



Kumeu River Vintage Report 2021

The winter of 2020 was relatively mild and dry. Spring came early again, but there were frosts to contend with in late September, one, in particular, causing damage to many of our Kumeu vineyards. Similarly, there were frost events at our Rays Road Vineyard in Hawke's Bay, but the wind machine we installed recently did the job, and fortunately, the damage was minimal. Flowering took place well ahead of normal, and it was apparent that the season would be very early this year. Conditions have been quite dry for a while now. Total rainfall in 2020 was just over 800mm, compared to the typical year of 1200-1400mm.

Harvest commenced on 5 February 2021 for the Crémant production, the earliest we have started vintage in living memory. The growing season rainfall was only sporadic, maintaining the dry conditions, and the temperatures were moderately warm, hovering around the mid to high twenties right through the ripening season. Usually, we can expect a few days over 30°C, but this year the maximum temperature was 29.2° on 9 December, and nothing came near that right through January and February. These relatively cool to warm and dry conditions allowed for slow grape maturation and the development of excellent fruit aromas and flavours.

We completed harvest by 9 March, about three weeks ahead of usual. In Kumeu, the frost damage had lowered yields by 30-40%, but the overall quality was exceptional. The Chardonnay wines, and in particular the Single Vineyards, look incredible. Pinot Gris also shone through this year with very high sugar levels and some *Botrytis* influence producing rich and textural wines.

History will see 2021 sitting very nicely in the trio of outstanding vintages: '19, '20 and '21. 2021 was my 40th Vintage at Kumeu, and I have never seen a run of vintages of this quality before.

Our Rays Road vineyard performed admirably in Hawke's Bay, with the grapes ripening a few days later than our Kumeu vineyards. At nearly 200m altitude, the conditions are cooler than most of Hawke's Bay and favour early ripening varieties like Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. While the Chardonnay yields were about normal, the Pinot Noir was down somewhat, allowing for good colour and flavour development. It's undoubtedly the best year for Pinot Noir since we acquired the vineyard in 2018. Several newly-planted Chardonnay blocks in this limestone vineyard are starting to come into production. The wines are exciting and edgy, coming from low-yielding rootstocks and clones that have given some excellent aromas and minerality and a great insight into the future wines of this site.