



MAHANA

PINOT NOIR 2014

>> Notes from the winemaker

There is something about pinot noir that brings out the best and worst in people, particularly winemakers. It is a variety of passion, sensuality, philosophy and spirituality. Pinot Noir is akin to religion. It seems to me that winemakers can be remarkably gracious about other winemakers syrah, chardonnay or riesling but when pinot noir enters the discussion it quickly becomes a blood sport. Winemakers grow fangs and claws, passions run high, opinions fly and sword fights seem the order of the day. All brought about by pinot noir. I have heard it referred to as a mistress and a minx. It is a variety that is all consuming. It offers a glimpse of heavenly enlightenment and a moment later it will sneak you a peek into the fires of hell. Beware of the allure, torment and addiction of the greatest variety there is. In a world of technology, noise and despair there is still the quixotic obsession of pinot noir to fill the day with dreams of crusades, romance, passion and tilting at windmills.

Here at Mahana we are blessed with pinot noir on Albic Ultic clay. This means that we have no need for supplementary irrigation which is a subject I do get worked up about. Turning on the water tap in my opinion is a blasphemy on the concept of terroir. You are quite literally watering the expression of the site and season away. The clay is able to hold enough moisture to get through a dry Moutere summer without any need for irrigation lines, pumps, filters, tanks and dams. The clay also lends itself to a quite assertive character in Moutere pinot noir. There is certain rusticity or tannic robustness that I believe is derived from the clay. It is not dissimilar to the wines of Nuits St George which also have an assertive tannic and earthy profile.

The trick to making pinot noir on clay is to focus on your weakness. We have no need to pursue colour or tannin. On clay they are a given. We must focus on what does not come easily here and that is restraint, elegance and perfume. These are the classical and perhaps delicate traits of pinot. The soil / site give us the character, the season gives us the personality and the winemaker manages it all looking for the best display or expression. For me, the use of whole bunches is critical to bring verve, spice and aromaticity to the power of clay driven pinot noir. Whole bunches bring about a certain cerebral quality to the obvious muscle and swagger of tannin.

This 2014 Pinot Noir only uses about 30% whole bunches in the fermentation so is still quite rustic and masculine. It is earthy and savoury with plenty of forest floor and mulch beginning to develop. There is a wonderful violet note on the nose which is always exciting. The palate is full, rich and quite powerful. If you are excited about what this wine may look like with some bottle age then you will be interested to know that we intend to hold back a few hundred cases of this wine to release at a later date as a 'Cellar Release'!

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