

2007 DELTA VINEYARD HATTER'S HILL MARLBOROUGH PINOT NOIR



The Delta Farm, first established in 1848, was purchased in 2000 by four partners. Winemaker Matt Thomson and London-based Master of Wine David Gleave are two of the partners. "The aim is to plant and work only with Pinot Noir, and to make the very best expression possible of Pinot from Marlborough," explains Matt. With this in mind, Matt looked for a site on the low vigour clay soils to the south of the valley. "In the past, much Pinot was planted beside Sauvignon Blanc on the high vigour loam soils closer to the river," explains Matt, one of the region's busiest consultants. "This soil is ideal for Sauvignon, but not for Pinot." His search drew him to the Delta site, where the vineyard was planted in 2002 and 2003 using the best of the new Dijon clones.

Vineyard

The Delta Vineyard has 30 hectares of Pinot Noir. It is situated on the West Coast Highway in Marlborough in New Zealand's South Island. About 25% of the vineyard is on the 'flats' while 75% is on the hills that rise to about 175 metres. The Hatters Hill Pinot is made from the very best fruit selected from the hills. The Hatters Hill makes up about a third of the company's production, with the Delta label making up the remaining two thirds.

Yields are about 6 tonnes per hectare on the hills. Vertical shoot positioning is used to give the vines' canopy the sunlight it needs, and to give the grapes the degree of exposure they require to ripen. The clay soil, combined with the elevation of the vineyard and the factors that make Marlborough such a successful viticultural region - warm days, the excellent quality of the light, cool nights and a constant breeze - makes this site ideal for the production of top quality Pinot Noir.

Vinification

2007 was a model vintage for Pinot Noir in Marlborough. Berry size was relatively small, giving good colour, tannins and weight, while the fairly cool conditions provided good aromatic Pinot Noir characters. We think it combines the best features of 2005 and 2006.

A mixture of machine harvested and hand-picked fruit was destemmed, but not crushed, into 4 tonne open-top fermenters. Open tops were used to reduce the amount of alcohol in the resulting wines, which in turn helped to improve balance, eliminating the hot, spiry characters of many new world Pinot Noirs. After a 5 day cold-soak to stabilise the colour, fermentation took place at temperatures of up to 34°C, with frequent gentle hand-plunging. Most of the tanks were pressed at dryness though about 20% of the tanks were left on skins for another week before pressing to stabilise the colour and to improve the structure.

After settling to remove solids, the wine was racked to a mixture of new (36%), and seasoned (27%) French oak barrels and stainless steel tanks for malolactic fermentation and ageing on light yeast lees. The wine was then blended and bottled after ten months of ageing.

Tasting Note

This wine has a deep colour with rich and concentrated aromatic characters. Fragrant aromas of Dawson cherries, and ripe plums, integrated with lifted floral notes. The complex palate is complemented by smoky hints from French oak, and the elegant tannins lead to a rich flavour that lasts.