



June 2009

This, the first monthly newsletter from me couldn't be better timed.

With the 2009 wines all in barrel we are taking the first steps in producing the 2010 vintage.

Pruning has begun! I always feel like winemaking for the year has started when we begin pruning.

So the beginning of my monthly newsletters coincides with the beginning of the 2010 vintage.

The question often asked is "why is pruning so important"?

Pruning affects the wine quality of the upcoming vintage as it is the first step in controlling cropping levels, i.e. the kg of grapes /vine. A plant can only ripen a certain amount of fruit to perfection, and excessive crop levels, to my mind, are the single largest factor affecting wine quality, especially in Pinot Noir.

(There is a very good reason Burgundy has laws governing cropping levels).

How long and how strong are the canes that are to be left?

How many spurs and buds are to be left? What should their positioning be? etc etc.

Pruning is actually serious work, requiring serious thought and skill with serious consequences if done incorrectly, which is why there is no large contract pruning crew in our vineyard one week then out the next.

All pruning is done Duncan Billing, (vineyard manager and my assistant in the winery), Tim Valli (everything else), and myself.

We fairly much know each vine by name and treat the vines according to their individual needs rather than following a set formula. Pruning will take up most the next three months.

However it is not only the physical act of pruning affecting the future wines, it is the chance for reflection, a chance to think about the vintage just passed, time to evaluate those on the spot decisions that needed to be made during harvest and see what lessons there are to take forward to the next one.

So what was learnt? What was the 2009 vintage like? That sounds like it could be the next newsletter. Outside the sun is shining, its one of those sunny crisp Central Otago winter days, so fingers off the keyboard and wrap yourselves around a pair of pruners, we are going winemaking.