

# 2021 vintage report

Early bud burst followed a record warm, dry winter (the second warmest winter since 1932). Thankfully, this meant a relatively calm and uneventful frost-fighting season with only a handful of frosts in September and unusually no ground frosts in October. Canopy growth got off to a great start with sustained warmth through the months of September and October, leading many weather predictors banking on above average temperatures for the coming summer.

Sadly, all came to an end during the critical flowering months of November and December. These months brought a cooling off with lower-than-expected temperatures and an unusually wet November. This poor weather across the crucial time of flowering and fruit set had a direct impact on the bunch and berry numbers of the season as well as impacting on the bud initiation for the following year.

Thankfully for Marisco Vineyards the majority of our plantings are in the Waihopai Valley, a much cooler, more southerly part of the Southern Valleys, that typically flowers a little later than much of the central Wairau Valley. This saw us protected from the worst of the impacts of a poor flowering season and in a better position than a lot of other Marlborough producers. However, our small, specialist Pinot Noir and Chardonnay blocks that sit on warmer, earlier-flowering sites closer to Blenheim were affected and subsequently set some very small crops this vintage.

The three months of summer principally responsible for grape ripening remained dry with

record high sunshine hours. This made for optimal ripening conditions which combined with the smaller crops from our warmer Pinot Noir sites resulted in an early start to harvest. Harvesting got under way on the 4th March 2021 starting with Chardonnay for our sparkling wines and handpicked Pinot Noir destined for The King's Desire Pinot Noir Rosé. This moved swiftly into harvesting big blocks of Sauvignon Blanc at the Waihopai River Vineyard in order to capture optimal fruit ripeness.

Harvesting continued in a calm, steady flow right up to the end of March when, with only 3000 tonnes to go, we received around 60mm of rain spread over several days. Typically, this amount of rain on very ripe fruit would be a recipe for disaster however excellent viticultural management combined with a complete absence of vineyard based fungal inoculum meant the fruit remained in pristine condition. Something the winemaking team went on to coin "the vintage miracle"!

Rain forecasted again at the end of the first week in April marked a very clear end to the harvest season. This saw our teams put their heads down, one last time and charge through ensuring all fruit (bar Syrah and Noble Sauvignon Blanc) was safely tucked up in the winery before the second rain event.

Thanks to the complete absence of vineyard disease, a moderately warm, dry season and proactive harvest plans designed to capture fruit flavours at their best, the winemaking team are very excited about the quality of vintage 2021. 

*gotta love vintage!*