



Nautilus Estate of Marlborough, Clonal Selection Wines

WHAT IS A PINOT NOIR CLONE?

The Oxford Companion to Wine describes 'clone' as follows:

'Clone' in a viticultural context is a population of vines all derived by vegetative propagation from cuttings or buds from a single vine called a mother vine.

'Clonal selection' is the process where a superior plant in a vineyard (mother vine) is selected and cuttings are taken to propagate a population of vines. This population is identified as an individual 'clone'.

Pinot Noir tends to show extreme variation between clones and in New Zealand in the 1990's there was considerable interest shown in a series of clones isolated from vineyards in Burgundy.

These three wines are produced from three such individual clones that originated from Burgundy and now form a significant part of our Pinot Noir plantings in Marlborough.

BACKGROUND

Nautilus first produced individual clonal pinot noir wines in 2001. This is part of an ongoing commitment to producing high quality Nautilus pinot noir that included the purchase of the Awatere River Vineyard in 1998, Clive Jones spending vintages in both Oregon (Willakenzie Estate) and Burgundy (Domaine Dujac) and the building of the pinot noir dedicated winery in 2000.

In 2001 we took pinot noir clones UCD5, 115 and 777 from one of our longstanding growers – Willie Crosse – and vinified them into individual wines. The purpose was to look at the contributions of different clones in terms of their palate structure and flavour profile, and also to see whether they worked better if they were vinified separately and then blended, or cofermented. A further purpose was to understand the ageing potential of the different clones.

The exercise was so useful that we retried it in 2003. 2003 was a particularly good year for pinot noir, and this time we took clones 667 and 777 from another of our growers and fermented them individually.

The success of these wines as an educational tool has encouraged us to reproduce this exercise in 2008, with fruit from the Yarrum vineyard in the Southern Valleys.





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2008 WINES

Each clone was hand harvested on the 27th March 2008 at optimum ripeness and destemmed directly into our eight-tonne open-top red fermenters. After being held for seven days for a period of cold soak, the wine underwent a five day indigenous fermentation. Once dry, the wines were pressed directly to one-year old French oak barriques for malolactic fermentation and maturation. The wines were racked to bottle in March 2009 without filtration. Every effort has been made to make these wines in an identical fashion and to ensure that they truly reflect the characters of each Pinot Noir clone as expressed by the vineyard site.

Clone	777	667	Ata Rangi
Brix	24.5	25.2	24.5
pH	3.43	3.46	3.28
Titrateable acidity	7.89 g/L	7.3 g/L	8.1 g/L

Clone 667 Medium ruby in colour, the wine has vibrant primary plum and cherry aromas, a touch of strawberry and some floral notes on the nose. The palate is delicate with a soft and silky mouth-feel, light plum fruits and a rounded finish.

Clone 777 Mid ruby with a dark berries, chocolate and spicy vanilla on the nose. On the palate this wine has a fine tannin structure and a medium finish.

Ata Rangi The darkest in colour with the most complex aroma showing red fruits, spice and chocolate. On the palate this wine has a great structure with firm acidity and tannin and a medium finish.

CONCLUSIONS

Together, these three components represent 40% of the 2008 Nautilus Pinot Noir blend.

Upon extensive tasting trials following fermentation, and then later as the wines aged, it was agreed that while each clone added different elements to the final blend, none stood out as perfect on its own. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

This philosophy has influenced our purchase of the Clay Hills vineyard in 2007. When the need for further land on which to grow pinot noir was identified, we searched for a site that not only gave us what we wanted in terms of terroir (a North facing, clay slope in the Southern Valleys) but also in terms of clonal selection (UCD 5, 114, 115, 667 and 777).

