

PYRAMID VALLEY VINEYARDS

THE JOURNEY

After 15 years of extensively travelling the world in search for clay limestone soils, Mike and Claudia Weersing finally found their site in North Canterbury New Zealand.



MIKE WEERSING

Mike studied oenology and viticulture in Burgundy, beginning at the Lycee Viticole in Beaune, and continuing at the Universite de Bourgogne in Dijon. He has worked extensively in the vineyards and cellars of Europe, for producers such as Hubert de

Montille, Domaine de la Pousse d'Or, and Nicolas Potel in Burgundy; Jean-Michel Deiss and Marc Kreydenweiss in Alsace; and Ernst Loosen in the Mosel. He has made wine in France and in Spain for Randall Graham of Bonny Doon Vineyards, vinifying in the Rhone Valley, the Languedoc-Roussillon, and the Navarra. New world vintages include apprenticeships with James Halliday at Coldstream Hills in the Yarra Valley of Australia, and with Russ Raney at Evesham Wood in Oregon's Eola Hills.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Every gesture we make, in vineyard and winery, is a summons to this spirit of place. Biodynamics, hand-based viticulture, low yields, natural winemaking – these are some of the means we've adopted better to record and transmit this voice. For example, all of our wines are fermented with their own yeast starters, cultured every year, from the vineyard itself. If wine is meant to be the bottled breath of a certain place, from a certain moment in time, then we feel that working with yeasts from that site, of that season, is an important step towards transparency and authenticity. Our cultures allow very long, very regular ferments: most of our whites ferment for more than a year. During this time, the wine is protected, so no sulphur is necessary. After so long a ferment, the wine is stable: thus most of our wines are bottled unfiltered, again with little or no sulphur.



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OUR HOME COLLECTION



The home vineyard has been established according to rules that Mike grew to respect and inherently to trust during his time studying and working in Burgundy: Pinot Noir and Chardonnay have been planted, on clay-limestone soils on scarp slopes, at a density of 10,000-12,000 vines per hectare. The vineyard has been biodynamically managed from inception, and is accredited with Demeter.

Each block is planted to reflect a specific soil type hence the somewhat irregular looking blocks. In total we have only 2.2 hectares planted in 4 separate blocks. The differences you can taste reflects the soil and climatic differences between each block, which is never more than 400 metres at most. We vinify each block and variety separately but identically in a mixture of old oak and clay amphorae so the outside influences on the grape are minimised. Each single vineyard wine is named after the predominate weed that grows within that block, Earth Smoke, Angel Flower, Lions Tooth and Field of Fire.

OUR GROWERS COLLECTION



Our ambition to create a range of wines from sites other than our home vineyard was born of multiple desires. We felt motivated to see recognition given to New Zealand's grapegrowers, who have played so critical a role in the ascension and the growing acclaim of their country's wine, but who so rarely receive due credit. How fun, and how just, we thought, to give these craftspeople a chance to show off their site and their skill.

The basic arrangement is simple: we lease a chosen area of a grower's vineyard, at a value set by the average income yielded by that area, if contracted to another buyer. We then, at our own cost, introduce a long list of operations geared to ensuring superior grape quality. This starts with converting to organics and biodynamics, followed by: shorter pruning, bud rubbing, shoot thinning and positioning, leaf plucking, fruit thinning, hand harvesting, and sorting or multiple passes at harvest if necessary. All work is done by hand. The extra canopy management also



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reduces disease, allowing a sharp reduction in the normal spray programme.



In the end, our fruit usually comes off at 40-60% of the yield realised by other buyers, with significantly better maturity.

This attention is then carried to the winery, where the grapes, must and wine benefit from the same mindful heed: a strict minimum of additions – little or no sulphur, natural settling, no enzymes; fermentation exclusively with yeasts cultured from each source vineyard, natural malos; no finings, filtration only when necessary. Our wines often ferment for many months, and malos usually require at least a year to complete. Movements of the wine – pressing, topping, racking – are timed to propitious stages of the lunar calendar. Because we know and trust our fruit, we are confident allowing our wines largely to make themselves.

Needless to say, spending considerably more to produce a smaller crop, and permitting wines to follow their own internal calendars

and logic, is no recipe for cash-flow felicity: but what excites us is making remarkable, memorable wine, and discovering what a great site and grower can achieve, if both are encouraged to ultimate quality.

LOCATION

My hero, friend, and mentor Gerard Potel once said to me, *“One is happiest when he loves both the wine he makes and the people who drink it.”* Claudia and I have always hoped to know personally as many of our customers as possible. As a small vineyard with very limited production, we are not open generally to the public. We do, however, eagerly welcome visits by appointment. If you find yourself in our area, and would like to stop by, please do call, or send us an email. We’re grateful for a little notice, as life in a vineyard is forever busy.

You’ll find us between Waikari and Hawarden at 548 Pyramid Valley Road, not far off SH7 between Waipara and Culverden. We look forward to your visit.



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MANAGEMENT

Mike Weersing, Winemaker Founder

Claudia Weersing, Marketing/Sales, Founder

Caine Thompson, Managing Director

Brittany Thompson, Winery
Manager/Assistant Winemaker

Struan McDuff, Vineyard Manager



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