

Welcome to this the first of a new series of Quarterly seasonal newsletters...

Summer 2012

THE SEASON SO FAR – ANOTHER 2009?

I write this at the end of five weeks of tucking (recalcitrant vines back under the tucking wires) following a short break from seven weeks of pruning.

But no one likes a moaner... and with a season like the one we have had so far it would be churlish to complain.

One of the many local rules of thumb (thumbs?) is that if its hot and dry at the Gisborne A and P Show in the second week of October (and you get sunstroke and drunk in the beer tent) then... it's going to be a great summer!

And so it has proven to be with a great season so far, the last three weeks have been on average 25-30 degrees most days, flowering and fruit set excellent and disease and pests almost negligible due to the hot, dry and windy conditions.

To date the season is very reminiscent of the wonderful 2009 vintage and the long range forecast suggests that may extend right through the summer.

Roll on the 2013 vintage!

ALCO-POP FEVER....IS EVERYONE IN THE WINE INDUSTRY GOING MAD?

One could be forgiven for thinking that the marketers have taken over the wine industry the way quite respectable folk are chasing the latest fashion fad.

We wonder if the old style wine industry, involving growing grapes at a named vineyard, faithfully producing the wine in the winery and inviting people along to the cellar door to meet the proprietors and taste the wine and learn about the terroir, is a dying art...or at the very least considered now to be too quaint.

Two very strong trends are the emergence, firstly, of a whole new generation of wine marketers making wine as a fashion statement.

Now labels have quirky non-viniferous names and their proprietors (or inventors might be a better term) proudly proclaim that they want to get away from wine label names about rocks,

creeks, hills, ranges and plateaus and give the wine names 'which identify with the end user' as one of them put it recently.

So.....Ho.....Ho... Is this the death of terroir as we know it?

Having soccer players and graphic artists lending their names to wine labels, would tend to suggest so.

The second trend is for normally respectable wine folk to suddenly take a tank-full of sweet wine down to the local brewer or bottler and inject a little Carbon Dioxide and Hey Presto – a sparkling fizz with a funny name.

Or, do you happen to have some old red wine lying around you haven't found a home for? (We did but at least we called it Claret).

Well, same general approach but add some orange juice on the way to the carbonation plant and Ole! ...Sangria!

Still we shouldn't be too critical since we have been producing a little alcopop of our own – the Non Vintage Chardonnay Semillon (see New Releases and Tasting Notes.)

VISITORS TO HAWKE'S BAY (INCOGNITO)

We had a weekend in Hawke's Bay recently on a Cellar Door Spying Mission (see Cellar Door Plans) and made some interesting discoveries between the \$30 million "tell the architects our jet is landing on September 1" school of winery, and a new and more identifiable (for us) school of 'Garagistes' who throw up a little barn or shed in the middle of the vineyard and hang the Open sign out.

NOT THE RIDGES AGAIN...

Among our favourites were Ash Ridge and Hawke's Ridge, which was just a coincidence.

Ash Ridge have gone into the alco-pop business with a considerable degree of style... producing a thing called 'Ritzling' which is a lightly carbonated Riesling, packaged in four little 250 ml bottles in a four bottle cube with dreamy graphics.

Hawke's Ridge has joined in with two other wineries on Ngatarawa Road to operate a thing called the Triangle Cellars where the three of them 'take turns'.

Clever.

Hawke's Ridge themselves have a little alco-pop called C'est Beau (and Oui it is good) which is a lovely little cocktail of ripe slightly botrytised wines with a tiny 'Spritz' on the front of the palate.

Both worth exploring.