



# VINTAGE 2010 OPTIMAL PICKING



## “BEFORE THE BEGINNING”

In the early part of the growing season there was above average rainfall and below average temperature. This cool and wet climate meant that there was a lack of growth in the vines early on. This also showed through in a very low Growing Degree Days (GDD) value. As a result the season was running about 2 weeks behind normal across both the Wairau and the Awatere Valleys.



After Christmas the gods turned the water off and we started to see some heat (higher GDD). The later part of the season saw the GDD higher than average and in actual fact the day after vintage finished we were ahead of the long term average growing degree days for the first time of the season.

The bunch architecture (make up of the bunches) was short with a lot of berries giving rise to above average weights around the district (except Awatere Valley).

There were only 4 recorded Botrytis incidences throughout the whole season meaning the fruit was clean as a whistle. This was unusually low mainly due to the lack of rain in the later part of the season - only 300mm or 75% rainfall of the seasonal rainfall average.

This put us in great shape for a flavour filled season all be it 10 days later than average.



## “IN THE BEGINNING”

The winery was all ready to go a good 2 weeks out from the actual start date of harvest so when the first truck rolled up to the winery gate,s we were more than ready for it.

Our first fruit for the season was Sauvignon Blanc, harvested from the Springfield's block in the Rapaura sub region of the Wairau Valley. This was a first cropping block that the company is in partnership with a local farmer. We were very excited about this block as it is in the heart of the Golden Triangle and in previous years, first cropping blocks have produced some stunning fruit. Because of the late start to the season we were all too aware that the onset of winter and those dreaded frosts were only just around the corner.

The winery has a capacity of around 450 tonnes of fruit per 24hr day and right from day one we were at that level. The weather was playing its part beautifully and so was the fruit. Just as the picking schedule was starting to look empty we would find another few blocks where the flavours were just right for the taking.

The first week of vintage went very smoothly, all of the pre-vintage planning was paying off. As a winemaker I was able to pick and choose what was ready and not have the hassles of factoring in weather or disease into what we were going to pick and when. Fruit quality was fantastic. We saw some of the younger/light cropping blocks come in with some really intense flavours at both the green and tropical end of the scale.



## “IN THE THICK OF IT”

A couple of weeks into vintage we were starting to wonder when the great run of weather was going to stop. Surely we could not go the whole of a Marlborough vintage without rain as in my 13 year history in the industry this has never happened. We obviously thought about this too much because sure as sure, not too long after my head hitting the pillow late one night I heard the pitter patter of rain on the roof and harvesting came to a halt. Knowing that there was not much I could do about the rain I went to sleep wondering what the morning would bring. Much to my surprise when I woke, it was only slightly overcast and there were no signs of puddles in my driveway (a sure sign that we have had a decent rain). The rain hadn't lasted too long and 12 hours after we stopped picking the hum of harvesters could once again be heard throughout the valley.

By now we were almost done picking the Sauvy, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris in the Wairau Valley and were starting to pick some of the main blocks in the Awatere Valley. We were still consistently doing 450 tonne of fruit per day and all was well.

Flavours in the Sauvy were still coming on good, winemakers were still cherry picking the best blocks and leaving the rest to develop more flavour. Again, like the 2009 vintage, one of the “sayings” of the vintage was “give it a few more days and it will look great”. We had the feeling (even at this early stage), that 2010 was going to be something special.

## “THE TAIL END”

It was almost like déjà vu with the 2009 vintage, but with, what I think better quality fruit. Bar the 12 hours we stopped for the small amount of rain, harvesting and picking decisions had gone exactly to plan. We still felt that we were able to pick blocks at the optimal time to produce what we think will be some stunning wines.

As usual by this time in harvest, things in the winery were starting to get busy. Tank space was getting tight and we started the annual “shuffling of deck chairs” in order to fit in the last of the Merlot and Pinot Noir in. Ferments for all varieties were well underway and we were starting to see some of those rich intense flavours that were in the vineyard come through into the tanks. All up we processed 6505 tonnes of fruit, only 68T less than 2009.

Also factored into the last few days of decision making was the timing of the all important “post harvest party”. It's always a juggling act between trying to have it after all of the fruit is in, but before all of the vintage workers leave. So the plan was to have it 2 days after the last of the Central Otago Pinot Noir was scheduled to come in. Well things didn't quite go to plan, picking was delayed due to some late season rain and the fruit arrived and was processed 2 hours after the start of the party. Not to worry, we all still made it to the party and had a good time celebrating a great harvest, and what is looking like being an exception vintage for Kim Crawford Wines.

## FERMENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

### SAUVIGNON BLANC

During fermentation we had some stunning looking tanks, 3 times a day the winemakers visit the top of the tanks to check how the ferments are going and to see how they smell. From what I have seen so far there are some really intense aromas coming through. It's always great to open a tank lid and smell fresh cut grass or rich intense tropical fruit. Showing through at this stage are some of the blocks from the middle part of the Wairau Valley and the lighter cropping blocks out of Blind River (Small sub region south of the Awatere Valley) and the Awatere Valley. On tasting these wines I am seeing real expression of fruit and intense rich palates with good length and persistence.



### PINOT NOIR

Again this year, as with 2009, we held out the Pinot Noir fruit on the vines to ensure that we gained maximum potential for fruit quality without getting the unwanted green tannins that come with a cool year. Post pressing, the wines are looking very good. One of the noticeable differences you see straight away is the deep rich colour that 2010 has provided. That along with some very nice aromatic qualities and rich full palates, I feel that 2010 will be as good as any others we have produced. Again the Waihopai and Awatere vineyards have shown through with both good aroma and palate weight



### PINOT GRIS

Pinot Gris is a hard one to tell, early on we were worried about not being able to get it ripe enough, but with the late heat that we got, in the end it has come through well. Still quite a bit of work to be done in the winery, but at this stage we have some excellent tanks and it looks like we will be able to continue to make a very fruitful driven style of Pinot Gris. The highlight so far would have to be from a small grower block in the middle Wairau Valley area. Very delicate aromas of peach and apple, followed through on the palate with good weight



### CHARDONNAY

Chardonnays were picked a bit riper this year, as there was a touch of lingering green in the fruit earlier on. Early days yet as the wine will look much better once it has finished MLF, but I think we will be looking to make some rich tropical fruit style Unoaked Chardonnay's this year. I feel that the longer growing season has only benefitted Marlborough Chardonnay to give in good weight and length on the palate.





## THE PEOPLE

Again, we have had a great bunch of people involved in the whole process. From the well organised viti team, the always cheerful truck drivers through to the out-going vintage workers (of which we had 11 different nationalities) and the ever-reliable permanent winery staff. We all enjoyed this vintage and had a great time making some awesome wines.



## CONCLUSION

Like 2009, 2010 was a great vintage for Kim Crawford Wines. Harvest saw the best growing and picking conditions for quite some years and the climate provided us with some excellent clean fruit that we feel we were able to pick at optimal flavour potential to hopefully produce some stunning 2010 vintage wines. Although harvest is always a busy time, I feel this harvest may go down as being one of the more relaxing ones (if there is such a thing).

Drink up and enjoy!

Matt Large  
Kim Crawford Winemaker

