



GRAND RESERVE

CHARDONNAY 2022

WINEMAKERS

Chris Scott, Craig Thomas

VITICULTURISTS

Graham Bartleet, Claire Pinker

“Church Road Grand Reserve Chardonnay is a blend of wines from our best Hawke’s Bay Chardonnay vineyards, grown and crafted to deliver a full bodied, yet refined wine. For the first time, the blend includes a significant portion of fruit from our Redstone Vineyard in the Bridge Pa Triangle winegrowing district. This is a new development in the cooler, more exposed southern end of a block and the first time we have grown Chardonnay in this area. The early results are very encouraging and we’re confident that this will become an important, high-quality resource.”

Chris Scott, Chief Winemaker

VINEYARD

Terraces Vineyard (56%): Situated on the western side of the Tuki Tuki river, approximately 8 km inland on an old river terrace, at the foot of the Havelock Hills. This site is an old gravel river terrace with a shallow calcareous clay loam topsoil. This area is affected by the cooling sea breeze in the afternoon, which helps to moderate temperatures, ensuring we retain good vibrancy in Chardonnay that is grown here. This vineyard delivers wines which are quite powerful, yet balanced with a fine seam of acidity. The fruit spectrum is quite fragrant, with an emphasis on subtle stonefruit and vibrant citrus / citrus blossom notes. The calcareous soil still leaves its mark with a lick of minerality which helps to bring direction and focus to the fruit weight.

Redstone Vineyard (44%): Situated in the Bridge Pa Triangle Winegrowing district, with its free draining, gravelly ‘red metal’ soils. This is a warmer site than the Terraces vineyard, and most of the area is dedicated to red varieties; however, a small southern section of this block is more exposed to cold air draining out of the western ranges, and ripens later as a result. For this reason, this section of the block was recently redeveloped into Chardonnay. The fruit develops good flavour ripeness and quite soft acidity at relatively low potential alcohols, making nicely balanced, quite savoury wines with subtle ripe peach notes, cashew and fig.

VITICULTURE

2022 was a challenging season in Hawke’s Bay, requiring careful vineyard management and meticulous fruit selection to achieve high quality results. Another exceptionally warm season, 11% above the long-term average, 2022 was also wetter and more humid than normal. Our viticulturists responded with an emphasis on canopy management and crop load, making sure the fruit was well exposed, with no clumping or crowding. This maximised aeration and ensured the fruit dried quickly after rain events, minimising the disease risk. Harvest began unusually early in the middle of February, and the Chardonnay blocks timed a bit of a window in the weather, allowing us to get a good volume of hand harvested and hand sorted fruit off the vines in very good condition. These conditions

have delivered elegant balanced wines with ripe flavour and gentle texture at pleasingly moderate alcohol levels. The vines were trained to 2 cane VSP. We employed extensive shoot and fruit thinning where required, along with bunch positioning, de-clumping, close canopy trimming and, this year, extensive removal of leaf through the fruit zone.

Clones: 548 (98%), 1066 (2%)

WINEMAKING

All fruit was hand-harvested and gently whole bunch pressed and filled to French oak barriques without any juice clarification or additions. Only free run juice was used. Wild primary and malolactic fermentation ensued, and has delivered an extra degree of complexity, textural interest and provided an excellent natural acid balance. Oak use was reasonably restrained this year (25% new) to avoid dominating the elegant nature of the vintage. The wine was matured on full yeast lees in barrel, approximately 11 months, with only occasional yeast lees stirring. The blend was then brought out to tank for a further 4 months of light lees aging. To avoid any unnecessary stripping effect, the wine was unfined and only lightly filtered for clarity prior to bottling.

WINE

A medium to full bodied Chardonnay balanced by gentle, fresh acidity and a whisper of flinty minerality. The warm season and the inclusion of a large proportion of fruit from the Redstone Vineyard has ensured ripe, subtle flavour with richer peach, cashew and fig notes being brought to the fore this year while vibrant mandarin citrus / citrus blossom notes take more of a back seat. The fruit is overlaid with complexities of roasted nuts and toasted brioche. Already drinking exceptionally well, with careful cellaring, we expect this wine to continue to mature gracefully for 6 years or more from vintage date. With age, the wine will develop more complex, savoury nuttiness and will gain breadth and richness on the palate.

Alc 13.0% v/v | **TA** 6.35g/L | **pH** 3.2 | **RS** 3g/L