

Tasting Notes Cabal Pinot 2016

VINTAGE

The 2016 growing season came with its fair share of challenges — a true test of patience and precision. Yet, in the face of it all, our Pinot Noir proved its remarkable resilience and affinity for the region. Pinot loves a cool year, and 2016 reminded us just how much. It was a season that kept us on our toes, demanding attention in every row of the vineyard, but our hard work was rewarded with perfectly ripened fruit. The resulting wine captures all the hallmarks of a classic cool-climate vintage — purity, elegance, and that unmistakable sense of place where Pinot truly thrives.

VINEYARD

This was the fourth year we made a single vineyard wine from Waipara; the grapes originating from Cabal Vineyard which is situated on the gentle North slopes of the Waipara Valley. The soil is a combination of clay and fragmented limestone. Various clones have been planted; grouped in rows and situated on differing slopes and aspect, thus giving us the opportunity to harvest several different parcels. Fermenting the clones separately allows the winemaker to build a wealth of information about each clone and how best to process the fruit in vintages to come. Typically, in Burgundy vineyards are planted with a mixture of clones and harvested at the same time. The Burgundians, however, have had centuries to learn about individual clones within their vineyards. In NZ we have only had 10-20 years and still have much to learn.

WINEMAKING

Traditional winemaking techniques were employed with a philosophy of minimal intervention — the wines were gently guided rather than manipulated, allowed to express their natural character. Around 40% whole bunches were placed at the base of the fermenter, with the remainder destemmed, creating a mix of whole berries and lightly crushed fruit. The whole bunches contribute structure, fine tannins, and spice, while the whole berries bring a generosity of fruit and lifted perfume. This balance has produced a wine of striking fragrance and depth — dark, brooding fruit layered with silky yet firm tannins, full-bodied and beautifully structured. Maturation took place in French oak barrels, 25% new, with each barrel carefully tasted and only the finest selected for the final blend. After 16 months, the wine was gently racked to tank to harmonise before bottling. Unfined and unfiltered, it's a pure and expressive reflection of both place and craft.

TASTING NOTES

Intense aromas leap from the glass — vibrant cherry and wild berry fruit layered with earthy, savoury nuances, evoking the cool hush of a chalk cave and whispers of cured meats. The high proportion of whole bunch fermentation brings a subtle herbal complexity, adding lift and intrigue. Generous fruit floods the palate before yielding to salivating, chalky tannins that coat the mouth with precision. Bright acidity underpins the structure, enhancing both drinkability and age-worthiness. This is a complex, beautifully balanced style of Pinot Noir — the exuberant fruit of New Zealand meeting the firm, mineral-driven structure of Burgundy. After eight years in bottle, it's in a wonderful place: still brimming with fruit, now layered with evolved notes of forest floor, sandalwood, and hints of leather and tobacco. The fruit and structure are in perfect harmony, offering immense pleasure today, yet it will continue to reward another four to five years in the cellar.

