



## Raymond Chan Wine Reviews

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## Te Mata Coleraine 2015 – 1982

2 August 2017

Te Mata 'Coleraine' from Hawke's Bay is in my opinion New Zealand's greatest red wine. No other wine made in the country has the continuous track-record of quality at the highest level, or the consistency of style. It is a tribute to the foresight of John Buck and his partners in creating the wine, and to the superlative work of winemaker Peter Cowley and the viticultural team led by Larry Morgans who have provided a wine that is internationally recognised as one of the very best from the country for over three decades. There are other wines that come close; in the Bordeaux-style, Stonyridge 'Larose' is a contender, but doesn't quite have the length of time of production, or the amount of wine made. There are some superb Pinot Noirs, but that is like comparing apples with oranges, and again, the length of track record of the top wines, Ata Rangi and Felton Pinot Noir does not measure up. Objectively one must say 'Coleraine' is a stand-out.

I've been a follower of Te Mata 'Coleraine' from the beginning, purchasing most vintages, including the pre-cursor Te Mata Cabernet Sauvignon 1981 (but I missed out on the first 1980). I slowed down my buying of 'Coleraine' once I joined the wine trade, but have always been interested in the developments and evolution, participating and in fact organising promotional events at the retail outlets I was working at, in conjunction with Te Mata and their distributors. It allowed an intimacy with the wine, the Buck family and the Te Mata team few have enjoyed. I worked vintage at Te Mata Estate for the 1991 vintage with the indomitable José Hernandez, my boss at the time. And I've been lucky to be involved in various vertical tastings of 'Coleraine', in particular the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tasting held in Napier on 3 May 2008, where 250 guests and 25 staff tasted the wines from the inaugural 1982 to the then current release 2006. Both my partner Sue Davies and I were pleased to help in a small way with the logistics of preparing the wines and pouring them. [www.temata.co.nz](http://www.temata.co.nz)

## The Te Mata 'Coleraine' Wine

Te Mata 'Coleraine' is the company's flagship. Although the first vintages of 'Coleraine' and 'Awatea' were released as 'equal' siblings, the 'Coleraine' was recognised as the more special wine. The wines from 1982 to 1988 were single vineyard wines, based on fruit from the Havelock Hills. From 1989, the 'Coleraine' and 'Awatea' became multi-site blends utilising the highest quality fruit. The fruit is hand-picked, at approx, 7.5 t/ha and handled as batches to allow maximum blending options. Destemmed though not crushed, the grapes are inoculated and warm-fermented, the wine spending around 21 days on skins with regular punching down. The blending sessions are crucial, and the wine spends approx, 18-20 months in French oak barriques of which up to 75% are new. The cepage varies, usually with Cabernet Sauvignon dominant supported by Merlot and Cabernet Franc, though this has varied considerably over the years.

## The 'Coleraine' Vertical Tasting

There were actually two tastings of the 'Coleraine' vertical held. I attended the first on Wednesday 2 August, the second tasting held the next evening. The 12 wines were presented all on the table at once, identity known, and it was suggested that we taste from the youngest to the oldest. Vertical tastings such as this are immensely valuable in being able to give the taster a sense of relativity of the different wines, for better than tasting the wines at separate times. The gradual (or sudden) development of different vintages can be easily seen, as are aspects such as level of ripeness from the growing season, the 'size' of the wine and also the balance. Scores from vertical tastings can be far more acute and accurate. However, there is always the spectre of bottle variation, especially with older wines. All the 'Coleraines' have been sealed with natural cork, of the highest grade available, comparable to that used in top-flight Bordeaux, but there is no doubt that variation does exist. Geoff provided a very comprehensive set of background notes, and the following information on each of the different vintages comes from that. His introduction was scholarly, and his running of the tasting very sensitive to the wines and the tasters. My notes follow.

#### **Te Mata 'Coleraine' Hawke's Bay 2015 ★★★★★**

Dark, deep ruby-red colour, youthful in appearance. The nose is very full and concentrated with softly packed, vibrant and ripe blackcurrant and cassis aromas, along with dark raspberry notes, all harmoniously interwoven. The black and red fruits are very deep and exude a voluptuous richness. On palate, very rich and ripe, with vibrant mouthfeel and acid vitality lending a degree of elegance and finesse. The blackcurrant fruit shows with cassis, slight herb notes, currants and oak. This is supple, growing in plumpness and plumpness as it flows, but there is serious extraction underlining the fruit. Beautifully rich and with a rounded opulence. This will keep 15+ years. 54% CS, 36% Me, 10% CF. 14.0% alc. 19.5/20 Aug 2017 Release Price \$140.00

#### **Te Mata 'Coleraine' Hawke's Bay 2013 ★★★★★**

Very dark, deep, ruby-red colour, with slight hint of garnet. The nose is very fresh and very finely presented, with piquant, bright and aromatic blackcurrant fruit with cassis liqueur fresh and dark herbs. This is so youthful and primary, the vibrancy fresher than the 2015. Beautiful floral lift and great depth and penetration. The palate is pure brilliance, with vibrancy and vitality, showing a fresh heart of blackcurrants, sweet black and red plums and curranty fragrance. The acidity is refined and active, lending poise, enhancing the sinewy tannin extraction. The mouthfeel is very refined, and the wine carries with lusciousness and energy to an extremely long finish. This must be perfection. It will live a further 20 years easily. 56% CS, 30% Me, 14% CF. 13.5% alc. 20.0/20 Aug 2017 Release Price \$95.00

#### **Te Mata 'Coleraine' Hawke's Bay 2009 ★★★★★**

Dark, deep, black-hued ruby-red colour, a little lighter on the edge. The nose is soft, full and harmoniously packed with dense, ripe aromas of blackberries and black plums, and layers of herbs, currants and a little earthy, secondary detail. This retains freshness and life in the aromatics. The palate is fulsome, with ripe, fleshy fruit flavours of ripe black berry, plum and curranty notes, encased by grainy, near sinewy tannins and structure. This still needs time to come together. The rich fruit has plenty of life and is a little brooding, but will blossom. The ripeness level and the structure will see it unfold over the next 15 years. 52% CS, 43% Me, 5% CF. 14.0% alc. 18.5+/20 Aug 2017 Release Price \$85.00

#### **Te Mata 'Coleraine' Hawke's Bay 2007 ★★★★★**

Dark, deep, ruby-red colour with garnet hues, a little lighter on the edge. The nose is very full with youthfully fresh aromas of black and red currants, along with fresh and dried herb note. The fruit is ripe and sweetly aromatic, and grows in depth and density in the glass. Complexing earth and cedary oak notes emerge with aeration. The palate is fresh and lively, with tightly concentrated

blackcurrant, cassis and fresh herb flavours at the core. The fruit aromatics are enlivened by bright acidity. The mouthfeel has energy and vitality, and is underlined by very fine-grained tannin grip and extraction. Though showing some aromatic development, the palate is decidedly youthful, with the potential to develop over the next 15+ years. 52% CS, 34% Me, 14% CF. 14.0% alc. 19.0-/20 Aug 2017 Release Price \$72.00

**Te Mata 'Coleraine' Hawke's Bay 2005 ★★★★★**

Dark, deep ruby-red colour with slight garnet hues, a little lighter on the edge. The nose is beautifully integrated and harmoniously expressed with intense aromas of dark-red and black berry fruit and plums, interwoven with layers of fresh and dried herbs, cedary and pencil oak. Some earthy detail unfolds, and this is showing the beginnings of lovely secondary development and complexity. Very rich, powerful and well-concentrated on palate, this has densely packed flavour of vibrant blackcurrant and plum fruit melded with savoury, secondary dried herb and earthy notes. The mouthfeel is fresh, alive and bright with plenty of acidity, along with fine-grained tannin structure. The freshness, vitality and youthful firmness on the palate will see this keep well, and grow in complexity over the next 10+ years. 45% Me, 37% CS, 18% CF. 13.5% alc. 19.5-/20 Aug 2017 Release Price \$75.00

**Te Mata 'Coleraine' Cabernet/Merlot Hawke's Bay 2002 ★★★★★**

Dark, deep ruby-red colour with garnet hues, a touch of bricking on the edge. This has a full, powerfully packed and dense bouquet with aromas of dark-red berry and plum fruit along with layers of funky, savoury game. The fruit and brettanomyces have melded together for complexing interest. The front palate has freshness and energy, the dark-red berry and plum fruit still sweet and lush, quite lively, and enhanced by the lacy acidity. The mid-palate shows the growing texture and grip with plenty of structure. The fruit gives way to the gamey, earthy notes and the mouthfeel shows the beginnings of dry firmness on the finish. This has mouthfilling, savoury, funky flavours, and the wine will become drier over the next 5+ years, but will keep longer. 39% Me, 36% CF, 25% CS. 14.0% alc. 17.5+/20 Aug 2017 Release Price \$65.00

**Te Mata 'Coleraine' Cabernet/Merlot Hawke's Bay 1998 ★★★★★**

Very dark, deep, black-red colour with garnet hues, some bricking on the edge. The nose is powerfully packed and densely solid with aromas of ripe black fruit interwoven with a little savoury secondary complexity showing earth, minerals, ink, game and cedary oak. The concentration and ripeness of the black fruits is the feature, but also the nose exudes a brooding power which promises more to unfold. On palate, this is rich, luscious and succulent with powerfully concentrated blackberry and black plum fruit, with blackcurrants and cassis intermingling with earth and mineral layers, and secondary dried herb nuances, with suggestion of undergrowth. The fruit richness is underlined by ripe, fine and firm tannin extraction providing balancing structure, with fresh acidity lending energy and freshness. The palate is linear, long and sustained. This is an exceptionally rich and ripe, beautifully structured wine that will develop further over the next 10+ years. 60% CS, 32% Me, 8% CF. 13.5% alc. 20.0/20 Aug 2017 Release Price \$55.00

**Te Mata 'Coleraine' Cabernet/Merlot Hawke's Bay 1995 ★★★★★**

Even ruby-red with garnet hues showing some depth, lighter edge with bricking. The bouquet is soft and refined in presentation with harmoniously integrated aromas of savoury dark-red berry fruits, soy sauce and layers of dried herbs and game, with earth and cedar. Some curranty undertones show the fruit freshness still inherent in the wine. The palate is sweet and rich, with red berry fruits intermixed with savoury herb, game and earthy secondary notes and the beginnings of tertiary development. The palate is elegant in proportion with underlying fine-grained tannins just beginning to soften, and gently refreshing acidity. A slightly smaller-scale wine, showing

secondary character, this is beautifully proportioned with fruit sweetness still the feature. 59% CS, 34% Me, 7% CF. 13.0% alc. 19.0/20 Aug 2017 Release Price \$36.00

**Te Mata 'Coleraine' Cabernet/Merlot Hawke's Bay 1991 ★★★★★**

Dark, moderately deep garnet-red colour, some bricking on the rim. The bouquet is very elegant and refined, with deep and concentrated aroma of ripe, savoury dark red berry and curranty fruits and some secondary earthy and black mineral notes. This is still fresh with vitality and energy, the aromatics vibrant and energised, but this is complex in detailing. The nose has intensity, style and life. The palate is beautifully sweet, with rich, vibrant black fruits at the core, showing blackcurrant, earth and minerals. This is incredibly fresh and aromatic, the fresh acidity enhancing the vitality of the wine. The fruit is melded very fine-grained flowery tannins that still contribute to the concentration and finesse of structure as well as linearity. The finish is remarkably long. A wonderful wine, still on its plateau after a quarter of a century. Another decade ahead easily. 59% CS, 29% Me, 12% CF. 13.0% alc. 20.0/20 Aug 2017 Release Price \$35.00

**Te Mata 'Coleraine' Cabernet/Merlot Hawke's Bay 1989 ★★★★★**

Even garnet-red colour, with some paleness, showing a little bricking. The nose is fine in proportion, still with a firm core, showing cooler-spectrum curranty fruit aromas along with herbs, a touch of eucalypt and cedar. The bouquet has depth and penetration. An elegant wine on palate, with accessibility, the fruit still sweet and lively, the cooler herbal notes lending freshness. The acidity adds to the energy, and the fruit is underlined by light, refined, tannin extraction and grip that allows the fruit to prevail. There is some secondary complexing earthy detail adding interest. This is still balanced and attractive, but deserves consuming soon. It will not fall over suddenly. 51% CS, 40% Me, 9% CF. 12.5% alc. 18.0-/20 Aug 2017 Release Price c.\$30.00

**Te Mata 'Coleraine' Cabernet/Merlot Hawke's Bay 1983 ★★★★★**

Dark, deep, ruby-red with garnet hues, a hint of bricking on edge, remarkably youthful in appearance. The nose is fresh, intense and penetrating with aromas of blackcurrant fruit entwined with herbal layers, unfolding notes of earth, black minerals, a suggestion of reduction, charcoal, toast and smoke. The bouquet has depth, density, and plenty of volume and presence. The aromatics grow in fruit clarity with aeration. On palate, very rich and sweet-fruited, and showing depth and concentration of blackberry and blackcurrants. The secondary and tertiary elements add detailing. This features ripeness, the heart growing in concentration in the glass. The tannins are very fine-grained, and the retention of acidity lends vitality and energy, enhancing the fruit sweetness. As the wine carries, the mouthfeel grows in harmony and integration, and the wine finishes with herb and smoke nuance. In wonderful condition, the wine should be consumed now. 75% CS, 20% Me, 5% CF. 13.0% alc. 18.5+/20 Aug 2017 Release Price \$22.50

**Te Mata 'Coleraine' Cabernet/Merlot Hawke's Bay 1982 ★★★★★**

Even garnet-red colour, showing some depth, a little lighter edged with bricking. The bouquet is softly full with volume, and harmoniously integrated with an amalgam of blackcurrant and savoury red-berried fruits, along with herbal notes, a little secondary dried herb and undergrowth and tertiary earthy and cedary elements. The cooler herbal detail lends piquancy to the aromatics. On palate, this still has vigour, a degree of robustness, but also an openness. The black fruits tend savoury and herbal, but remain aromatic and lifted, with a fresh line of acidity providing tension. The tannins are fine in the granular expression, and with the acidity carry the wine to a lingering finish, the fruit tending to dryness. 94% CS, 6% Me. 13.5% alc. 18.5-/20 Aug 2017 Release Price \$15.00