



Fromm Winery La Strada – Vintage Report 2002

Weather conditions during the growing season

At the beginning of the season, there were fears of a continuing drought. The winter was cold and dry, the water table still very low and not likely to cope with the demands of another dry year. The long term weather forecast was not helping either, predicting no significant rain in the coming months. Luckily that proved to be more of a bad guess than fact. Soon after bud-burst we got some good rain and it continued right through to January with October recording the highest rainfall since 1902. The drought was broken, the vineyard looked very healthy and yet the vigour was well balanced partly due to the competing cover-crop between the rows.

Then the wet conditions in December and early January with above average temperatures caused high disease pressure in most vineyards. An open, well aerated canopy was essential to minimise the risk of botrytis. Despite being described as mad for not spraying any conventional (systemic) botryticide, we went into February/March with a clean vineyard. The weather finally changed and stayed fine throughout the ripening period until the end of harvest in late April.

The Wines

2002 was our 11th harvest and for the first time we reached our goal to be a 100 tonne winery. With Pinot Noir now well over 50% and Chardonnay about 20%, the bulk of our intake is harvested within the first 10 to 12 days, a potentially hectic time.

Part of the success of this vintage was the fine-tuning of the vineyard prior harvest in terms of crop-regulation, individual leaf-plucking regimes for different varieties and the elimination of any undesirable fruit during véraison (colour-change). Once Pinot Noir and Chardonnay were ready we were able to pick large quantities fast and clean with minimal sorting required.

The other part was a great team. George Fromm was here for 2 months, first guiding the vineyard through the final stages before harvest and then enjoying very much the hands-on involvement at the Fromm's New Zealand winery and coordinating the entire picking of the Clayvin Vineyard. In addition we had an excellent and enthusiastic bunch of people in the cellar.

The Pinot Noir across the board looks very promising. The single vineyard *Clayvin* seems to gain structure from year to year while still maintaining its early appeal. The *Fromm* vineyard produced again the typical terroir-wine we have seen since 1996. Our growers Sue and David Bamfield had their first full size crop of their vineyard in the Brancott Valley. While still young vines, the richness and opulence of their fruit is remarkable and will add positively to the mouthfeel and generosity of our La Strada Pinot Noir.

Amongst the other reds we are particularly excited about the Merlot, showing real concentration, ripeness and a fine structure with elegance and finesse. The other wine of interest is the Syrah, which for the first time contains about 6% of the white grape Viognier, a blending practice traditionally applied by many wineries in the Côte Rôtie.



The whites too performed well this year. The Chardonnay is very much in line with the previous vintages, focussed and quite minerally, particularly the Clayvin vineyard. Our sweet, low alcohol Rieslings will be similar to 2001, deliciously light and elegant. Lastly Gewürztraminer, we had a good size crop, picked earlier with good flavour ripeness to avoid excessive alcohol.

Overall 2002 has been a very positive vintage, made easy by favourable weather conditions during autumn. We noted slightly higher pH's and above average malic acids. It remains speculation if this after malo-lactic fermentation will result in softer, earlier drinking wines with medium rather than long term aging potential.