vineyards intimately and responded best to a unique season.