



Ethical, Social and Environmental Statement

Misha's Vineyard recognises that to be a successful wine business, all of our decisions need to be made in an ethical, social and environmentally sound way. This acknowledges the combined role that all our resources play; from the people to the soil, water and the air in which they work. They are all important in allowing us to grow the best grapes and produce wine in a responsible manner.

To be a successful and sustainable wine company, consistency of quality and yield are two key factors. Site selection is one important determinant for these, hence after much searching, the site chosen for Misha's Vineyard is on the lakefront slopes of Bendigo Station in Central Otago. There were many criteria used to determine the suitability of potential sites but some of the most important were soil type, micro-climate, frost-risk and water availability.

People

Of course people are where it all starts - they have a huge impact on the final wine right from choosing the site, planting it, growing the grapes through to turning it into wine, then finally marketing, selling and drinking it. We employ a small team of experienced permanent workers to carry out vineyard work year round. Over the summer and during harvest we also employ extra casual staff – including viticulture students who need to gain field experience. Consistency of staff and a “hands-on approach” are things that are very important to getting the best result in the vineyard and winery.

Soil

We have planted on soils that are naturally low in vigour, both due to low organic matter levels and low water holding capacity. Low vigour soils are positive from a wine quality view point but also challenging in terms of maintaining vine health. Soil health was for a long time, purely viewed by many from a mineral and nutrient standpoint. Nowadays there is a wider acceptance of the importance of soil biology combined with such things as its role in sequestering carbon. We believe our soil management practices are sustainable in the long term and will continue to improve the soil health.

The vineyard has been planted to maximise slopes for natural frost protection but also to protect gold mining heritage sites and areas of outstanding landscape, such as the gorges running through the vineyard. These have been further enhanced by replanting of native vegetation such as Golden Kōwhai (as part of the Department of Conservation's Project Gold), as well as Mānuka, Kānuka and large Tussock.

To enhance the life and health of our vineyard soils which are fragile and often on steep slopes, we avoid any cultivation. This minimises erosion and helps increase the soil organic matter levels. We encourage a range of deep-rooted inter-row plants and are trialing various species to see what works best. We also aim to minimise herbicide applications both in terms of the area under-vine sprayed and limiting the period the soil is bare. As the vines become more established we will further reduce the use of herbicides.





The merino sheep from Bendigo Station are used over winter for natural weed control and help reduce tractor usage. Composted winery marc is also returned to the vineyard to increase soil organic matter and we utilize the sheep manure that we dig from under the Bendigo Station shearing shed to add to our compost.

Frost

By planting on slopes that run down to Lake Dunstan we have largely mitigated the risk of frost damage. This means we have not had to install wind machines, overhead sprinkler systems or use helicopters to drive warmer air down during early and late season frosts. Not only does this avoid ongoing energy costs/inputs and noise pollution but it also means we all, especially our vineyard manager, sleep a lot better!

Water

Central Otago is the driest area in New Zealand, with vineyard areas generally having annual rainfall of <350mm. This climate combined with the low water holding capacity of our soils mean irrigation is critical to maintaining vine health. Lake Dunstan where we draw water from is fed by the Clutha River which sources water from high rainfall headwater areas and snow melt. At Misha's Vineyard we carefully monitor and minimise our usage through in-ground sensors and maintain the infrastructure to a high level to avoid any wastage.

Wind

We are in a high wind area and this has the benefits of reduced disease pressure and limiting vine vigour. However it can cause physical damage and plant stress. During the initial years of the growth of the vines, we installed significant amounts of a specially-made shelter cloth to help protect the vines and enable them to focus energies on root development and limit erosion issues. With the reduced wind impact and a subsequent reduction in the drying out of the soil, we have been able to conserve our precious water resources. The areas with shelter cloth have gradually been reduced as the vines have matured and established good root systems – and therefore better able to utilize natural water resources.

Winemaking

Our wines are produced in accordance with NZ Winegrowers Sustainability program. Overall we aim to use as few inputs as possible and let time do the job rather than using extra resources to fast track the process. For example the majority of our wine is fermented using natural yeast and bacteria, for both the primary and secondary fermentations. Filtration is only used if the wine doesn't clarify naturally, or if there is residual sugar remaining from the grapes. Use of sulphur dioxide is kept to the minimum levels possible.





Packaging

Good packaging is vital to ensuring that our wine gets to the consumer in the condition they expect. Bottles, labels, closures and cartons involve significant cost and energy input, so each of these is chosen weighing up the importance of delivering a high quality and consistent product to our customers whilst not adding unnecessarily to our carbon footprint and avoiding any waste. Hence we use a lighter weight bottle where appropriate and we have standardised the bottle shapes where possible, to minimise the number of carton types used. Our labels need to stand up to being placed in ice buckets and to the high humidity conditions in many of the Asian markets we export to, so are made from a water-proof synthetic material. We use screw caps for sealing all our wines as we believe this closure currently gives consumers the best guarantee of enjoying our wines untainted and fresh, both in the short and long term.

Distribution

Rather than focus on the older more traditional wine markets Misha's Vineyard has placed an emphasis on Asia, which will be increasingly important to New Zealand as an export market. Fortunately it is also easier to service this region from New Zealand thus reducing our air miles and carbon footprint. We also warehouse wine in a temperature-controlled facility in Singapore which allows us to consolidate shipping throughout South-East Asia. The added benefit is that it ensures that in the hot and humid conditions of this region, our wines are shipped and stored appropriately in perfect condition.

Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand

Misha's Vineyard is certified and audited by Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand, one of the world's leading sustainable wine production programmes. Since this programme was implemented by the New Zealand Wine Industry, it has significantly reduced many synthetic inputs and also decreased waste and water usage.

Our aim in the vineyard and winery is avoid using synthetic inputs whenever possible. This means having a nil agricultural residue target for all of the fruit we harvest and make wine from.

Any one certification program will never suit every vineyard or winery, the most important thing is to make every management decision in a considered way.

Ultimately the stance and ethical decisions taken by any business are driven top down, but often only implemented if the owners are closely involved. By being a small company and managed by its owners thoughtfully and day-to-day, Misha's Vineyard believes it is doing the utmost to create a sustainable future.

Olly Masters – *Winemaker*
Misha & Andy Wilkinson - *Owners*
Michelle Dacombe – *Vineyard Manager*

