

# Te MATA

## ESTATE 1896

### **'Third Time's a Charm!'** **VINTAGE REPORT 2015**

2015 is our third successive high-quality vintage following on from the magnificent 2013 and 2014. At this early stage the wines look utterly charming - concentrated, fresh, and full of fruit.

Spring 2014 began with a nice September of average warmth and rainfall leading to chardonnay budbreak in the first few days of the month, which is normal timing.

South-westerly and westerly winds alternated during October giving a variable month that was drier and cooler than normal. A frost on the 5th caused a small amount of damage in three low lying spots of the Bullnose Vineyard, but nothing to speak of elsewhere. November gave us some nice spring weather alternating with cooler periods from southerlies. Rainfall was just 24mm – just half the usual amount.

The first half of December continued the trend of cool dry weather. Two rain events mid-month produced the normal December average of 54 mm. From that point the month warmed up with many days over 25 degrees and many warm nights. The timing of flowering was normal with chardonnay finishing on the 8th of December. Flowering for sauvignon blanc and the reds occurred over the next fortnight. We were puzzled by the normal timing in spite of a coolish spring, as cool weather usually leads to later flowering. As usual though, reality became apparent when Larry Morgan our viticulturist reported the results of his crop estimates. Bunch numbers were down, on average, in most blocks which actually tends to speed up growth and ripening.

January was warm with most days over 25 degrees and two over 30. Rainfall was one third of normal. Soils were drying out and irrigation was necessary in many blocks in early January. As we always point out in these reports, dry soils and the resultant stress on the vines is critical at this point in the season - particularly for red grapes, as it encourages small berries with good concentration.

Although February had plenty of warm days around 25 degrees, and 2 days over 30 degrees, the nights were cool and so heat summation was below average for the month. Rainfall was only 18mm. Colour change - which began on the 2nd of February and was done by the 16th - was fairly compact, which is always a good sign as it leads to even ripeness.

March began with warm days and nights, and was rainless until the 12th when about 30mm fell, but hardly soaked the dry soils. The remnants of an ex-tropical cyclone (Pam) were predicted to cause widespread rain in Hawkes Bay beginning on the 16th of March, so we

picked all of our sauvignon blanc and early chardonnay nicely ripe and in great condition just before then. In the end, only 60mm of rain fell from Pam. Good southerly winds and dry conditions immediately after allowed ripening to continue in warm (25 degree) days and nights. Viognier for Zara, and Chardonnay for Elston, were picked between the 21st and 27th of March in lovely condition and with ideal brix levels. We began picking the ripest of our Merlot on the 28th, followed by Gamay Noir, and then had a break for a week in perfect early autumn weather.

No rain at all fell between Pam and the 9th of April, and days and most nights remained warm. We had two very busy days picking red blocks on the 7th and 8th of April before 50mm of rain fell over the following few days. By now, the first beginnings of botrytis could be seen in some crops around this time. Hand harvesting ensured that this was removed and grapes arrived in the winery ripe and healthy. After the 13th of April dry winds from a southerly quarter prevailed, cooling daytime temperatures. Most of our red blocks were in great condition and nicely ripe when the cooler weather arrived so there was nothing to be gained from further hang time. We continued to harvest most days until finishing on the 21st.

Overall, the success of 2015 is down to the lower than normal crops which provided great concentration and maximized the effect of the dry and warm mid-summer. The good fortune of well-timed weather when we wanted it outweighed any concerns from a cool start to the spring or a few late-season autumn showers. The charm of 2015 is already evident in the wines and will prove the lasting testament of our third successive high-quality vintage.

White grapes had lovely flavour in the vineyard and this has flowed through to the young wines. They are fresh and full of fruit.

Red grapes benefitted from a long, mostly dry and warm growing season. Small crops produced wines with concentration and dark colours. Tannins and flavours are ripe, and lively acids will keep the wines fresh in youth and maturity.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Cowley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**18/5/15**