



Kumeu River 2022 Vintage Report

The excellent 2022 vintage came on the heels of three others, in a magnificent chain of four superb quality harvests. The winter of 2021 was relatively mild, but quite wet, so the soil was well hydrated. Spring came early, and fortunately we managed to avoid any frost damage. The spring growth was lush and rapid, requiring even more careful leaf removal from around the fruiting zone. Flowering was ahead of usual, indicating another early harvest.

January was quite dry and allowed for excellent ripening conditions, but early February brought rain and high humidity over Waitangi weekend, but that soon cleared to allow us to start picking in sunshine 2 days later. About that time there was also the threat of Cyclone Dovi bearing down on us from the Northwest. Fortunately for us, the cyclone sailed past Auckland well to the west, and we also managed to avoid any significant rainfall in its wake.

Our temperature data shows mild to warm ripening conditions, with a maximum of 28°C in early January. This is significantly cooler than most vintages, but a steady run of dry weather and daily temperatures above 25°C throughout January gave ideal conditions for the gentle and persistent development of aroma and flavour.

Harvest commenced on 8 February 2022 for the Crémant production, where we need to pick the grapes a little early to produce a vibrant Sparkling wine style. Table wine harvesting started a week later, which was still very early by any historical standard.

The harvest period itself was free of rainfall, allowing our hand-picking team lovely conditions in which to work. Having a crew such as this to pick and sort the grapes by hand means we get beautifully pristine fruit arriving at the presses and is a major contributing factor to the high quality of our wines. It is a very expensive process, but well worth the cost and effort for the quality it brings.

We finished harvesting on 13 March, thus avoiding the substantial rainfall that came a week or so later.

Once again the Chardonnay wines, particularly the Single Vineyards, are shining examples of the Kumeu style. The terroir differences between various parcels are very distinct, really highlighting their individual personalities. Pinot Gris is also very strong this year with high sugar levels, and with some *Botrytis* influence producing rich and textural wines.

Our Rays Road vineyard in Hawkes Bay continues to improve greatly as the new plantings gain maturity. Ripening was pretty much in parallel with Kumeu, which made for a very busy

time in the winery for an intense period of pressing and fermenting. We are now receiving significant quantities of Chardonnay from the new plantings, based on Clones 15 and 548. These allow for a much deeper and more nuanced expression of the Chardonnay variety than the existing Clone 95 plantings, but still with the zesty minerality on the palate. Similarly with Pinot Noir, we now have new plantings of the most up-to-date Dijon selections from Burgundy: Clones 828 and 935. While still in very small quantities, it is obvious even now that these will have an enormous positive impact on the quality of our Rays Road Pinot Noir. These are exciting times indeed.