

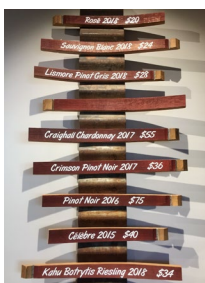
FROM THE CELLAR... ATA RANGI



YOU HAVE TO VISIT OUR WINERY BECAUSE...

“Visiting us is like going to an art gallery and meeting the artist. It’ll give you a much better appreciation of our wines.”

Sophie, Cellar Door Hostess,
Ata Rangi.



Ata Rangi’s main entrance (top), Winemaker, Helen Masters (middle), and a view of Ata Rangi’s wine list (bottom)

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

March 18, 2019

We arrived at Ata Rangi on a beautiful March day, which set the tone for a most memorable visit. Sophie, our Cellar Door Hostess, greeted us in a warm, inviting manner before she showcased everything great about the estate and, more broadly, the Wairarapa wine region.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Ata Rangi dates back to 1980, when Clive Paton purchased a 5-hectare parcel of land on the outskirts of Martinborough. As the story goes, his decision to acquire the property was informed by a Wellington-based scientist, Dr. Derek Milne, who determined the soil would be ideal for producing wine, especially Pinot Noir.

The winery’s name, Ata Rangi, means “new beginning” or “dawn sky,” and for nearly 40 years, Ata Rangi has grown and developed a reputation for its exceptional offerings. In fact, its 2010 Pinot Noir earned the revered distinction of “Grand Cru of New Zealand” (Tipuranga Teitei Aotearoa), a rare and revered feat.

Helen Masters, a highly-regarded and decorated winemaker, spearheads the Ata Rangi winemaking team. Perhaps best known for her Pinot Noir, which, according to many is among the best in New Zealand, if not the entire New World, she produces wines with several other varietals, including Chardonnay, Riesling, and Syrah.

Total production ranges in the neighbourhood of 15,000 cases per year, or about 180,000 bottles, a volume comparable to other producers in the Wairarapa region.

The region, by virtue of his geographic location and climatic conditions, provides everything needed for producing world-class wines. Martinborough is one of Wairarapa’s three main sub-regions, with the other two being Gladstone and Masterton. The overall Wairarapa region accounts for about 1% of New Zealand’s total wine

production. This explains, in part, why getting your hands on a bottle of Martinborough Pinot Noir can prove challenging.

WINEMAKING PHILOSOPHY

Helen Masters and her team strive to make each vintage shine by respecting the terroir from which Ata Rangi's grapes are grown. This includes everything from viticulture to winemaking techniques. The basic aim for each vintage is to extract the very best from the fruit. In the process, seasonal variations in climatic conditions are embraced. The vineyards owned by Ata Rangi are certified organic as part of New Zealand's BioGro initiative. As one would expect, hand sorting ensures the grapes are treated with care, a practice that also ensures quality. Fermentation occurs with wild yeasts.

“The Ata Rangi extended family is dedicated to respecting and nurturing the land for future generations.” – Ata Rangi

ONE-ON-ONE WITH SOPHIE, CELLAR DOOR HOSTESS, ATA RANGI

Q: What do you like most about wine?

A: The people and all the layers it offers, both in conversation and in tasting. It's like music in that respect.

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

A: The McCrone Pinot Noir. It's a single plot vineyard. The Chardonnay would be close behind. I'd pair the Pinot Noir with any high-fat or slightly spicy food, but I'd also drink it on its own.

Q: What's your ultimate favourite wine and why?

A: Anything from Châteauneuf-du-Pape. I've also had some really nice Barolos, too. Dry River Wines and Margrain Vineyard, both from Martinborough, are also fantastic.



A warm, Ata Rangi welcome at the hands of our amiable cellar door host, Sophie.

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

A: I love the way the place works, especially the relationship between the winery and the workers. I also like the customers. I learn an awful lot from them.

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

A: That I only get to do this one day per week because I also work in Wellington.

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

A: You need to book in advance, but we do not charge for the tasting.

THE TASTING...

As part of our group tasting, Sophie took her time describing each offering and adding colourful anecdotes here and there. She began by pouring the 2013 Craighall Riesling (price: \$33 NZD) and ended by offering us a sample of the 2015 Celebre, a blend made from 55% Merlot, 30% Syrah, and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon (price: \$40 NZD).



A selection of Ata Rangi's offerings.

In between, we tasted the:

- 2018 Raranga Sauvignon Blanc (price: \$24 NZD)
- 2017 Craighall Chardonnay (price: \$55 NZD)
- 2017 Crimson Pinot Noir (price: \$36 NZD)
- 2016 Pinot Noir (price: \$75 NZD)

For us, the 2017 Crimson Pinot Noir stole the show. The grapes come from some of the estate's youngest vines, which range in age from 5 to 20 years. Pale ruby in colour, this wine served up cherries, plums, blueberries, grilled meat, black pepper, anise, and red licorice in the fragrant nose. In the mouth, we'd describe this wine as medium in body, with low-medium acidity and soft, fine tannins. Flavours included sour red and black cherries, black pepper, blackcurrant leaf, and graphite. The enduring finish consisted of more sour cherries and graphite. We could see this wine pairing beautifully with grilled pork or poultry.

On a related note, Ata Rangi, as an enterprise, remains committed to environmental preservation and restoration, and this includes one of Clive Paton's brainchild's, Projet Crimson. This charitable organization has as its vision to restore New Zealand's native forests to their former, pristine condition. A portion of the Crimson Pinot Noir sales goes towards this noble cause, which speaks volumes about the estate in our book. For more information about Projet Crimson, see: <https://projectcrimson.org.nz/>.

FINAL NOTES

Based on our visit to Ata Rangi, we could see why the estate has such a stellar reputation, not only for its wines, but for the way its friendly, knowledgeable staff members treat their visitors. As a bonus, we had the opportunity to meet Helen Masters, one of New Zealand's most highly-acclaimed winemakers, who took a few moments to greet us and share her passion for wine (thank you, Helen and Sophie!). If you are interested in visiting Ata Rangi, which we highly recommend, make sure to book well in advance. Tasting are by appointment only.

Contact Ata Rangi

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