



Raymond Chan Wine Reviews

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Rod McDonald 'Trademark' 2015 Chardonnay and 2013 Syrah

Rod McDonald has been slowly developing his brand over the last 10 years. The key to understanding the Rod McDonald brand is that any wine with his name and logo comes from fruit from vineyards that he and his team have total operating control over. The 75 ha of vines are managed to his aim and philosophy of creating great wines that "taste like where they came from and who made them", which is essentially "terroir". Rod manages the vineyards he sources his fruit from with environmental awareness, and the target is to have them all certified BioGro organic within three years. The crucial aspect in getting there is to enable sufficient yield to ensure commercial viability during the conversion process.

The pinnacle of Rod's dream is based around the finest expressions of Hawke's Bay Chardonnay and Syrah. The beginning of the realisation of this dream was manifest in the release of his super-premium 'Trademark' Syrah 2011 in 2014 (click here to see my review). The intention is to have five individual vineyard sites producing such distinctive wine that could be all blended together, or bottled separately in making outstanding wine. At this stage in the development of the flagship 'Trademark' brand, there are now four vineyards that supply Syrah of the desired quality and style, these being the 'Two Gates' in Maraekakaho, 'Bridge Pa', the 'Seager' vineyard in the Tuki Tuki River Valley, and the 'Te Awanga Estate'. There is still one vineyard for Syrah to come. For this first 'Trademark' Chardonnay 2015, all of the fruit has come from the 'Two Gates' vineyard, but future releases will have the fruit source available from other sites as well, as with the Syrah. Rod regards Chardonnay and Syrah as the icon varieties, and there will not be a Bordeaux-varietal based 'Trademark' wine. Rod's best Merlot comes from the 'Te Awanga Estate', and it has been reserved for a special wine under the 'Te Awanga Estate' brand.

It is indeed exciting times as Rod McDonald grows his wine brand, especially at the top level. Here, I review the latest 'Trademark' releases, the inaugural Chardonnay from the 2015 vintage, and the second Syrah, from the 2013 vintage. www.rmwwines.co.nz

Rod McDonald 'Trademark' Hawke's Bay Chardonnay 2015 ★★★★★

Bright, light straw-yellow colour with pale green-golden hues, lighter on the edge. The nose is powerfully concentrated with intensely packed aromatic amalgam of white and yellow stonefruits entwined with subtle citrus fruit notes, melded with layer of nutty and creamy oak, unfolding complexing gunflint and mineral waves, with toasty detail. This has a tight and deep core that builds with aeration. Medium-bodied, the palate is elegantly and stylishly rich and luscious with flavours of white and yellow stonefruits intermingling with citrus fruit detail, along with creamy and nutty barrel-ferment layers. Waves of gunflint and mineral complexities unfold from the concentrated core. The mouthfeel is bright and lively with fresh acidity, and complemented by underlying power and drive. The wine follows a fine line and phenolic thread that leads to a very long, lingering finish of stonefruits, gunflint, minerals and smoky, toasty oak. This is a stylishly rich and concentrated, complex Chardonnay with stonefruit, nutty and gunflint flavours and a fresh, fine-textured line. Match with rich seafood, pork and veal dishes over the next 6+ years. Equal parts clone 15 and 95 from the 'Two Gates' vineyard, Maraekakaho, fully barrel-fermented with full solids by indigenous yeasts to 13.0% alc., the wine aged in French oak, 70% new with a little batonnage and approx. 30% MLF. 19.5-/20 Jul 2016 RRP \$60.00

Rod McDonald 'Trademark' Hawke's Bay Syrah 2013 ★★★★★

Very dark, deep, near impenetrable black-red colour with youthful purple hues, a little lighter on the rim. This has a powerfully concentrated nose with a deep and intense heart of ripe blackberry fruit entwined with layers of black pepper, liquorice, Asian spices, tar and minerals, unfolding dark red and violet florals. The nose has great penetration and waves of intermingling detail. Medium-full bodied, the palate is elegantly proportioned, but very concentrated, unfolding rich, luscious and succulent flavours of ripe blackberry fruits along with black pepper, liquorice, spices and piquant florals. Mineral and earth elements add complexing detail. The fruit is supported by very fine-grained, flowery tannins providing considerable extraction, structure and mouthfeel. The fruit sweetness and textures are in wonderful balance, with integrated acidity adding to the richness and energy. The palate carries to a very long and sustained finish with rich fruit and firm, fine grip. This is a very rich and structured Syrah with layers of black fruits and complexing liquorice, pepper and mineral detail. Serve with slow-cooked game meat dishes over the next 10+ years. 100% Syrah, a mix of clones including MS, from the 'Bridge Pa' and 'Hillside' vineyards, destemmed and indigenous yeast fermented to 13.5% alc., the wine aged 24 months in French oak, 80% new. 19.5/20 Jul 2016 RRP \$80.00