



Our Changing Industry

The last five years have seen many changes in the wine industry.

Probably not so obvious a change has been the huge investment by wineries and vineyard contractors in computer equipment, skilled people and smart software to manage the grape intake over vintage.

Not so many years ago the peak of the harvest took over four weeks. These past two seasons have seen a record number of tonnes picked with a peak picking period of only three weeks.

Many vintages of the past were plagued with unexpectedly over filled wineries, frustration and delays, today we have a different story, the harvest is still challenging but aside from weather problems is more orderly. At times the strict regimentation of acceptance slots at the wineries can be a little frustrating; but there is no doubt it works to everyone's advantage.

The meeting room at our office over vintage resembles the War Room at Number 10; except wall maps and mobile symbols moved around by pretty WAAF's, are replaced by a large wall mounted computer monitor; we also forgo the cigars and brandy!!! The logistics and planning to utilise our considerable harvest horsepower is complex and ever changing, but thanks to our partner wineries and their cooperation we manage together.

To be able to plan the harvest and winery intake we need to know the yield of each individual vineyard. Once again with the use of a computer model and many hours of time by our skilled staff, under the watchful eye of Melissa Sutherland, we have developed a reasonably accurate system of data collection.

One of the major wine companies ran a competition for this last season, of the closest yield

prediction to actual harvest over their whole grape intake, we were the closest with one of our client vineyards and received a prize of wine which was shared amongst our team.

PS. We do have some pretty (could be) WAAF's.



Meet the Staff

Our newest staff member is Phil Dixon, who joined us in October 2012. Phil is an experienced machinery operator, who you will most likely see driving one of our

sprayers, or a Harvester. Phil grew up in the sounds, and still spends a lot of time there. He enjoys fishing, whitebaiting, and crayfishing, as well as watching the Crusaders play.



Phil Dixon



Harvesting Fleet

Vintage Harvesters has a fleet of eight Gregoire harvesters, with a range of different specifications, so we are able to best match a machine to meet your harvesting needs.

Some of our machines are side discharge machines, where the grapes travel along a conveyor belt on a boom, and drop into gondolas towed beside the harvester, which then empty into the waiting truck.

We also have a range of twin bin machines which pick into two bins at the back to the harvester, which will

then tip into the gondola when they are full. These machines are great for vineyards with narrow rows, or on steep blocks.

Our cleantech vario machines provide the cleanest whole berry sample available from a machine harvester. The harvested crop passes along a chain belt, which has holes in it, any loose berries pass through the holes and onto a conveyor. The whole bunches travel along the chain, until they reach the end, where "fingers" on a spiral auger gently remove the berries.

If you have any special harvesting requirements, don't hesitate to contact Jason and we will tailor a solution for your needs.



Gregoire G8 Harvester

New Technology

During the 2013 harvest we implemented a new tracking system for our fleet of harvesters. Tracmap provides real time live updates of



Tracmap map showing harvested portion of a vineyard block

the location of our harvesters, allowing us to track progress of each machine, showing what has been completed and what is left to harvest. Tracmap works using GPS and cell phone technology in a functional and easy to use head unit in the cab. The Tracmap unit has the flexibility to be moved from harvester to tractor, allowing us to utilise it for other aspects of vineyard management, such as fertiliser spreading, spraying, leaf plucking and trimming.



Tracmap head unit in tractor



Soil Tests

A healthy growing vine will continue producing as long as the soil can provide the nutrient to supplement what is lost in the harvested fruit. To determine the loss from the soil and to apply the right mix of fertiliser in the right quantities, regular soil testing is a must to build a picture over the years of how your soil type is reacting and how you can apply the right nutrients in the most efficient manner.

Petiole testing of the growing plant at flowering can also serve a useful function, but unfortunately if the vine is showing a deficiency at this stage it will most probably be too late to fix for this season. The vine will have already determined the likely crop load based on the level of nutrition available. Changes to nutrition after flowering may help the growing plant and can be used

to improve the nitrogen level of the fruit, but will not improve the yield.

Soil and petiole tests should be done at least every two years to ensure you comply with SWNZ. More frequent testing may reduce input costs and help track changes in the soil. Call Melissa if you need any help or advice with your nutrition programme.

Websites

Have you visited our websites? www.jtcviticulture.co.nz and www.vintageharvesters.co.nz

Winter Services Available

- Lime and Fertiliser spreading
- Klima vine stripping
- Langlois vine stripping
- SWNZ accreditation assistance
- Vineyard assessments
- Fertiliser recommendations
- Seed drilling
- Post Driving
- Mulching
- Winter trimming



Now is a good time to look at your soil tests to work out what fertiliser you need for the coming growing season



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