



MILLS REEF WINERY

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Mills Reef Winery

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Mere Road Vineyard

Image by **Billy Nordmeier**, Buzzfeed article contributor - read his review here
<https://goo.gl/rkgGWt>

Newsletter

Summer 2018

Summer greetings from the Mills Reef team!

And what a fantastic summer it's been so far. One of the hottest for many years, with many New Zealanders enjoying sun-soaked days and record temperatures.

This weather has also been fortuitous for our vineyards and the speed of ripening, with the growing season running approximately 1-2 weeks ahead of normal. More on that later ...

We also welcome to the winery our summer influx of new and regular visitors alike, to enjoy a relaxing experience or for a more focused wine discovery.

Please read on for further insights on our most recent activities & achievements ...

MEDAL EXTRAVAGANZA

for first 2016 Reds !

It was with great joy that we learnt of our just-announced successes at the Royal Easter Show Wine Awards, one of NZ's oldest wine competitions.

We are thrilled to receive a **GOLD** medal for our **2016 Reserve Cabernet Merlot** and two **SILVERS** for **2016 Reserve Merlot** and **2016 Reserve Merlot Malbec**.

This 'first wave' of accolades speaks volumes for the high quality of our 2016 vintage red wines, and signals further exciting wines to come as our full 2016 reds selection is gradually released over the next six months.



ROYAL EASTER SHOW
WINE AWARDS
The crowning achievement in New Zealand Wine

As that occurs, we anticipate even broader success reflecting the stature of these wines and this magnificent vintage from the Gimblett Gravels Winegrowing District.

They are wines not to be missed, and we highly recommend securing some for your cellar now, for future enjoyment.

GOLD Reserve Cabernet Merlot 2016



BESPOKE follow up

In our previous newsletter we were delighted to announce the release of our new 'Bespoke' range of wines.

Since then, the two wines comprising this inaugural release have been enthusiastically sought out by wine lovers for a wine style experience that differs from the norm.

Respected NZ wine critics have likewise enjoyed the wines. Here are some snippets of what they had to say:

Bespoke Cabernet Sauvignon/ Cabernet Franc 2015

★★★★★

Raymond Chan

Fragrant redcurrants with nuances of blackcurrants nutty oak detail elegant and beautifully aromatic. Medium-bodied, the palate is refined and elegant with sweetly rich and juicy redcurrant fruit flavours entwined with blackcurrant fruit notes unveiling a little dark herb and nutty oak interest. Fine-grained tannins lending a velvety structure and mouthfeel balanced and integrated flowing to an elegant, lingering finish.

★★★★★ (95 PTS)

Bob Campbell MW

Appealing, silken-textured red with sweet dark berry, liquorice, vanilla, wood smoke, red rose and spicy oak flavours. Very elegant and quite polished wine, with an impeccable balance of fruit sweetness and drying tannins. Accessible now but promises to age well.

Bespoke Chardonnay 2016

★★★★★

Michael Cooper

The debut 2016 vintage was designed to 'pay tribute to the famous old-school style' pale straw, it has an oaky, creamy bouquet. A softly mouth-filling wine, it is fat and generous, with concentrated, peachy, toasty flavours and a rich, well-rounded finish.

THE GROWING SEASON to date



Gimblett Gravels
Southerly view toward Roy's Hill

Our attention at this time of year turns to progress of grape ripening in the vineyards and climate expectations for the lead-up to harvest. It's a crucial time when the stature of a vintage is largely determined.

The growing season and summer climate to date has generally been extremely conducive, with some of the hottest and driest weather seen for many years.

For those that follow statistical measures, Hawkes Bay's season-to-date heat summation (called 'growing degree days' - GDD) tallies 960 GDD versus a long term average of 812 GDD, meaning it's been approx 15% hotter than normal.

Even better, that additional heat has been fairly evenly spread throughout the season rather coming in heat wave bursts offset by cooler spells. That nice even heat distribution is so important for delivering top quality grapes.

In tandem, Hawkes Bay rainfall has also been one of the lowest for many years, with a total to date of just 172mm compared to the long term average of 281mm i.e. 40% less rain than normal, which is welcomed by grape growers. Although unlike the heat distribution pattern, rainfall has tended to come in short intense bursts with long dry spells in-between. But all in a very manageable and timely manner to keep vineyards from becoming too parched.

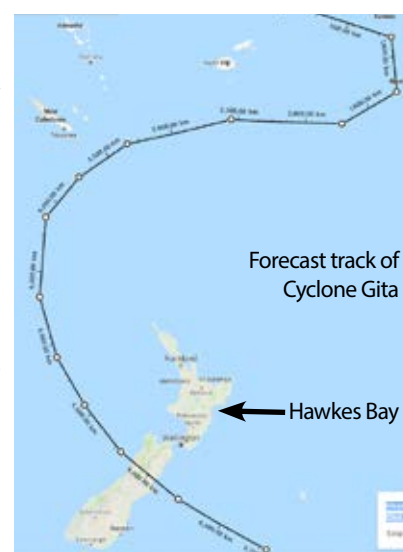
As a consequence, Hawkes Bay vineyards are looking terrific, and ripening is progressing ahead of normal. Our attention now turns to the late-Feb/early-March period when ex-tropical weather (warmer humid airflows) can predominate.

At the time of writing, tropical cyclone Gita has passed by Samoa and New Caledonia and is now approaching New Zealand. Fortunately for Hawkes Bay it has tracked south through the Tasman Sea corridor and is predicted to cross the upper South Island.

Should that eventuate, we anticipate Hawkes Bay will experience a few days of stronger westerly winds but little rainfall thanks to the natural sheltering effect of the westerly Tarawera, Kaweka and Ruahine ranges. Which is good news!

Beyond, for the next few weeks, there's ample confidence amongst grape growers and weather forecasters that above-average temperatures will continue. At the same time a settled westerly airflow pattern is expected to establish, meaning less chance of ex-tropical weather and instead more settled warm dry conditions, which we hope will lead into a nice long warm 'Indian summer' to finish the growing season, delivering exceptional quality grapes (and therefore wines) at harvest.

We shall know just how exceptional, once the harvest is in!



Forecast track of
Cyclone Gita

Hawkes Bay

NEW RELEASES

Traditionally at this time of year, our prior-vintage Estate and Reserve tier Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah wines are brought from barrel for blending and bottling. Taking place now, we look forward to releasing these wines to you in the near future.



Estate Chardonnay 2017
Aromas and flavours of peach, lemon and baking spices supported by subtle toasty oak. Medium-bodied and silky smooth.



Reserve Chardonnay 2017
Pronounced yellow stone-fruit and ginger spice, vanilla, toasty oak and cashew nut notes. Lovely creamy weight, complexity and balance.



Elspeth Chardonnay 2015
Striking intensity, complexity and balance. Tropical peach, fig and honey flavours abound, intertwined with hints of cashew, toasty oak seasoning and a lovely rich creamy texture.



Reserve Syrah 2017
Conveys boysenberry, white pepper spice and hints of liquorice, whilst ageing in quality oak barrels has conferred depth, supple tannins and fine earthy notes.



Elspeth Merlot 2016
Great poise. Intense notes of ripe blackcurrant and spicy Black Doris plums, in harmony with silky smooth tannins and a wonderful freshness, which flows to a long mocha finish.



Elspeth Cabernet Franc 2016
Normally used in a blending role, this vintage was so outstanding that we had to make a small single-varietal bottling! Intensely perfumed, great complexity with concentrated berry fruit and spice flavours, ripe supple tannins and finely integrated French oak seasoning. The finish is deliciously long and persistent.



Reserve Cabernet Merlot 2016
A rich and brooding wine, it exudes intense blackcurrant and brambly blackberry flavours, with cigar box and toasty vanillin oak notes, on a silky smooth palate. Already a Gold medal winner!



Reserve Merlot 2016
Opulent and full-bodied, with a medley of ripe plum, black berry fruits and spicy leather notes. Generously textured and layered. Silver medal upon release!



Reserve Merlot Malbec 2016
Warm harmonious blend showcasing black berry fruit, spicy leather, earthy musky violets, and liquorice hints. Beautiful medium weight and satin texture. Silver medal upon release!

We're also delighted to be releasing the following wines following an extended period of barrel aging and bottle maturation

VERAISON

At present our red grape varieties are progressing through veraison, which is a time when the vines shift their focus from developing shoot and leaf growth, to ripening their bunches of grape berries.

The start of this physiological change is signalled by veraison, which for red grape varieties is seen when berries change from a green to red colour, followed by rising sugar levels and lowering acidity, and development of lovely flavours.

Berries also change from firm and pea-like, becoming larger and softer. They also become sweeter to taste, more intensely flavoured and richly coloured. A favourite time of year!

Consequently, these changes also make berries much more appealing to birds. Hence it's a busy time putting nets onto the vine rows to protect grape bunches from bird-peck damage and theft!

UNTIL NEXT TIME

We have further exciting news (still under wraps) regarding upcoming wine awards and new developments, and look forward to announcing these in our next Autumn newsletter.

We also wait with great anticipation for 2018 harvest to arrive and the prospects for fantastic quality grapes, and wines.

In the meantime, please do take the opportunity to seek out our latest new-release and award-winning wines. It has been our pleasure crafting them, for your enjoyment and pleasure.



Our award winning winemaking team (L to R): Brenda Marris, Paul Dawick, Tim Preston, Mark Fidler

Take care and our very best wishes from the Mills Reef team.



Reserve Merlot 2016



Reserve Merlot
Malbec 2016



Our Elspeth Syrah grapes as they progress through veraison



Putting nets on vines to protect grapes.