

FROM THE CELLAR... CRAGGY RANGE

**YOU HAVE TO VISIT
OUR WINERY
BECAUSE...**

“We offer world-class
experiences.”

Matt Judd, Sommelier, Craggy
Range



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

March 19, 2019

From the moment we set foot on the Craggy Range property, we had the impression we had arrived at one of the premier wineries in Hawke’s Bay, if not the entire country. The massive stone and glass building, which houses the cellar door, exuded a swanky, upscale feel. The grounds themselves, a combination of pristinely manicured lawns, a sprawling pond, and bovine statues (you read that correctly), added to the overall, contemporary appearance. A plot of neatly pruned vines completed the scene, as did the gorgeous Te Mata Peak.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Craggy Range dates back to 1998, when Terry Peabody, who made his fortune manufacturing concrete, acquired the property and set up a 950-year land trust. The goal from there consisted in not only producing world-class wines, but offering a world-class experience.

Production consists of about 100,000 cases per year from multiple vineyards in three of New Zealand’s esteemed wine-producing regions: Hawke’s Bay, Martinborough, and Marlborough. As we came to learn, Craggy Range grows Chardonnay, Syrah, and Bordeaux varietals in Hawke’s Bay, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir in Martinborough, and Sauvignon Blanc in Marlborough.

About 90% of Craggy Range wines are exported, most of which are sold in high-end restaurants. We therefore understand why the winery wanted to produce a label worthy of a place on some of the world’s best dining tables. From what we could glean, they achieved their objective with a clean, classy presence.

Consistent with the winery’s vision, some of Craggy Range’s offerings, especially their top-end reds, carry a premium price. The estate also has an award-winning restaurant, and it offers luxurious, on-site accommodations, including garden cottages and river lodges, for those wanting a more complete experience.



Various views from and of the Cellar Door.

WINEMAKING PHILOSOPHY



Craggy Range's vision.

Craggy Range endeavours to produce premium wines that pair beautifully with food. To do so, of course, starts with the best quality fruit and ends with the skillful hands of the Chief Winemaker, Julian Grounds.

“We wanted something that looked good on the table (the label) and we wanted wine that pairs well with food.” – Matt Judd, Sommelier, Craggy Range

ONE-ON-ONE WITH MATT JUDD, SOMMELIER, CRAGGY RANGE

Q: What do you like most about wine?

A: It's from the land, and I like the cultural and historical aspects of wine. As a 17-year-old kid, I was introduced to Pol Bollinger Champagne. And since then, I've experienced the history of wine in New Zealand. I also like that wine brings us together.

Q: Of all the wines you produce, which one is your favourite and why?

A: Our Gimblett Gravels Syrah, which, for me, is the best expression of Syrah. I also appreciate the Sol Syrah, which was rated by Decanter as the best Syrah in the world for two years running.

Q: What is your ultimate favourite wine and why?

A: La Roquette Chateauneuf-du-Pape Blanc. Then, Milton Chenin Blanc from Gisborne.



Service with a smile from Matt Judd, Craggy Range Sommelier.

Q: What's the best part of your job?

A: The people. Talking and drinking are what I'm good at.

Q: What's the worst part of your job?

A: When people aren't engaged, or when they only want to give you their experience or put you down.

Q: What is your most embarrassing wine moment?

A: Once during our prestige wine launch dinner, I accidentally 'blended' part bottles of Aroha Pinot Noir and Les Beaux Cailloux Chardonnay to make a wildly expensive rose, which I then proceeded to pour at the VIP table, including the owners, GM and our winemaker! I have been reminded of this regularly over the years.

Q: Tell us one thing about you or your winery nobody else knows.

A: There is a long-term family legacy at Craggy Range.

THE TASTING...



Not one bad seat in the house, or should we say, the tasting room.

We were among the first people to arrive at Craggy Range on the morning of our visit, which afforded us some additional time with our learned host, Matt, who guided our outstanding tasting. As a bonus, we had the opportunity to see his skills in action as more people filled the cellar door and he wound up gliding around the floor, ensuring everyone had sample in hand.

Our tasting began with the 2018 Te Muna Road Vineyard Martinborough Sauvignon Blanc (price: \$25.95 NZD) and ended with the 2016 The Quarry Gimblett Gravels Vineyard Hawke's Bay (88% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Cabernet Franc, and 4% Merlot) (price: \$150 NZD).

In between, we tasted the:

- 2018 Te Muna Road Vineyard Martinborough Pinot Gris (price: \$27.95 NZD)
- 2018 Kidnapper's Vineyard Hawke's Bay Chardonnay (price: \$29.95 NZD)
- 2018 Mary's Vineyard Hawke's Bay Chardonnay (price: \$39.95 NZD)
- 2016 Te Muna Road Vineyard Martinborough Pinot Noir (price: \$49.95 NZD)
- 2016 Aroha Te Muna Road Vineyard Martinborough Pinot Noir (price: \$150 NZD)
- 2017 Gimblett Gravels Vineyard Hawke's Bay Syrah (price: \$39.95 NZD)
- 2016 Le Sol Gimblett Gravels Vineyard Hawke's Bay (Syrah) (price: \$150 NZD)
- 2016 Te Kahu Red Blend (80% Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and Malbec (price: \$29.95 NZD)
- 2016 Sophia Gimblett Gravels Vineyard Hawke's Bay (a blend of 58% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, and 22% Cabernet Sauvignon) (price: \$140 NZD)

For us, the 2016 Aroha Te Muna Road Vineyard Martinborough Pinot Noir emerged as the pick of the lot. Pale-medium ruby in colour, this beautifully-balanced red served up a fragrant bouquet of red cherries, raspberries, red licorice, cigar box, and tobacco ash in the nose. In the mouth, this concentrated Pinot Noir had a light-medium body, with high acidity and light-medium, round tannins. We enjoyed tart cranberries, blueberries, dark plums, white pepper, allspice, cinnamon, graphite, and oak on the palate. In terms of the finish, more graphite and sour red fruit ensued in a pleasant, contemplative way. We came to learn half of the grapes are whole-bunch picked, and about a fifth of the oak barrels are new.

FINAL NOTES

We came away from Craggy Range impressed by the estate's vision, as well as its range of offerings. We could easily see how the winery has found its way into numerous high-end restaurants, and we wouldn't hesitate to

order a bottle of its fantastic Aroha Te Muna Road Vineyard Martinborough Pinot Noir, which, as noted, comes at a premium price. With an award-winning restaurant and luxurious accommodations, the winery offers a complete, upscale experience.

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