

The Vineryards at Clos Marguerite

Jean-Charles Van Hove:

So the vineyard is really what sets the scene. That's very, very important. When we talked about Terrior, the vineyard is actually the major player; so it was important for us to, you know, find a -- find a good place. And this place, basically I decided on it because from the other side of the river it was quite clear, looking toward this face, all the different geological features were there for me. And the bottom is basically a strata which is of detritic deposits, and it's very close or very similar to something I know very well from Bordeaux; it's called the mollasses, and you find them in St Emilion. And then there is a layer of typical river deposit also; but it's stones, gravels. And it's also, you know, in many, many of your famous vineyard of this world, you've got those stones. And then another characteristic of this place is loess deposits, so that's a windblown material and that varies a lot. The depth of that strata varies a lot in different places of the vineyard. So that's where I can decide where I put Pinot or Sauvignon and what rootstock I'm gonna use. And in terms of rootstock, one of the few things we did when we -- well, actually the very first thing we did when we got this place was to plant rootstock, and then we grafted our own vines. And practically everything we've got here in the vineyard is we've made it our self.

To focus on early on as Sauvignon Blanc, we've got five hectares of it; and Pinot Noir, and we've got three hectares of that, about ... about one-third, two-third.

And then another major decision to take when you create a vineyard is how you're gonna plant them, and we went for traditional old world plantings; so it is close planted. We've got 1.8 meter between the vines here. That gives us about nearly twice the density of a traditional New Zealand vineyard. But by the way, the trend in New Zealand is for getting closer and closer. We used to be 10 feet between the ... between the rows, and then it went to 9 feet in the '90s, and then it's now 8 feet. It's not a traditional, but it's still a wee bit away from where we are, only 1.8 meter, which is 6 feet.

And then we do also saw an old world type of pruning; it's called guyot pruning, and it's only two canes on a -- on a reasonably low wire. The wire's at 700, which is also -- 700 millimeters from the ground, which is also different than the traditional 900. And we trim the vineyard quite high, so I've got a lot of ... a lot of leaf, a lot of canopy here doing all the good work for me. And the -- the advantage of having only one layer of -- of fruit, so they're what the guyot pruning gives me, is, A, I get even ripening because I've only got one layer, one level; and, B, I've got a thin canopy, and that's very important for a few reasons, but one of them is disease pressure. So it will -- the canopy will dry out much quicker after a -- after a rain event, and that's -- that's particularly important for us.

It's bordering the river, and it's quite close to the sea. The sea is about a

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kilometer from here. And bordering the river there is a cliff from this terrace here down to the river, and bordering the river is also very important for good frost protection. We've got a bit of draft going alongside the river in the spring, in the cold morning of the spring, which are dangerous for frost.

And another particularity of this vineyard is -- is wind. Wind is a feature of Marlborough generally; but it's even more so here at Clos Marguerite. And what we get is basically the northwester funneling from the Cook Strait into the river mouth. And why is that important for us? Well, wind is really the friend of the viticulturist. It's -- it's very good as a passive disease control, because again it will dry up my canopy after a rain event fairly quickly. So this is the perfect place.