

# Wine stories

## from the valley...

Esk Valley Newsletter - Summer 2018

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## How times have changed, or have they?

“Having just returned to New Zealand after a month in Europe, it has once again struck me how little Rosé is drunk here. New Zealanders seem to ignore the pleasure of a chilled, full bodied Rosé.”

The above statement was copy I wrote in 2000 relating to our Esk Valley Merlot Rosé. How times have changed. Rosé is the hottest category on the shelves and New Zealanders are now fully appreciating the joys of the wide range of Rosés on the market.

“The vintage conditions determine how long we leave the Merlot juice on skins before drawing off our 150 litres per tonne, but the average over the last few years would be about 36 hours. You always have to overdo the colour as most of it drops out over fermentation.” This statement was also from the same story.

How times have changed. Today our Rosé comes from vineyards in the hinterland of Hawkes Bay.



Cool sites unsuited to red wine production but ideal for growing Merlot with fresh acidity, fresh strawberry fruit flavours and ultimately low alcohol. The fruit is delivered to the winery as quickly as possible to avoid colour pick up and pressed immediately. The juice is not only light in colour but light in tannin also giving the finished wine a lightness and deliciousness unimaginable all those years ago. The wines of the past now look like light bodied reds, today's more akin to an elegant white wine made from red grapes.

“Isn't it about time that the wine drinkers of New Zealand experimented further and gave Rosé the opportunity it enjoys in Europe? A summer afternoon, some smoked meats or fish, a glass of Rosé what could be better?” This statement too is from the original story. Some things never change.

Esk Valley Merlot Rosé 2017

**Gold Medal** - 2017 NZ International Wine Show

**Gold Medal** - 2017 New World Wine Awards



## What's in store?

Our 2017 Chardonnay blending.

It takes practise to taste, analyse and assess 250 samples of young wine. To stay focused and to look for and understand subtleties is hard and tiring work. Memories are jogged of the picking decisions, the ferments, those that struggled and those that filled the cellar with their peachy aromas, the choice of barrels, their source and toasting. All become a piece of the puzzle, a building block of our 2017 Esk Valley Chardonnay's.

Once the samples have been assessed, trial blends are generally made and tweaked until they meet our expectations. In 2017, yields were down and nearly all the parcels were

needed. Thankfully the wines looked great, so much so that a small volume of our Winemakers Reserve will be produced alongside Hawkes Bay Chardonnay. This has emerged as a vintage of elegance, lower alcohols, and fresh acidity with peachy overtones. Delicious wines.

No need to hurry the process though. The individual parcels will be left in barrel until after Christmas, disturbed only with regular stirring in an endeavour to enrich the wines further.

With sore teeth I signed off our blends and felt vindicated about those decisions made back in March 2017. Now the wait to repeat the experience in February when we blend our 2017 Gimblett Gravels reds.

# THE TERRACES – How long do they last?



My tasting note for the oldest of the vintages ends: “This has aged well, will last a while yet”.

The wine in the glass was from the 2000 vintage and is now seventeen years old.

My note for its follow up, the 2002 vintage was somewhat similar:

“Long and youthful”.

This was a sunny Saturday in November, and for a group of our loyal customers I had opened a selection of The Terraces vintages dating back to the aforementioned 2000 vintage. It's always a nerve racking experience opening these older vintages. They are rare and revered wines, unique in their production and scope, you could say my life's work in a glass.

During the tasting, themes emerged:

- **The uniqueness of the wine.** A co-ferment of Malbec, Merlot and Cabernet Franc, fermented in an 85 year old concrete fermenter from a limestone based hillside.

- **The spicy nature of the wines.** This is not a Bordeaux or Cahors copy, more a southern French red made from Bordeaux varieties in a Burgundian manner.

- **The ability of the wine to age** gracefully over many years, gaining considerable complexity as it does so.

How long do they last? Twenty years at least seems to be the norm, but I'm picking the trio of 2013, 2014 and 2015 may well last many more. Not that you need wait 20 years, they're delicious now, just splash into a decanter and wait as long as you can before finding your biggest wine glass.

**The Terraces 2015 is available from Esk Valley Cellar Door. Contact Sue at [enquiries@eskvalley.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@eskvalley.co.nz)**

## THE TERRACES – Reviews from Raymond Chan

Esk Valley 'Heipipi' 'The Terraces' Hawkes Bay Malbec/Merlot/Cabernet Franc 2015

Black-red with a very dark, near impenetrable heart and purple hues on the edge. The nose has great density and concentration, with size, presence and power, showing interwoven aromas of ripe blackberries, cassis, black plums, ink and plenty of oak shine with vanilla and lead pencils. Some boysenberry, plum and jam elements unfold in the glass. Extremely rich, ripe and plush, the sweetness of the fruit is the feature. Flavours of blackberries, blackcurrants, boysenberries with exotic spicy plums fill the mouth and are supported by considerable tannin extract, the texture very fine-grained, powdery and refined, with fresh, lacy acidity lending liveliness to the mouthfeel. The tannin extraction and structure grows and carries to a sweet, super-ripe plummy finish. This is a wine of ripeness and sweetness with great structure. A blend of approx. 40% Malbec, 35% Merlot and 25% Cabernet Franc from 'The Terraces' vineyard, the fruit hand-picked and co-fermented in concrete vat, the wine aged approx. 18 months in 100% new French oak barriques. 19.5/20 Sep 2017

Esk Valley 'Heipipi' 'The Terraces' Hawkes Bay Malbec/Merlot/Cabernet Franc 2014

The nose is full, dense and voluminous with great breadth and depth of ripe black berries, black plums, unfolding an amalgam of spices, iron-earth, hints of black herbs and minerals. The nose is complete in expression, quite multi-layered and multi-dimensional. Full, firm, still quite tight and near closed on palate, the density and power grows, with concentrated ripe blackberry fruit entwined with spice notes, sweet oak and iron-earth and minerals. The tannin extraction provides mouthfilling structure, the acidity integrated. The trade-off is vitality for completeness. This is a monolithic wine, with immense drive and ripeness and density. A great wine. A blend of approx. 40% Malbec, 35% Merlot and 25% Cabernet Franc from 'The Terraces' vineyard, the fruit hand-picked and co-fermented in concrete vat, the wine aged approx. 18 months in 100% new French oak barriques. 20.0/20 Sep 2017

# Looking back at 2017: Awards & Scores

## Air New Zealand Wine Awards

Gold - Esk Valley Marlborough Pinot Noir 2016

## Hawkes Bay A&P Wine Awards

Gold - Esk Valley Winemakers Range Chardonnay 2016

Gold - Esk Valley Winemakers Range Syrah 2014

## New Zealand International Wine Show

Gold - Esk Valley Winemakers Range Bordeaux Blend 2014

Gold - Esk Valley Sauvignon Blanc 2017

Gold - Esk Valley Verdelho 2017

Gold - Esk Valley Rosé 2017

Gold - Esk Valley Winemakers Range Bordeaux Blend 2013

## New World Wine Awards

Gold - Esk Valley Merlot Rosé 2017



## Scores

### Wine Enthusiast (USA)

92/100 - Best of Year - Esk Valley Gimblett Gravels Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon/Malbec/Cabernet Franc 2014



### Jamie Goode's Wine Blog (UK)

93/100 - Esk Valley 'Heipipi' 'The Terraces' Hawkes Bay Malbec/Merlot/Cabernet Franc 2014



Hawkes Bay Charity Wine Auction

## The Successor to New Zealand's first Malbec

For each of the last 26 years Esk Valley has offered a unique lot for auction at the Hawkes Bay Charity Wine Auction and 2017 was no exception.

Auction Lot 32 was listed in the catalogue as: Esk Valley Estate – 36 x 750ml bottles of Gimblett Gravels Old Vines Malbec 2016

This old vine lot of Malbec was drawn from a single barrel of Malbec from the Cornerstone Vineyard. Planted in the early 1990s, this small patch of land in the heart of the Gimblett Gravels has been the source of Malbec for our famed Gimblett Gravels Winemakers Reserve Merlot, Malbec/ Cabernet Sauvignon. It was also the source of New Zealand's first varietal Malbec bottled by Esk Valley from the 1999 vintage and never repeated. Lot 32 was truly a unique wine with a fine pedigree, but that's the idea behind the auction and why wine lovers flock to the Hastings Opera House each November.

Auction Lot 32 sold for \$3,500 to a local wine enthusiast, rich reward for our efforts and a generous contribution to Cranford Hospice. This wine the successor to New Zealand's first Malbec will offer its new owner, many years if not decades of pleasure and a piece of New Zealand liquid history.

# Hawkes Bay Seasonal Recipe:

## Big Eye Tuna, Grilled Asparagus & Chimichurri Dressing

*Courtesy of Cod & Lobster Brasserie - Nelson*

Since its opening two years ago Nelson's Cod & Lobster Brasserie has quickly become one of the city's hottest tables. With arguably the most extensive list of gins in the country, a great wine list and a fabulous seasonal menu, the Cod & Lobster is a must dine experience if you are in Nelson.

It was an honour and loads of fun to recently host an Esk Valley Winemakers Dinner at The Cod & Lobster where a selection of our wines were paired with a special menu created by Chef Helen. The course of the evening for me was an entrée of Big Eye Tuna with seared Asparagus and Chimichurri dressing, so much so that I asked Helen for the recipe. She sent me the following which is a recipe for the Chimichurri dressing. Traditionally an accompaniment for meat dishes in South America Chimichurri paired wonderfully with seared tuna and asparagus. Although this is a spicy dish it was wine friendly and matched perfectly with our Marlborough Pinot Noir. I'm sure it would have been just as happy with our Hawkes Bay Rosé.

### Chimichurri

1/2 cup red wine vinegar  
1 teaspoon salt  
4 cloves garlic  
2 tablespoons dried oregano  
50g fresh coriander  
50g fresh parsley  
3/4 teaspoon dried chilli flakes  
3/4 cup olive oil

Blend all ingredients together in a food processor or in a magic bullet. Check seasoning & add more salt or chilli flakes to taste.

Smear on plate and top with grilled asparagus and Simplicity on a plate and perfect for summer evenings.



"At Esk Valley, we craft  
our unique wines using  
traditional methods and  
local knowledge to bring  
out the best of every  
vintage"

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Russell'.

Gordon Russell  
Esk Valley Winemaker

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