

Ata Rangi Craighall Chardonnay 2015

The Story

In 1980, Ata Rangi founder Clive Paton made the bold decision to sell his small herd of dairy cows in order to buy 5 hectares of stony, barren sheep paddock at the edge of the small Martinborough village. His dream, inspired by a scientific soil and climate report on the suitability of Martinborough for grape-growing, was to become a world class vigneron. As a keen rugby player he had often skinned his knees on the free-draining gravels of Martinborough, so he knew very well the challenges he faced in nurturing the young vines.

Clive was soon joined by his sister Alison who purchased a 2 ha adjoining paddock. Clive planted this in pinot noir while she worked in London, bolstering her knowledge of the international wine trade. Clive married in 1987, after meeting his wife Phyll in Marlborough where she'd also been working as a winemaker. Ata Rangi, thanks largely to talented and highly respected Winemaker Helen Masters, has an enviable reputation as one of the New World's most respected Pinot Noir producers and remains proudly in family ownership.

The Vineyard

The valley is protected from rain by mountains on three sides. Harvest days are warm, yet nights are cool year round due to direct exposure to the southern ocean. These factors contribute significantly to the consistency of quality, both by preserving fruit intensity and facilitating a long, slow, steady ripening through the autumn. The stony river terrace on which most of the vines are planted is made up of very shallow silt-loam on top of 25-metre-deep alluvial gravels. The stones are mostly quartz-threaded greywacke and to a lesser extent volcanic basalts. This very free-draining profile, combined with the windiest and driest climate in the North Island - around 700mm rainfall a year - means humidity and therefore disease risk is low. Spring is typically cool and windy, often resulting in imperfect flowering which keeps yields naturally in check, at a much lower average tonnage per acre than the rest of the country.

Vintage 2015

With a low annual rainfall and typically strong Wairarapa winds and the result is a high percentage of tiny berries, giving wine of serious concentration and drive with tight, bright acidity.

Winemaking

Hand-picked fruit was whole bunch pressed, with the unsettled juice fully barrel fermented in Burgundy barriques (25% new) using indigenous yeasts. Partial malo-lactic. Aged in barrel on lees for 12 months

Tasting Note

A very alluring, restrained nose of citrus, white-flesh nectarine and citrus blossom leads onto a tight, fine palate with a subtly chalky texture. With no one, single flavour dominating, the 2015 is an intriguing, very complex and very complete Chardonnay with fabulous flow and persistence. Fully barrel fermented with 'wild' indigenous yeasts, we're confident this exceptional release has excellent cellaring potential.

Alcohol Percentage	13.5%
Residual Sugar	Dry
T.A.	6.5 g/L
Aging Potential	10 + years