

Te MATA

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Vintage Report 2016

Late autumn and winter of 2015 were very dry. Bud break in Chardonnay began in the first few days of September and in reds early October which was normal timing.

Spring

High rainfall in September was very welcome, as the water table beneath the Heretaunga Plains had not recovered from the previous summer. It was a relief to see aquifer levels bounce back to near normal as the rainfall permeated the recharge areas. Many days were warm in September, but the nights remained very cool, keeping the monthly average temperature low. There was no frost damage, although it was a close call several times. Nights remained cool throughout October, but it was a dry month with a third of the normal rainfall. The days warmed up nicely, with most reaching 20 to 25 degrees. Bud break and shoot growth was even along the canes and young bunches were looking plentiful in some varieties. November alternated between warmer and cooler weeks and finished quite warm, with several days between 25 and 30 degrees. Three short rain periods added up to an average 50mm.

Summer

December weather was variable. There were a few cooler southerlies, but temperatures warmed up nicely, with many days in the mid-twenties and two nudging 30 degrees. Rainfall was half the usual for the month. By mid-month, the driest parts of some vineyards required a drink, and by Christmas most of our vineyards in Havelock North and the Bridge Pa Triangle were being irrigated. Spring and early summer days had been pleasant, but there were many cold nights, and going into January the heat summation for the growing season was amongst the lowest on record.

The first week of January was mild, but then the summer kicked in with a vengeance. Most days had highs between 25 and 30 degrees, and there was a run of 8 days later in the month when highs were all 30 degrees or slightly above. Nights were warm, ensuring that the heat summation for the month was above average. A few rain days early and late in the month added up to average rainfall, but soils dried quickly in the hot weather. Our viticulturist, Larry Morgan, carried out his usual sampling of each block of grapes to determine potential crop size. He found that most varieties were carrying an average sized crop but Merlot and Syrah blocks had set a large crop. Our vineyard crews spent much of January crop thinning Merlot and Syrah to ensure timely ripeness and concentration.

February was very warm. Most days were between 25 and 30 degrees and there were 6 days in the low 30s. Nights were unusually warm, never dipping below 10 degrees and many around 15 degrees or more. A few spots of rain added up to 10 to 15 mm across our vineyard sites. The month was recorded as the second hottest on record in many parts of New Zealand. The very warm January and February weather brought heat summation to near average, which must be one of the biggest turn arounds we have experienced. In the vineyards, thinning of red varieties continued and after Cabernet had turned red (veraison), we removed a larger number of green berries than usual from the bunches.

March began with a cooler few days, but then warmed right up again. We began picking Sauvignon Blanc on the 16 March, and Chardonnay the following day. Temperatures became milder at this time, although nights remained warm. 20mm of rain mid-month, the odd dew and a foggy morning lead to the first signs of botrytis in some vineyards. Harvesting of white grapes in lovely condition, and with great flavours, continued every day until finishing whites on the 26 March. We began harvesting Merlot the same day. The heat in February and March had ripened the reds nicely and they were looking very good. Light rain over three days around this time brought the monthly rainfall total to two-thirds the average. Again, the first signs of botrytis in some crops kept us busy, picking Merlot and Gamay every day until the end of the month.

Early April featured nice warm weather and warm nights. Rainfall for the month was a quarter of the average. Cabernets, Syrahs and the remaining Merlot blocks ripened nicely in the warm, dry conditions with picking continuing on and off until finishing vintage on the 20 April.

The growing season in vintage 2016 had its moments, but turned out very well. Heat summation was about average and, apart from September, rainfall for every month was below or well below average. The unusually warm temperatures in February and March made up for the unusually cool spring and early summer. Soil moisture dried out early in the summer, which is essential for a good vintage.

At the time of writing this report (late May) we can say that our white wines from 2016 are fresh and fruity, show nice ripe flavours and have good acid balance. The red wines have all been pressed and sent to barrel. Deep colour is a stand out feature of the young red wines for the fourth year in a row. They are plump and fruity and have good levels of ripe tannins. Time will tell with these young red wines as always; but, as they look at the moment, we couldn't be happier. The Bordeaux varieties, in particular, look especially promising.

Rainfall

Sept 145mm Oct 22mm Nov 40mm Dec 30mm Jan 55mm Feb 12mm Mar 44mm April 19mm

Heat Summation

1432 degree days to the end of April. 1403 days to the last day of picking