

Meet Daniel Le Brun
No 1 Family Estate

Daniel Le Brun: The name is Daniel Le Brun. I am, you could say an up rooted Frenchman who decided to leave my native District of Champagne for a new life in Marlborough, New Zealand that was a few years ago now. We arrived here with my wife and child in 1980 with the intention to plant the vineyard and produce the style of wine that is produced in Champagne.

So some years later, I think we have just achieved that. Because at a time in 1978 that was, the vineyards in the districts were only their infancy, there was already a few contract growers and we did established the third winery in the district, some years later there are some 440 contract growers in the district and some 50 wineries. So just to tell you that someone else has followed what we did but I am just saying I was one of the first people to discover the potential of the district for producing quality wines.

Little has changed during the time, the wines are getting more and more sophisticated and they can now compete with the best in the world in many different areas. Something that is different about what I do here, I have since the beginning the to specialize in producing bubbles, simply because coming from the District of Champagne, I have no intention to try my hand at Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling or whatever. So in this districts I grow the three grapes of the Champagne District of France, mainly of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier which is a red grape related pinot noir, which is very useful in Champagne as a blending material.

Being specialists, we grow and use the best fruit we have for the production methode champenoise and nothing I have done here is any different in anyway to what is done in champagne. I follow the rules of champagne without having any constraints to do so or any regulations to follow here is simply, to produce the highest quality, I think we use the grapes, I grow myself in follow the same rules, without having any rules. I follow the same rules that they have to in Champagne, like aging on lees in the cellar and extraction right from the fruit and these types of things. Which, gives me in time, really something that was comparable to what I used to do in France.

In fact what I produce here is capable and it's proven, it's really been compared to some of the best vintages in Champagne, been compared to some brands very high reputes, like Bollinger or Taittinger , these types of great champagnes.

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The Rayner Vineyard
Waipara

Kym Rayner:

The first vineyard site I'd like to talk about is my own vineyard. My wife Maggie and I bought this vineyard in 1991; but some of the vines were planted in the mid-1980s. This makes us one of the oldest vineyards in Waipara. And the other interesting aspect is that these vines are planted on their own roots, as opposed to much of the newer plantings that are on ... where the vines are grafted onto resistant rootstock. My wife Maggie and I planted the rest of vineyard, and we do all the vineyard work ourselves apart from harvesting.

The soil is heavier clay with a few stony ridges. The topography is sloping, which helps with cold air drainage, and that avoids the spring frosts.

We have the key varieties of Riesling, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir, and we also have two other interesting varieties, being Pinot Gris and Gewurztraminer. We harvest the Chardonnay and Riesling by machine, but handpick the other grape varieties.

We have drip irrigation on the vineyard, which is used primarily for establishment and in the hot years. The advantage of older vines and heavier soils means in most years, we do not have to irrigate the older vines.

Our vineyard is run on sustainable practices. It's in our own interests, obviously, to do this. We also drink vines from this vineyard on a regular basis. So we use the minimum number of sprays that we think is acceptable to produce grapes of superior quality.