

Church Road 1 Single Vineyard Gimblett Gravels Merlot 2020

WINEMAKERS
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CHURCH
ROAD®
HAWKE'S BAY

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"Terroir is a French word with no direct English translation. It can be described as the taste of the place. The same grape variety grown in different sites, even in the same region, will demonstrate uniquely different characteristics related to those individual sites. Differences in soil, slope, altitude, and shelter can subtly or dramatically alter the resulting wine, even over distances of a few metres. The very best sites growing well suited varieties, will produce wines that stand out amongst their peers. Wines of recognisable personality, presence, and above all, quality. Church Road 1 is a range of single vineyard wines that showcase the terroir of our best vineyards."

Chris Scott, Chief Winemaker

VINEYARDS

The Gimblett Vineyard:

Situated in the Gimblett Gravels Winegrowing District, this is an area of very free draining alluvial gravels, this soil type is some of the lowest vigour, lowest nutrient soil in Hawke's Bay, restricting vine growth and water uptake and resulting in meagre crops of intensely flavoured fruit. The area is only 30m above sea level, and far enough inland to be relatively well protected from the sea breeze, the vineyard is also sheltered from the cold southerly by Roys Hill, making this one of the warmest areas in Hawke's Bay ideally suited to red winegrowing. This vineyard tends to produce wine with a core of dark fruit and a firm tannin structure that brings length and drive to the palate. These wines have great longevity.

VITICULTURE

2020 was an exceptional year in Hawke's Bay, with warm, dry, settled weather over most of the season. A significant sustained drought period lasted from mid-summer through until well after harvest was completed, allowing for all fruit to be harvested in optimum condition. The vines were trained to two cane VSP and we employed extensive shoot and fruit thinning, along with bunch positioning, declumping, close canopy trimming and 100% removal of leaf through the fruit zone, to ensure a balanced, evenly spaced and well exposed crop. Soil moisture was monitored regularly to regulate a deficit drip irrigation programme. This keeps the vines in a functioning yet low vigour state that promotes both ripening and concentration. Approaching harvest time, we visit the blocks every two or three days, tasting, evaluating flavour and ripeness and checking for condition to ensure we pick at the ideal moment, aiming to achieve a balance between density, power, freshness and precision in the resulting wines.

WINEMAKING

Blocks were selectively harvested across a sorting table to remove any green material before being crushed to fermenters. Fermentation was allowed to peak at 34 deg C ensuring good extraction of colour and ripe tannin. The wines were allowed to undergo post fermentation maceration for a total time on skins of between three and four weeks. During this time regular aeration was employed to stabilise colour, integrate the tannin and open up aromatics, accentuating ripe fruit, and floral notes. We taste daily to determine the amount of aeration and to determine the optimum time to drain and press. The wine was then filled to predominantly French oak barriques (44% new) to complete malolactic fermentation and subsequent maturation for 21 months. The final blend was decided only after a rigorous barrel selection tasting of our very best Gimblett Vineyard components. The wine was racked for clarity and to avoid any unnecessary stripping effect, was bottled without any fining or filtration.

THE WINE

This is serious Merlot with a core of brooding, dark plum and berry fruit, with lifted violet aromas and with undertones of licorice, earth and new leather. This is supported by balanced oak bringing cedar, spice and cacao notes. A full, supple mid palate leads into a powerful finish with firm but fine-grained tannin driving great length and back palate presence. With careful cellaring, we expect this wine will age gracefully for 15 years or more.

Alc 14.5% v/v | TA 5.5g/L | pH 3.65 | RS 2.0g/L

