

Michael Cooper's Buyer's Guide to New Zealand Wines 2011

Trinity Hill Gimblett Gravels Tempranillo 2008 ★★★★★

This is a consistently impressive red, full of personality. The 2008 vintage (★★★★), grown in the Gimblett Gravels, Hawke's Bay, was matured for 10 months in French (90 per cent) and American oak casks (25 per cent new). A blend of Tempranillo (87 per cent), Touriga Nacional (10 per cent), Malbec (2 per cent) and Viognier (1 per cent), it's a generous, serious, ageworthy red with full, youthful colour and fresh, deep plum and spice flavours, complex, savoury, finely balanced and lingering.

Trinity Hill Gimblett Gravels Hawke's Bay Noble Viognier 2008 ★★★★★

The 2008 vintage (★★★★) was made from hand-picked, botrytised grapes and partly barrel-fermented. Hard to resist, it is lush, sweet, rich and soft, with mouthfilling body, lovely, ripe, stonefruit flavours and a highly perfumed bouquet. The 2009 (★★★★) was handled in tanks and old French oak barrels. Unabashedly sweet (200 grams/litre of residual sugar), it has concentrated peach and apricot flavours, an oily texture, and good complexity and richness.

Trinity Hill Hawke's Bay Chardonnay [Black Label] 2009 ★★★★★

[Up to and including the 2008 vintage, this wine was labelled 'Gimblett Gravels'.] The flagship Chardonnay from John Hancock, it is typically very stylish, intense and finely structured. The 2009 vintage (★★★★) was grown at two sites in the Gimblett Gravels and two sites 'in a cooler part of Hawke's Bay.' Hand-picked, barrel-fermented and matured on its yeast lees for 10 months in French oak barriques (partly new), it is lemon-scented, with lovely fruit sweetness, delicacy, texture and length. Showing very elegant fruit flavours and good acid spine, it is vibrant and seamless, with strong cellaring potential.

Trinity Hill Homage Gimblett Gravels Hawke's Bay Syrah 2007 ★★★★★

One of the country's most distinguished – and expensive - reds. Harvested by hand from ultra low-cropped (2.5 tonnes/ha), mature vines, and matured for 18 months in French oak barriques (mostly new), the 2007 vintage (★★★★) is a densely coloured, majestic red, still very youthful. Blended with Viognier (9 per cent), it has a commanding mouthfeel (14.5 per cent alcohol), with highly concentrated flavours of plums, spices and liquorice, and a foundation of ripe, fine-grained tannins. It's still years away from revealing its full personality; open 2012+.

Trinity Hill The Gimblett 2008 ★★★★★

A great buy, from one vintage to the next. The 2008 (★★★★) is based mainly on Cabernet Sauvignon (43 per cent) and Merlot (41 per cent), blended with Petit Verdot (7 per cent), Malbec (6 per cent) and Cabernet Franc (3 per cent.) Hand-picked in the Gimblett Gravels, Hawke's Bay, and matured for over 18 months in principally French oak barrels (25 per cent new), it is dense and very ageworthy. Dark, with blackcurrant and spice flavours, notably rich, ripe and firmly structured, it's still very youthful, but finely balanced, layered and lingering.

Trinity Hill Gimblett Gravels Syrah 2008 ★★★★★½

Winemakers John Hancock and Warren Gibson are pursuing a 'savoury, earthy Rhône style'. Grown in the Gimblett Gravels, the 2008 vintage (★★★★½) was hand-picked, co-fermented with Viognier (8 per cent), and matured for over a year in French oak barriques (25 per cent new.) Fleshy and fruity, with excellent depth through the palate, it's a highly approachable, warm and supple red with deep colour and ripe blackcurrant, plum and spice flavours, showing excellent complexity. It's still youthful; open mid-2011+.

Trinity Hill [Black Label] Hawke's Bay Pinot Gris 2008 ★★★★★

The 2008 vintage (★★★★) was grown in the Gimblett Gravels (46 per cent), at Haumoana (37 per cent) and at Mangaorapa Station, in Central Hawke's Bay (17 per cent). Hand-picked, tank-fermented and lees-aged, it's a dry wine (3 grams/litre of residual sugar), rich and full-bodied. It shows excellent balance and depth, with a lifted fragrance of pears and spices.

Trinity Hill Gimblett Gravels Hawke's Bay Viognier 2008 ★★★★★

An emerging star. Peachy, slightly nutty and full-flavoured, the 2008 vintage (★★★★) was hand-picked and fermented in a mix of tanks and seasoned French oak barrels. It's a complex, fully dry wine with an oily texture and impressive harmony.

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Trinity Hill Hawke's Bay Arneis 2009 ★★★★★

A consistently good buy. The 2009 vintage (★★★★★) was estate-grown and hand-harvested in the Gimblett Gravels, and fermented in tanks and old barrels. The bouquet is fresh, lifted and strongly varietal; the palate mouthfilling, with ripe pineapple, herb and spice flavours, and an appetisingly crisp, dry finish.

Trinity Hill Hawke's Bay Montepulciano 2009 ★★★★★

Winery founder John Hancock doesn't believe Montepulciano has a strong future in Hawke's Bay – but still wins high accolades. The 2009 vintage (★★★★★), grown in the Gimblett Gravels, was blended with some Cabernet Sauvignon and given “minimal” exposure to oak. Made for early drinking, it hits the target with ease, offering lots of vibrant, plummy, spicy flavour, seductively fresh and smooth.

Trinity Hill High Country Pinot Noir 2009 ★★★★★½

This impressive wine proves that Hawke's Bay can make fine Pinot Noir. Sourced from vineyards in the relatively cool hill country, south of the Heretaunga Plains, it is picked by hand and matured in French oak (with a high percentage of new barriques.) The 2008 (★★★★) is floral and sweet-fruited, with the power to age. The colour is full and bright; the palate offers strong, ripe raspberry/spice flavours, with good density, firm tannins and oak complexity. The 2009 (★★★★½) is deeply coloured, mouthfilling and very rich, with highly concentrated cherry and plum flavours, still very youthful. It's a powerful wine, full of promise.