Kumeu River

The Kumeu River Ray's Road Chardonnay is a fresh, zesty Chardonnay with a mineral backbone, reflecting the unique limestone terroir of the Ray's Road Vineyard in Hawke's Bay . Known for its vibrant acidity and lively minerality, this wine adds elegance to the Kumeu River range.

KUMEU RIVER

Alcohol :13,50 %

Composition: 100% Chardonnay

Ray's Road Chardonnay 2020

Auckland, New Zealand

Region and Vineyards

The **Ray's Road vineyard** is located in **Hawkes Bay**, one of New Zealand's most renowned wine regions on the **North Island**. Acquired by Kumeu River in **2017**, this vineyard sits on a **limestone hillside** at an elevation of **180 meters**. Its **northerly aspect** provides optimal sun exposure, allowing for gradual ripening of the grapes and preserving their natural acidity. The limestone soils of Ray's Road impart a distinctive **mineral quality** to the wine, giving it a fresh and structured character.

Hawkes Bay's coastal climate, combined with the vineyard's altitude, creates cool growing conditions that help maintain vibrant acidity in the fruit. The vineyard is **dry-farmed**, meaning it relies entirely on natural rainfall, which leads to more concentrated and complex flavors in the grapes. The vines, aged between **3 and 12 years**, consist of clones **95, 15, and 548**, trained using **Vertical Shoot Positioning (VSP)** for optimal sun exposure and air circulation.

Winemaking

The 2020 Ray's Road Chardonnay is made from **100% Chardonnay**, and the winemaking process is carefully handled to ensure that the fruit's purity and site expression are preserved. The grapes are **hand-harvested** to ensure only the finest quality is used. Once picked, they are **whole-bunch pressed**, a gentle method that minimizes extraction of harsh tannins and preserves the delicate aromatics of the fruit.

The juice undergoes **indigenous yeast fermentation** in **older French oak barrels**, ensuring a slow, natural fermentation that adds layers of complexity to the wine. The use of older barrels ensures that the oak influence is subtle, allowing the freshness and minerality of the fruit to take center stage. Following fermentation, the wine undergoes **100% malolactic fermentation**, which softens the acidity and adds a creamy texture to the palate. The wine is then aged for **11 months in barrel**, which integrates the flavors and enhances its complexity without overwhelming the fruit.

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Tasting Notes

- **Color**: A pale, straw-yellow hue with bright reflections.
- **Aroma**: Delicate aromas of **white flowers** and **lemon zest**, accompanied by subtle hints of **mineral complexity** from the limestone soils.
- **Palate**: The palate is lively and zesty, featuring flavors of **citrus**, particularly **lemon** and **grapefruit**, balanced by a fresh **oyster-shell minerality**. The wine has a creamy texture from the malolactic fermentation, but retains its vibrant acidity, leading to a crisp, refreshing finish with a lingering mineral note.

Did you know?

The **Ray's Road vineyard** marks Kumeu River's first venture into the **Hawkes Bay** region, expanding their traditional footprint in Kumeu. The vineyard's **limestone soils** are a key factor in the unique minerality and freshness of the Chardonnay, setting it apart from the more clay-based soils in Kumeu River's other vineyards. This acquisition has allowed the winery to experiment with a different terroir, adding a new dimension to their renowned Chardonnay range.

Wine Pairing Ideas

- **Oysters on the half shell**: The wine's crisp acidity and oyster-shell minerality make it a natural pairing with briny, fresh oysters.
- **Grilled lemon herb chicken**: The citrus notes of the wine complement the bright, herbal flavors of grilled chicken, while the wine's texture matches the dish's savory richness.
- **Pan-seared scallops**: The wine's fresh acidity cuts through the richness of scallops, while the minerality enhances their natural sweetness.
- **Goat cheese tart**: The creamy texture of the Chardonnay pairs beautifully with the tangy richness of goat cheese, and the wine's citrus notes add a refreshing contrast.

Robert Parker (RP) : 94 Points (2020)

The 2020 Rays Road Chardonnay is still largely made from fruit from the vines that were original in the vineyard; however, there were some new plantings coming online in this vintage. In majority, this is clone 95. So, on the nose, there is white peach, lemongrass, a hint of torched tatami mat, almond meal, croissant and pastry. It's really settled into itself now, after several years in bottle, and it's moving toward that gently nutty, silky space. "2019 was good from the start, but 2020 was like 'here, hold my beer, I'll show you how it's done,'" says Michael Brajkovich. 13.5% alcohol, sealed under screw cap.

James Suckling (JS) : 93 Points (2019)

A very bold delivery of ripe-peach aromas with some gently buttery undertones. The palate has a smooth, creamy textural build to a fresh, crisp and dry peach finish.