



Ata Rangi Pinot Noir Grand Vertical

There was a real sense of excitement and anticipation as we prepared for this tasting. The cellar stock of our very first vintages is so low that we knew this occasion could not be replicated. The sole bottle of '87 had leaked, so was omitted from the tasting. We've occasionally managed to buy back small parcels of our own wines, in each case attempting to establish the cellaring conditions pre purchase. The very first Ata Rangi "cellar" was fashioned from terracotta clay field tiles stacked up against the coolest south-facing internal wall in Clive's house. Who knows how these wines would have showed given a better start in life!

Please note that cork closed bottles ('86 to '01) all had varying fill heights as described.

We appreciate that not everyone has a perfect temperature controlled environment. Helen's projections for an outer year from our tastings is based on ideal cellaring conditions (14° year round) and a good closure.

Adjust from there depending on the relative storage environment.

The wines were all tasted from Gabriel glasses www.gabriel-glas.com kindly supplied by Shubert Wines. We have been impressed with these glasses over the past year for true expression of the aromatic and palate profile of more elegant styles of wine. The wines were tasted from oldest to youngest.

1986

*Cork
Mid-shoulder
fill height*

Very light in colour and browning. Coffee, greener herbal notes, past best moving to aromas of vegemite. The palate was light and soft, with little tannin left. The finish fades into spicy notes of sweet tobacco.

This was the first ever release of Ata Rangi Pinot Noir, winning Gold at the 1987 Royal NZ Easter Wine Show - an encouraging start for Martinborough at the time! Clive sheepishly revealed that 7% Cabernet Sauvignon had been blended in, explaining some of the more herbaceous notes on this wine.

1988

*Cork
Mid-shoulder
fill height*

Rust in colour. Gorgeous nose. Enticing savoury herbal notes with intriguing feral, meaty notes - very reminiscent of an aged burgundy. Charming is a word that cropped up more than once around the table. The palate had a bright but soft entry which rested on a beautiful seam of acid. Bright redcurrant fruit notes blended with the more savoury, rustic character of roast coffee, chocolate and herbal tea, with hints of quinine. The palate finished with soft tannins. Well past its best but very interesting to see how the wines have progressed in style since those days. *Past.*

Reserve Pinot Noir. Deeper, richer aromas but marred slightly by an odd smell (not TCA, more the smell of cork wood). Over this, creamy fruit aromas still showed through with redcurrant, cherry and chocolate. There were more oxidised characters on the palate (not surprising given the ullage). This wine had more tannin on the palate than the previous two wines, with some char and spice characters showing.

1989 was a very warm, dry year – picking started the first week of March, the day after Clive and Phyll's wedding! Young vines suffered some water and heat stress.

Drink now.

Reserve Pinot Noir. Floral, lifted sweet fruit, herbal seam, with cinnamon and violet notes. Dense full entry on the palate with char and spice showing through. Beautifully integrated acidity with soft fine tannins leading through to a finish that had complex savoury gamey notes and an iron ore character. A very complete wine with huge advances in depth and structure from the previous years.

The season was characterised by a very cool start, with only moderate mid-summer temperatures but relatively high sunshine hours. A reasonable level of tartrates and other solids was evident in this wine which slightly blurred the aromas. Careful decanting just prior to serving is recommended.

Drinking well now, would love to see again in 2 years.

1989

*Cork
Low-shoulder
fill height*

1990

*Cork
Mid-shoulder
fill height*



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1991

*Cork
Upper-shoulder
fill height*

Deep brick in colour. Sweet fruit and floral aromas melded with notes of iron, and lovely moreish truffle notes. Dense tight entry on the palate, lovely weight with a lingering, fresh palate.

This wine had very fine tannins with a gorgeous fleshiness that was very seductive. Helen's favourite of the first six wines, and it still had life in it. As with the 1990, this wine had reasonable level of tartrates which, unless care is taken, will make the wine slightly cloudy. Careful decanting just prior to serving is recommended.

Drink now and next 2-5 years.

1992

*Cork
Top-shoulder
fill height*

The wine had a lifted nose of sweet plum and rather herbal, stemmy aromas. Sweet, vibrant entry and fine tannins with the lacy, delicate feel of a wine reaching its peak. The palate still had suppleness and fruit notes of brambles and dark raspberry, however it definitely lacked stuffing.

This was the first year that 50% whole bunch was used. In hindsight that was a mistake considering the cool, frost affected spring and summer caused by the haze from the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines the previous year. Martinborough Growing Degree Days were the coolest on record at 860 degree days.

Drink now.

1993

*Cork
Top-shoulder
fill height*

Lifted aromas of cherry, dried strawberry, overlaid with a moreish savoury character described as a meld of vegemite, black teas and green olives. The palate opened early with sweet mouth filling fruit. Pretty and delicate with some lovely savoury spicy, tarry characters on the finish.

This season also suffered residual effects of the Mt Pinatubo eruption, with a severe frost in late November and cooler summer temperatures.

Drink now.

1994

*Cork
Upper-shoulder
fill height*

Deeper, more complex aromas than the previous two years, with aromas of iron ore (also noted in the 1991) and fig overlaying dark fruits.

A dense and vibrant palate with yeasty, miso paste umami notes. The palate had a very svelte quality to it and a long compelling finish. Helen was left with the distinct impression that she'd just experienced a wine unique to the Martinborough terrace, powerful yet elegant. 1994 saw a cool start followed by a long extended autumn. A yin and yang season.

Drink now and over next 4-5 years.

A very enticing blend of cherry, lifted floral and savoury grilled meat notes. On the palate there was great poise with a perfect tension between fruit, tannin and acid. Mocha, chocolate and woody spice flavours ran through the palate. This was a mid-concentration wine with long fine tannins that gave a lovely shape to the wine.

What started as a near perfect season was blighted by 16 solid days of rain pre harvest, bringing issues of botrytis and dilution. Without sorting tables (as we now have) it was difficult to remove all the botrytis-affected fruit in the vineyard. Having said that, this wine showed far better than expected with neither dilution nor premature ageing obvious.

Could be cellared for another 2-3 years.

This wine was a favourite for all. On the nose, a wealth of unfolding aromas, violets, cherry, star anise, a drop of pennyroyal and, for a couple of tasters, sumac powder*. A very well balanced wine with "look at me" star quality and a peacock tail finish. The blend of both warm, ripe fruit and cooler aromatics plus the secondary savoury, chocolatey notes were appreciated by all. Good fruit density and weight, powerful and moreish, ending long and fine.

Drink now and over the next 5 years.

* Sumac powder is from a plant grown in Africa and North America used in Middle Eastern cuisine to add a savoury/lemony taste.

This was a cooler El Niño year, resulting in more herbal elements reminiscent of sweet tobacco and Echinacea flower. The palate belied the nose, with a bigger entry than the aroma profile would suggest. A nice line of acidity added a chalky feel to the texture. Lovely savoury development was apparent on the palate, though the wine finished much shorter than the 1996.

Drink now.

Deep, powerful nose with intense savoury aromas, cinnamon, ripe fruit and herbal notes. Big fruit entry with obvious tannins.

The shape of this wine was differentiated from others in the line-up by its shorter length and more blocky tannins. 1998 season was marred by drought and for fruit from vines without irrigation there was a lot of tannin that was not fully physiologically ripe.

Drink now to 2016.

1995

*Cork
Upper-shoulder
fill height*

1996

*Cork
Upper-shoulder
fill height*

1997

*Cork
High-shoulder
fill height*

1998

*Cork
Top-shoulder
fill height*



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1999

*Cork
Top-shoulder
fill height*

Redcurrant and cherry aromas brightened savoury aromas of truffle and sesame paste. Sweet fruit on the entry, moreish savoury notes through the mid palate, and on the finish aromas of tea. It finished quite short and there was a hint of oxidation that pointed to the cork.

This was a lower cropping year with very small bunches and berries.

Drink now to 2018.

2000

*Cork
Top-shoulder
fill height*

Incredibly similar notes between the tasters with this wine; cherry fruit, savoury notes of vegemite/ marmite (depending on what you grew up with) and descriptors such as "classic Martinborough Pinot". Good fruit weight on entry, clean pure fruit and dense supple tannins. Very Attractive blend of fruit and savoury complexity. Berry size was larger than in the 1998 or '99 resulting in a plush mid palate.

Very enjoyable; drink now to 2018.

2001

*Cork
Top-shoulder
fill height*

Delicious bright aromatics of cherry, as well as hay, straw, truffle, roasted meat jus with dried herbs on the nose of this wine. Dense, tight entry to the palate, full vibrant fruit through the mid palate before fine tannins pulled the wine back in for a long finish. Flavours of violet and cherry lingered.

A very compelling, supple palate.

Great drinking now and until 2018.

2002

Screwcap

Perfumed nose of violets, savoury roasted meat mix with a stemmy, vinous note. All up a very attractive nose. The entry to the palate was sweet and supple with a lovely spread of flavours to finish. The overall impression was of an elegant, charming wine.

The wet, cool summer of 2002 made it difficult to achieve balance in the vineyard. Loads of extra work was done to reduce vegetative canopy growth over the summer months. Late rain at harvest is expressed in lower fruit weight and less tannin than is typical.

Drink now till 2018.

Deep and dark, still purple hued in colour. Fruit on nose slightly muted on smell, opening up to brambly fruit notes, with hints of roasted meat and rabbit guts. This was a concentrated, sinewy wine with a tight entry and flavours of black tea and spice running the length of the palate. Rich and vinous; very much a food wine.

The spring of 2002 was blighted with frosts and cool southerlies resulting in a tiny crop, 60% down on a normal harvest. The resulting wine is structured and powerful but perhaps lacking a little elegance, though it definitely tells the story of that season.

Drink now till 2020.

Lifted aromatics of toffee apple, jelly crystals, red fruits, rose, bramble and hints of violet. Defined palate, with very fine, chalky tannins and a long lingering palate. Very elegant, and a lovely example of the prettiness that Pinot can express.

2004 was marred by major rain events over the summer, with local rivers flooding in late January. The gravels of the uplifted river terrace on which the vines are planted were put to the test, but the water drained away as if through a sieve, and it was remarkably dry underfoot. This wine still has a beauty and charm well beyond our expectations at the time

Drink now to 2022.

Vibrant aromatics of cherry, dark fruits, violet and hay with a more feral note of cured meats. The palate was weighty with most of our notes going back to flavour descriptors such as black olive, exotic spice, dark fruits. The acid was vibrant and youthful. The tannin structure was less classic Ata Rangi, with most of the weight on the mid palate and finishing slightly shorter in the mouth. That said, this wine was impressive in terms of the sheer weight and range of exotic flavours.

The season was reminiscent of 2003, with the cold, frosty spring resulting in an extremely low yield and lots of small bunches and berries.

Drink now to 2022.

2003

Screwcap

2004

Screwcap

2005

Screwcap



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2006

Screwcap

2006 can only be described as seductive; aromas were slightly elusive, taking time to slowly emerge from the glass. Violets, roses, clove and savoury notes of hay meld together. Very good weight on the palate. Full, juicy fruit with mouth-coating fine tannins. Great poise; very good balance of acid and tannin. We all agreed this wine defines for us Pinot Noir from Martinborough.

2006 was thankfully an uneventful growing season, with average rainfall and summer temperatures.

Drink now to 2024.

2007

Screwcap

Deep, dark red in colour. Dense, inky aromas of dark fruits, cinnamon and spice, cherry and violets ending with a savoury note - quite intoxicating. Very full entry, with very good mid palate texture. On the palate bright primary fruit melds with hints of herbal tea. A lot of tannin was evident giving an almost chalky texture and a long lingering finish. Less elegant than the 2006, more power.

Another very low yielding year after a cold, windy spring. December was the coldest since 1860!

Drink now to 2024.

2008

Screwcap

Big fruit aromatics of raspberry and boysenberry, with florals of violet and hay. Good fruit weight on entry, with density and supple tannins, very well balanced. Bright primary fruit characters come through on the finish, with less savoury characters than most of the other vintages. Very elegant and accessible but a bit light on structure and length. Higher yields after the low ones of 03, 05 and 07.

Drink now till 2020.

2009

Screwcap

Lovely enticing bouquet of spice, rose petal and lavender with hints of black liquorice and cut hay. Succulent entry to the palate; supple fruits and very fine textured tannins through the mid palate. Very attractive with good length.

2009 was a warmer season with early ripening due to come high temperatures through January.

Drink 2015 to 2022.

A very enticing nose with a mix of cherry, lavender and clove as well as herbal notes of cut hay. Dense fruit weight on the entry, concentrated mid palate but still remaining bright and crisp. Good tension between acid and tannin giving real length to the palate. A seam of a more herbal, stemmy character on the palate kept a nice tight structure to this wine. Very youthful still, on slow reveal in the glass.

2010 was a coolish season with long, slow ripening which is expressed in the dense, fine structure.

Drink 2016 to 2026.

Complex aromas of star anise, pot pourri and roast meat; evolving to more pure floral notes of rose petal and violet with time in the glass. Dense fruit weight, with fine tannin and acid giving a long, driven, tangy palate. This wine manages to be graceful while remaining intense. Fruit flavours are balanced out by more savoury notes making for an enticing wine with both yin and yang. Less fruit-forward than the 2008 or 2009 with more savoury complexity.

Drink 2016 to 2028.

Very vibrant nose of raspberry, cherry and star anise. Rich palate weight with intense flavours spreading through the mouth of clove and hints of lavender moving to dark cherry. The cool season has delivered a very aromatic, elegant vibrant wine. Though not as big in structure as most of the previous vintages, the focus of this wine is the fine tannins balanced with fresh acidity that give this wine great tension. A very cool, overcast season.

Drink 2017 to 2028.

2010

Screwcap

2011

Screwcap

2012

Screwcap