

## MERLOT 2020

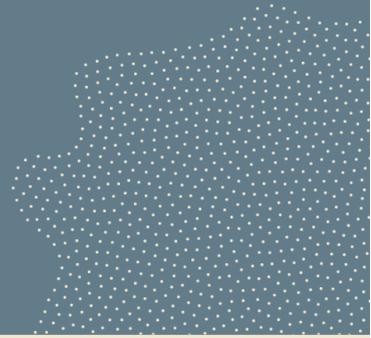
The Village Orchard was a special place. One of its landmarks was this woolshed. In addition to the year round events of sheep farming, it served as a meeting place for pigs, chickens, wild cats and rascally arataki road kids. It saw a ton of firework activity, all in accordance with safety protocols, and hosted many bonfires. Pretty much what sheds not too far from your house were designed to do. Cheers to Rex Jones for capturing its true essence in his watercolour depiction of the classic shed. Merlot was the perfect fit for this beloved relic. The shed's easy going, warm and welcoming charm sums up the Merlot's drinkability and unpretentiousness to a T.



2019/2020 season was the maiden voyage for us on the block at 265. It was considered one of mother natures best with respect to conditions. A good drop of rain came in early spring and the clay was able to lock most of this away for the season allowing us to dry farm. Spring growth burst out the gate, soil temps and free moisture came to the party and we flew through round after round of shoot thinning, leaf pulling and wire lifting frantically attempting to keep on top of things. As humidity crept up, and with it ensuing mildew pressure, we worked as hard as we could to keep the canopy light and airy. Hawkes Bay seriously turned up the heat dial late Jan early Feb with almost a dozen days on the trot in the high 30's. Veraison exploded onto the scene and before long harvest was here at record pace (roughly ten days ahead of schedule).



Our Merlot is composed of BDX clones 481 and 2096. Of the three varieties at 265, the Merlot canopy was on a whole the least temperamental and best behaved in 2020...yeah I'm looking at you Syrah. We thinned leaves in the fruiting zone just after flowering to give the new baby bunches plenty of UV light and air circulation. Flowering went through without drama and a quick crop adjustment was done early in the new year. Keeping the birds away was particularly challenging. We had to accept their presence, being quite close to town, so modifying the nets in a way that completely kept them off the fruit was devised by Dai and implemented. A bit more work but it meant we could sleep a little easier.. Picking day was the 23rd day of March. Conditions were slightly overcast but a 5am start saw the fruit find the processing floor early in the morning.



The Woolshed (1998)