

INSIGHTS INTO GROWING & MAKING PINOT NOIR AT HODDLES CREEK

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HODDLES CREEK

— ESTATE —

HODDLES CREEK

- **Majority of Pinot Noir was planted in 1997 and 2001.**
- **Mainly MV6 with some 114 and 115 (v. average) and later plantings of Abel (not recommended).**
- **Cane pruned to two canes, looking at vine balance so bud numbers change depending on the vine.**
- **Harvest is normally first week of March historically.**
- **Yield is around 2.5-3.0 kg per vine. Sometimes too light a crop can be a disaster in warm years. Aim to balance it with the season. Regardless of season, we want to make sure the fruit has enough time on the vine to develop tannin maturity.**

VINEYARD IS KING

We look to spend 90% of our time in the vineyard. Annual production is 350 tonnes and no full time winemaker.

With Pinot Noir, it's essential firstly that is grown in the right place. We look at sites where we can get tannin development. Too warm, and it ripens too quick and the tannins will be green and unripe. We want lots of good tannin, vineyard is where it starts.

In regards to vineyard work we:

- Shoot thin to around a hand spacing, taking doubles, triples and clearing the crowns to set up for fruit set the following year.**
- Three wire lifts, trim early to promote lateral growth to protect from sunburn. Just looking for dappled light.**

TYPICAL PINOT NOIR BUNCH ZONE ON EASTERN SIDE (LATE TUCK WITH BOTTOM WIRE)



TYPICAL BUNCH ZONE WESTERN SIDE



PICKING AT HODDLES

We really look at all the factors:

- **Flavour (no point picking without some flavour. We are looking for aromatics and more a feminine style which our site gives us). Need to work with the site, not on what style you want to make.**
- **Acidity: Looking at the trend, majority of years there is no need for a acid add. When do you add acid?**
- **Vineyard health**
- **Weather forecast**
- **Logistics**
- **Sugars**

HARVEST

- **Hand picked, fruit chilled to 10-12 degrees C**
- **Destemmed/not crushed using a elevator to lift the fruit.**
- **Destemmed into bins, then tipped in tank with a fork rotator.**

Our aim is to start to ferment with zero tannin or very little. When fruit is crushed too warm, then we find we are pulling out too much tannin. Receival bins, must pumps etc pulp the berries before ferment which leaches out too much tannin.

It's very hard to work ferments if you are starting with a baseline tannin level that's too high.

DON'T PLUNGE, CHECK TANNINS.

That's our motto during harvest. Think about why your doing it rather than doing it to look busy.

- We let the fruit sit at ambient temps (12-14 degrees C) before fermentation kicks off, this is usually a few days.**
- Once ferments starts, we are very gentle in the beginning with the aim for a few delastage's but mostly pigage.**
- Every tank is tasted at least twice a day, to work out the daily regime for cap management for the tank. We are only really looking at tannins, as I think that's the only thing you can really change during ferment.**
- Aim is to go 1.5 times more tannin than we need then let it come back during elevage and time in bottle. Looking for lots of fine tannin.**

TANNINS

With the seasons warming at Hoddles, we have changed how we have gone about making Pinot Noir. In the early days, we would plunge three times a day and the tannins would be fine. Now, all you have to do is hold the plunger up to the tank and you've got enough tannin. I think this is because the shorter growing season influencing tannin development on the vine.

If we think we are pulling out too much tannin, then we will let it sit for a day, then reassess and work it again. It is amazing how the tannins will come back in after sitting for a few days.

We love tannin, wine needs tannin as it's a natural preservative although you need good tannin. We find we have better tannin's towards the end of the ferment than at the start. Higher temperatures towards the middle/end of ferment will help pull these tannins out with very little cap work.

POST FERMENTATION

- Aim to hold the wine on skins for up to two weeks, looking for the tannin to integrate. Really depends on the season.
- Pressing is gentle and quick, max 40 minutes and 1.2 bar
- Settled for a day in a settling tank, then racked to barrel via gravity with bottoms of the tank marked on barrels.
- Matured in oak for 10 months, then racked to tank. The barrels from the bottoms of the tanks are racked to a separate tank and filtered if necessary.
- No filtration on the blend, and no fining as the tannins should be correct from ferment.

BUNCHES V WHOLE BERRY

At Hoddles depends on the site and the season.

- It almost has to be an ideal season (long, cool) to use bunches. I only like what it does to the tannins, not the wine.**
- Our 1ER Pinot Noir is the only wine with WB. Site that runs down to the south, so longer cooler growing season. Nothing more than 25% in a ferment.**
- Majority is whole berry, but not completely whole berry. Achieved with old equipment that works. More about the fruit and temperature rather than equipment.**

DESTEMMING



WHAT I'VE LEARNT AT HODDLES IN 20 YEARS

- **Spend the time in the vineyard to make sure it is set up early. Get sunlight onto bunches early to not only promote tannin development but also protect from sunburn.**
- **Respect the site, it will tell you what style you should be making.**
- **Over the last 20 years, tannins have changed due to the shorter growing season. The tannin profile will dictate your cap management during ferment.**
- **Overall, it's the little things that add up to make good pinot. State of the canopy, temperature of fruit at receipt and picking at the right time. After that, the less you do the better wine you'll make.**