

WAIPARA HILLS



2017 Vintage

Sensible crop levels and skilful vine management promoted early flavour development as harvest time rolled around at Waipara Hills for 2017.

“It is in such a year that the basic, but all important tasks performed by our viticulture team throughout the season, prove so important,” said Waipara Hills vineyard manager Jean-Luc Dufour.

Daily walks through the vineyard to monitor flavour development and ripening parameters versus disease pressure was paramount, to make the “all important call” for when and what to pick. He said a good spray programme, canopy management, crop levels and irrigation management all contribute to picking day. The stand-out fruit for Jean-Luc was the Riesling from the Mound Vineyard, where the picks displayed a wide range of flavours.

“We made several picks, and our best fruit came from lower cropping vines with good sun exposure,” he said.

Waipara Hills winemaker Andrew Brown was also particularly excited about the developments across the Riesling blocks.

“There was a range of flavours which matched the timings of the picks, from lime and ripe lemon, to orange citrus and satsuma,” said Andrew.

2017 marked his first harvest in the role of winemaker at Waipara Hills, and he was eager from the early stages to get involved and see how all the fruit was developing. The timings of the picks lasted four weeks, with the first Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris fruit coming off the vines on March 30. Andrew said working with fruit from vineyards in such top condition was a huge advantage for him when it came to making picking decisions. He noted the early picked Pinot Gris saw profiles of apple and nashi pear compared the later-picked spicy flavour profiles of baked apple and stone fruit, while the Pinot Noir provided primary red fruits, good colour and fine acid backbone.

“Despite the challenges, our vineyards and general fruit condition stood up amazingly well. It’s a huge credit to the viticulture team for this,” said Andrew.

Assistant Home Block Vineyard Manager Ben Roiri said grapes harvested were clean and full of flavour, courtesy of great vine balance throughout the season. He was particularly happy with the Riesling this year, and noted that the Pinot Noir picked off the Deans vineyard, as well as the Pinot Gris, also looked great. Ben added that if the rain events did occur, fragile fruit was prioritised, ensuring the best results from across the blocks.

"It was all clean, flavoursome and ripe," he said.

The whole team has enjoyed seeing how the wines are developing post-harvest, with the wine now in tank and barrel waiting for some finishing touches.

"Despite the well acknowledged and talked about bad weather for the harvest of 2017, we had some very pleasing results," said Jean-Luc.