



## the vineyards

My vineyards are at the heart of what I do. I selected the sites, developed the infrastructure and planted the vines. Spread through three distinctive sub regions of Marlborough the vineyards are unique like the wines that they produce.

My first land purchase was on a hidden ridge in the Waihopai Valley. Considered by some to be too harsh and cold for grapes, I knew it was perfect from the moment I serendipitously set foot on it, and then did all I could to ensure it was mine. My first vineyard is called Ant's nest, and is my home. The animals depicted on my label all reside here, and give hours of pleasure and excitement to my children, who roam the vineyard in search of adventure. Bounded on one side by the Omaka River, and exposed to the prevailing north westerly winds on the other, it is a fantastic site, and a place of which I never tire and constantly marvel at the changing of the seasons and sunrises and sunsets.

Living in the vineyard I'm constantly aware of the 'work' of the vines and the development of the fruit, and my children are learning the craft of the vintner, without even knowing it. It's not a bad life, though I'm neglecting to mention the cold nights up frost fighting, or the hard slog out in vineyard in the hot winds, better to mention the "dreamy good stuff".

After developing Ant's Nest, I was excited about planting things, and developing raw land into beautiful vineyards, and so embarked on a major vineyard development drive. I planted two more blocks on the same ridge, as well as one further up the valley. All of these Waihopai sites are on elevated, clay ridges and terraces, which restrict growth and vigour, and provide "balanced" fruit. The flavour profiles from these vineyards tend lemon, lime, and stone fruit, with less of the herbaceous vegetal characters found in some parts of Marlborough. Apart from the fruit flavours, there is greater minerality and density to the wine, and better structure. These wines age well, and have more grunt than the heavily irrigated vigorous vines growing down by the Wairau River.

Whilst searching for a block on which to plant Pinot Noir, I stumbled onto a great site high in the Awatere Valley. Known as Upton Downs, the stunning views here give a preview of the stunning fruit from this area. Once again, clay and wind keep the vines in check. Fruit from here is minerally, and has potential to be very lifted and passionfruit (talking about Sauvignon here). For the Pinot Noir, the ripening is slow, and this area gets very little rain, so fruit can be left to hang to achieve good phenological ripeness without high alcohols, or disease pressure. This allows lovely savoury characters to compliment the ripe fruits often seen in Marlborough Pinot Noir.

Venturing into one of the coldest parts of Marlborough I planted Patriarch vineyard which lies on north facing terraces facing Mount Patriarch and Mount Fishtail. Once again a uniquely beautiful site, this vineyard has clay on the upper terrace and river stones on the lower terrace. This will give me more blending options, and provide some very pungent and classic Marlborough fruit.



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Due to the extreme cold here, the vineyard is protected by full coverage water for frost fighting. If you haven't seen the water freeze on the vines, thus cocooning them and protecting them from the frost, it's a pretty amazing site, and a quirk of science that the vines can still be undamaged despite temperatures down around minus 5 C. This vineyard has been developed as a certified organic vineyard from day one, and this has been a hard road but one we believe worthwhile. All of our vineyards are sustainable, and we are looking to convert to organic over the next few seasons. As I, and some of my staff live on some of the vineyards, the more I can protect these environments and make them great places to live and work, the better they will be.

Ant

