



Written by Jancis Robinson 10 Oct 2018

Kumeu River Chardonnay vertical bonanza

Jancis reports on a world first: a hugely impressive set of verticals from a source of impeccable Chardonnays, in New Zealand.

Do we need white burgundy? This thought went through my head at the end of an amazing, and impressively consistent, tasting of 48 Chardonnays from Kumeu River in New Zealand last month.

I will never forget the glory of a [DRC Montrachet 1978](https://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/504601) (https://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/504601) I was lucky enough to taste in 1999, and I am a huge fan of the wines of Colin-Morey and Roulot – and am lucky enough to have had some great bottles of Coche-Dury's [Meursault](https://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/cochedury-meursault-rougeots-vertical-wip-cs) (https://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/cochedury-meursault-rougeots-vertical-wip-cs) and [Corton-Charlemagne \(1986–1996\)](https://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/coche-dury-corton-charlemagne-1986-1996) (https://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/coche-dury-corton-charlemagne-1986-1996) and [1997–2006](https://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/coche-dury-corton-charlemagnes-1997-2006) (https://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/coche-dury-corton-charlemagnes-1997-2006)), but so much white burgundy from other sources is just so damned unreliable. Three years ago I took part in a blind tasting comparison of a range of Kumeu River Chardonnays with premier cru white burgundies from some of Burgundy's most admired producers. As you can see from [this tasting article](https://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/kumeu-river-chardonnays-triumph) (https://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/kumeu-river-chardonnays-triumph) , Kumeu triumphed.

It is difficult to imagine four dozen wines from any white burgundy producer that would not include several disappointing bottles, whether because of faulty corks, [premature oxidation](https://www.jancisrobinson.com/ocw/detail/premature-oxidation) (https://www.jancisrobinson.com/ocw/detail/premature-oxidation) or [less-than-perfect winemaking](https://www.jancisrobinson.com/ocw/detail/less-than-perfect-winemaking).

But when a group of wine professionals assembled at Farr Vintners in London to tackle vintages 2006 to 2017 of Kumeu River's Estate Chardonnay and their three single-vineyard bottlings, there was only one wine that was anything less than impeccable. The 2011 vintage in the North Island, as in Australia, was plagued by much more rain than usual and, although Kumeu's winemaker Michael Brajkovich MW is quoted as saying that they were very careful to sort out any berries affected by bunch rot, I found the 2011 Village blend less frank than the other 27 wines. But it turned out to be the exception that proved the rule. The rest of the wines were stunning.

After some late-twentieth-century problems with deficient corks, all of Kumeu River's wines have been stoppered with screwcaps from the 2001 vintage. I knew therefore that these Chardonnays were likely to be fresh rather than suffering the dreaded premo, but I did wonder in advance whether the wines would vary enough to make the tasting interesting. I need not have worried. The flights/bottlings each had their own style, and some very marked vintage patterns emerged.

Here's how Michael's brother Paul Brajkovich, who presented the wines, characterised the vintages, explaining that, despite Auckland's fairly low latitude, prevailing breezes off the sea mean that they rarely see summer temperatures above 30 °C (86 °F), with mid 20s being much more usual.

2017 – cool, slightly small vintage with some 'weather events' during harvest (see Elaine's 2017 – cyclone-hit but no write-off (<https://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/nz-2017-cyclonehit-but-no-writeoff>) for a detailed report). Hand harvesting was essential to retain only clean fruit.

2016 – pretty good, a bit riper than 2015. Peachier than 2017.

2015 – cool and very good with a fairly small crop. Citrus Chardonnays.

2014 – a spectacular vintage; nothing went wrong. Very clean, ripe fruit that was easy to harvest. Generous in flavour and texture. Quite tight initially but a benchmark vintage.

2013 – very good quality shrunk, and concentrated, by September frost. They hired helicopters to try to avoid crop loss but there just wasn't any warm air to push down. 'We spent a lot of money but it was futile', said Paul. 'We made only 200 to 300 cases of the single-vineyard wines as opposed to more than 1,000 usually.

2012 – Quite similar to 2017. A cooler year with some challenges just pre-harvest. Not as concentrated as 2013 or 2014 but supple. Good for drinking now.

2011 - Like 2012 but tough because there was so much rain at harvest. They needed twice as many pickers as usual. Tricky.

2010 – Very, very good. Like 2013 in that there was a frost in September 2009 which concentrated the wines. Not as acid as 2013 but the wines have needed bottle age.

2009 – Big crop but no weather problems. Slightly cooler than usual in early summer. Clean fruit and a bit less ripe than 2014 and 2010.

2008 – Very warm year. Deepish colour and a little bit of botrytis.

2007 – Very good vintage but cooler and a bit concentrated. Citrus and mineral.

2006 – Perfect growing season, like 2014.

I found the 2011s were very distinctive (though the single-vineyard 2011s were perfectly sound) while the 2009s were relatively soft and ripe (rather like 2009 burgundies). Paul Brajkovich obviously saw 2014 and 2010 as the standout vintages but I found the 2015s to be pretty impressive too, and the 2017s are clearly going to be exceptional in the long term. None of these 12 year-old wines was remotely ropey even if the 2006 and 2007 Estate Chardonnay are arguably just past their best.

This comprehensive tasting was so unusual – the tight-knit Brajkovich family are down to just four or five cases of the older vintages of these wines – that a representative of NZ TV was there to record the historic occasion.

Like many Croatians, the Brajkovich family emigrated to New Zealand in the late 1930s. They saved enough money from their work in vineyards and orchards to buy a small vineyard of their own on the outskirts of Auckland in 1945. Maté built his own cellar in 1948 during the era of hybrids and two-litre flagons of fortified wine. The business was initially called San Marino and run by Maté, the father of Michael and his siblings viticulturist Milan, Paul and their sister Marijana, who, like Paul, looks after sales. (Their mother Melba still rules the roost.) Maté was famously gregarious and attracted a huge number of visitors to his cellar. When he ran out of his 'sherry' he would go and supplement his stocks with some from a neighbour who was much less popular. That

neighbour would be rather miffed that people were happy to buy his wine from Maté at a premium, according to Paul.

In the 1980s the winery was renamed Kumeu River and by 1986, three years after working in France, Michael was making Chardonnay in the image of burgundy. The hybrids had long since been pulled out and by 1990 Maté's vineyard, the original one, was planted as it is now. The Brajkovichs produce some Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris which are fine but, so far anyway, not as dazzling as the Chardonnays.

Most impressively, for both producer and importer, the blue-chip US importer Wilson Daniels picked up Kumeu River as long ago as 1988. Hugh Phillips of Boxford Wines of Suffolk was the earliest convert in the UK, also in 1988, and Barry Phillips, now of Four Walls Wine, put the Kumeu River Chardonnay 1987 on his famous wine list at the White Horse Inn at Chilgrove in Sussex. The next British professional to fall for these wines was Stephen Browett of Farr Vintners. On a visit to New Zealand he tasted the 1989 vintage from barrel and placed an order. Farr Vintners has shipped every vintage since then and Kumeu River is arguably the best-value wine on their list.

The simplest, earliest-maturing Chardonnay from the Brajkovichs' 30 ha (75 acres) of vines, supplemented by fruit bought in from a further 10 ha, goes into their least expensive Village bottling, currently on the list of The Wine Society at just £9.95 a bottle. Our tasting started with the Estate bottling, a notch finer than the Village wine, but still almost ridiculously good value. Browett reported that the Estate Chardonnay was £110 a dozen in 1989 and is still only £140. Compare and contrast with what has happened to burgundy prices over the same period.

What made the tasting even more interesting is that the wines are all made the same way: hand-harvested (essential to maintain quality), whole-bunch pressed and then fermented and aged for 11 months on the lees, just as in Burgundy. The only variable is the proportion of new barriques. (A certain proportion of the basic Village bottling that we didn't taste is fermented in tank, generally about 20%.)

Kumeu River is a truly great producer of fine, ageworthy Chardonnay at more than fair prices. But they are located in a suburb of Auckland where urban development is encroaching apace. As a result, last year the Brajkovichs made their first foray outside Kumeu with the acquisition of Ray's Road vineyard in Hawke's Bay. It is worth remembering that it was not so long ago, though before Sauvignon mania, that Hawke's Bay on the east coast of the North Island had a fine reputation for its Chardonnay.

Here's what Michael Brajkovich reports on this new grape source: 'We have already bottled two Sauvignon Blanc wines from Hawke's Bay – the 2018 Kumeu River Sauvignon and 2018 Kumeu Village Sauvignon Blanc – plus the 2018 Kumeu Village Pinot Noir, which this year is 100% from the new Hawke's Bay vineyard. There are also two other Pinot Noir wines in the works, including a sparkling wine base and a richer style that is now ageing in barrels. We also have two batches of Chardonnay, picked about a week apart, which are still in barrel and looking very interesting indeed.' Paul Brajkovich reports that their first Hawke's Bay Chardonnay, probably about 1,000 cases, will be released in September 2019. They have also planted more Chardonnay so eventually the volume available will grow. This is good news.

The 48 wines below are grouped by flight and then listed by vintage in the order they were tasted, but you can change this within the groups.

Order by

ESTATE

Wine for the Estate bottling is selected from their own best blocks supplemented by some from vineyards that are not owned by the Brajkovichs. The 2010 was the favourite of the group of tasters.

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2017 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624120>)

Water white. Fresh as a daisy on the nose. Very young and Chablis-like. But on the palate there is Cote d'Or richness and intensity, finishing with a strong youthful streak of lime.

Drink 2019-2027

16.5 (</tastings/view/624120>)

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2016 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624121>)

Pale straw. Slightly teenage reticence on the nose. Flinty character on the nose and some breadth on the palate. Then it tightens up – almost dries – at the end.

Drink 2019-2027

16.5 (</tastings/view/624121>)

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2015 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624122>)

Broad and opulent on the nose. Massive streak of acidity. But real grip and extract on the palate. Lovely already with strong attack. Long.

Drink 2017-2026

17 (</tastings/view/624122>)

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2014 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624123>)

Lime-sherbet nose. And then a little sweet on the palate – less intense than the 2015 but very respectable. Slightly dry finish. Still great potential.

Drink 2017-2024

16.5+ (</tastings/view/624123>)

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2013 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624124>)

A little bit of sweetness apparent on the nose, and then fully evolved on the palate. Very solid. It has the weight of the 2015 without quite the verve. Slightly dry end.

Drink 2016-2023

16.5 (</tastings/view/624124>)

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2012 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624125>)

Light, fresh nose without massive subtlety. Big and quite brawny. But still technically perfect. A bit like a Meursault given a spring clean.

Drink 2015-2023

16.5 (</tastings/view/624125>)

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2011 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624126>)

That very wet year. Darker than most other vintages. Very deep straw. A little bit of rot? It is very different from most – without the nerve and definitely a bit lacking fresh fruit. Over its best? Alcohol stands out a bit too.

Drink 2013-2017

15.5 (</tastings/view/624126>)

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2010 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624127>)

Very steely and nervy. The lightest of suggestions of struck match. Fresh and dancing on the front palate and appetisingly dry on the end with real structure and – still – life.

Drink 2013-2023

17 (</tastings/view/624127>)

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2009 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624128>)

Creamy, almost fat on the nose. Lots of extract and perhaps a slight lack of nerve. Some alcohol evident. A bit Bordeaux 09-like!

Drink 2012-2021

16.5 (</tastings/view/624128>)

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2008 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624129>)

Deep greenish straw. Light but fresh and true nose. Absolutely composed and well balanced. Lime fruit slightly fading.

Drink 2010-2018

16.5 (</tastings/view/624129>)

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2007 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624130>)

Deep greenish straw. Mellow and fully evolved. Slightly lacking acidity and zesty fruit. Over its best but still very respectable.

Drink 2009-2018

16 (</tastings/view/624130>)

- **Kumeu River, Estate Chardonnay 2006 Kumeu** (</tastings/view/624131>)

Deep greenish straw. Muted nose and solid fruit with a nice savoury aspect. Very burgundian! But the fruit is fading so that it's just a powdery dream now.

Drink 2008-2016

16 (</tastings/view/624131>)

CODDINGTON

By the 2000 vintage the Brajkoviches had started to bottle some wine from individual vineyards separately and had already earmarked Hunting Hill as having a distinctive character. So they thought it would be a good idea to show off the peachier, more luscious character of Chardonnay from the Coddington vineyard. They were able to launch these two single-vineyard bottlings in 2006 because other vineyards came on stream around 2006 and their fruit could go into the Estate bottling to make up the shortfall.

This single-vineyard wine is a bit more open and earlier-maturing than that from the Brajkovichs' own Hunting Hill vineyard, also launched with the 2006 vintage. It is named after the original owners Tim and Angela Coddington. (Tim was executive producer of the highly recommended current movie *Crazy Rich Asians*.) The Coddingtons have since split up and in 2015 sold the property to a new owner who grants the Brajkovichs only a 12-month lease which has to be renegotiated each year. There are just 2.4 ha (6 acres) of vines. There could have been more but Tim Coddington wanted a polo field. 25% new barrels, mainly from Claude Gillet of St-Romain, whose barrels are slightly toastier than some.

The wine is definitely a step up from the Estate bottling and its extra concentration makes it easier to taste young than, say, the more expensive but longer-lived Hunting Hill or the more concentrated Maté's. The group favourite was 2010 with 2007 in second place but the 2015 pleased many too.

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2017 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624132>)

Water white. Very intense nose. A really aromatic wine – almost Riesling GG-like! And the fruit is much more concentrated than the Estate 2017 so it seems more forward. A spicy, gingery element to this. Very long and rich on the end.

Drink 2018-2030

17+ (</tastings/view/624132>)

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2016 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624133>)

Sleek and slightly muted nose. Teenage again. Chalky texture and quite blowsy, almost floral, fruit. Reticent.

Drink 2019-2030

16.5++ (</tastings/view/624133>)

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2015 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624134>)

Very savoury nose with just a hint of struck match. Intensity and vibrancy – very winning already. Bit of a golden boy. Real reverberation. Beautiful balance.

Drink 2018-2030

17.5 (</tastings/view/624134>)

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2014 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624135>)

Smoky nose. And then quite rich and broad. I think the 2015 has a bit more tension. Big and ripe and I'm sure it will develop well. Very long. Intense rather than complex.

Drink 2017-2032

17+ (</tastings/view/624135>)

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2013 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624136>)

Straw. Very fresh nose with a hint of struck match. Racy and lively with a strong green streak. Not the most concentrated. But very refreshing and Puligny-like now. Nicely balanced with a rather chalky texture. Good tension and drier than many.

Drink 2015-2028

17+ (</tastings/view/624136>)

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2012 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624137>)

Open and fresh. Very well mannered and well balanced and attractive even if not dramatic.

Drink 2014-2024

16.5 (</tastings/view/624137>)

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2011 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624138>)

Less expressive on the nose than the other vintages though it's clean enough. And the balance is there. It's even reasonably persistent. Certainly not a bad wine. And much better than the Estate 2011.

Drink 2013-2021

16.5 (</tastings/view/624138>)

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2010 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624139>)

Dramatic with a hint of botrytis on the nose. Really quite rich! Definitely richer than most of these Coddingtons. Quite extreme for a Kumeu River – none of the usual slight austerity. I think maybe not my favourite but it's certainly impressive.

Drink 2012-2025

17 (</tastings/view/624139>)

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2009 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624140>)

Greenish. Sweet note on the nose and lower acid than many other years. Solid and satisfying but I wouldn't mind very slightly more freshness.

Drink 2011-2021

17 (</tastings/view/624140>)

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2008 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624141>)

Light and vivacious with a strong green streak of citrus. Delicate. Really very fine indeed and lovely to drink now, at 10 years old. Great vibrancy. A triumph.

Drink 2010-2025

18 (</tastings/view/624141>)

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2007 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624142>)

Deep golden straw. Smells years older than the 2007. Big and bold with quite a bit of chew. But it's not that long. Polished and dramatic but maybe past its best?

Drink 2009-2020

17- (</tastings/view/624142>)

- **Kumeu River, Coddington Chardonnay 2006 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624143>)

Deep greenish straw. Pungent and it tastes golden green somehow. Smooth texture with a bit of chew. Very much still alive. Thunderous finish.

Drink 2008-2025

17.5 (</tastings/view/624143>)

HUNTING HILL

Chardonnays from this vineyard, opposite the winery and owned by the family, need probably the most time to open up; Paul suggested five to six years. Unlike the Coddington vineyard, which is trained on a conventional trellis with vertical shoot positioning, Hunting Hill is all trained on the double trellis of the lyre system (<https://www.jancisrobinson.com/ocw/detail/lyre>). It was replanted in 2000, not with the Mendoza clone, which is virus-affected, but with clone 15. Mainly on clay, this is a relatively cool site because it is in the direct path of sea breezes from the south west even though it faces north overall. There is a little Pinot Noir at the top of the hill, too.

Despite being relatively cool, this is the first vineyard to be picked each year, and the fruit tends to be particularly healthy. For Paul the wines, less rich than Coddington, usually have a lemon and lime blossom fragrance. They always seem tighter even though the winemaking is exactly the same. 25% new barrels, usually François Frères. The 3-ha vineyard usually produces just over 1,000 cases of Chardonnay.

The group favourite in this flight was the 2007, then the 2010 and the 2013.

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2017 Kumeu**

(/tastings/view/624144)

Cool and introvert nose. Very bracing and textured. But with an undertow of extreme concentration.

Drink 2020-2032

17.5 (/tastings/view/624144)

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2016 Kumeu**

(/tastings/view/624145)

Light struck-match nose and then quite opulent fruit on the palate. Tense and vibrant. Very long. The most appealing 2016 so far.

Drink 2018-2031

17.5 (/tastings/view/624145)

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2015 Kumeu**

(/tastings/view/624146)

Very green, juicy and fluid somehow. Great density and balance on the palate. Truly superior wine. Long and reverberant. A great Chardonnay by any measure.

Drink 2018-2032

18 (/tastings/view/624146)

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2014 Kumeu**

(/tastings/view/624147)

Light and a little shy on the nose. Broad and friendly on the palate. Molten texture. Lots of grace notes and excitement. Dense and long with a light floral note. Still quite chewy.

Drink 2018-2032

17.5 (/tastings/view/624147)

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2013 Kumeu**

(/tastings/view/624148)

Muted nose with some strong green – even vegetal – notes. Crisp and delineated with sufficient fruit in the middle though it's certainly nothing like sweet! Very long with a positive

impact on the palate. Great structure. Should knock most Chassagnes off their perch. I'd love to see this next to a Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey wine. Very long.

Drink 2017-2030

18 (</tastings/view/624148>)

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2012 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624149>)

Sultry and pungent. Lots to like here though it is quite evolved. Great savoury stuff with quite a bit in reserve.

Drink 2016-2028

17.5 (</tastings/view/624149>)

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2011 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624150>)

Not bad at all! Very fine in fact. Not quite the mellifluous fruit of other vintages and a tiny bit lacking fruit in the middle but a very good wine. Very long.

Drink 2015-2025

17 (</tastings/view/624150>)

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2010 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624151>)

Deep straw. Surprisingly light nose for this combination of provenance and vintage. Lots of sheen and delicacy but the iron fist inside this velvet glove is not really in evidence. A little easy.

Drink 2016-2026

17 (</tastings/view/624151>)

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2009 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624152>)

Deep straw. Ripe and a tiny bit blobby. This would give enormous pleasure if served in isolation but is not razor-sharp compared to other vintages.

Drink 2015-2025

17- (</tastings/view/624152>)

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2008 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624153>)

Light nose. Tight and fresh. Crunchy fruit. Not the delicacy of the Coddington 2008 but impressive nonetheless. Does not taste like a 10-year-old wine!

Drink 2013-2027

17.5 (</tastings/view/624153>)

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2007 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624154>)

Clean and fresh and direct. I like the extract and drive. Very chewy still – arguably this needs even more time!

Drink 2018-2032

17.5++ (</tastings/view/624154>)

- **Kumeu River, Hunting Hill Chardonnay 2006 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624155>)

First commercial vintage with vines just six years old. Attractive evolution – one of the first wines that actually seemed to have noticeable evolution. Rich and round and lovely now. Great layers and very difficult to spit. Long. Rich.

Drink 2014-2024

18 (</tastings/view/624155>)

MATÉ'S VINEYARD

This has been sold as a single-vineyard Chardonnay since 1993. The 2.5-ha plot was last planted back in 1990. The family's original vineyard, it was uprooted and left fallow in 1980s. Chardonnay did so well there that they decided to plant the Mendoza clone, regarded as the best clone then, and on low-vigour rootstocks. Pater familias Maté (who tried to convince me to take out NZ citizenship when I first visited here in 1988) died in 1992 and so it was obvious to name the inaugural vintage after him when it was released in 1995 to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the family's wine business.

This vineyard is on friable clay. It's a bit more sheltered from breezes than Hunting Hill and, according to Paul, they regularly find a sweet fruit – pear? – character as well as the density that is immediately obvious in this wine. As so often with the Mendoza clone, there is some virus, and it is characterised by 'hen and chicken' uneven fruit set, which only helps to concentrate the wine. They think they should replant the vineyard at this age, 'but the quality keeps getting better and better' according to Paul, who added that because of the concentration 'we have to press harder to get the juice but there's lots of tannin and extract. The wines can be quite closed when they're young and so much denser than the other Chardonnays. But at eight years old they start to take on flesh.' Michael uses up to 30% new barriques, mainly Seguin Moreau with a bit of François Frères.

The group vote favoured 2014 in this case.

- **Kumeu River, Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay 2017 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624156>)

Smells like GG Riesling! Aromatic, tight and with masses of acidity. Real grip.

Drink 2022-2035

17++ (</tastings/view/624156>)

- **Kumeu River, Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay 2016 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624157>)

Hugely intense and liqueur-like. A bit like a Kumeu River Chardonnay compote. Really dense and jewel-like and long. Almost flashy!

Drink 2019-2035

18 (</tastings/view/624157>)

- **Kumeu River, Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay 2015 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624158>)

Big and brawny but not that expressive aromatically. All potential rather than reality. Edgy and grainy and intense.

Drink 2020-2034

18+ (</tastings/view/624158>)

- **Kumeu River, Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay 2014 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624159>)

Savour on the nose and extremely burgundian. So composed. Such balance. Everything in its place. Almost the weight of a burgundy grand cru. Smashing! Great crystalline structure with massive fruit in the middle. Still some chew on the end.

Drink 2018-2035

18.5 (</tastings/view/624159>)

- **Kumeu River, Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay 2013 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624160>)

Pale greenish straw. Vegy/savoury nose without massive intensity and then massive impact on the palate with a bit of bitterness that slightly worries me. Still chewy. Everything else is superb, mind you.

Drink 2020-2030

17 (</tastings/view/624160>)

- **Kumeu River, Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay 2012 Kumeu**

(</tastings/view/624161>)

Well mannered. Quite a bit of evolution on the nose. Light and creamy. Sweet and lively. Lime chews. Lots of fun and intensity but perhaps not the most classical of these wines.

Drink 2017-2030

17.5 (</tastings/view/624161>)

- **Kumeu River, Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay 2011 Kumeu**

(/tastings/view/624162)

Rather simple nose. Satin texture. Good vitality. Really very juicy and appealing. So juicy and *gouleyant*. A great drink for now. Not that persistent but impressive – especially for this vintage.

Drink 2016-2024

17.5 (/tastings/view/624162)

- **Kumeu River, Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay 2010 Kumeu**

(/tastings/view/624163)

Greenish gold. Light nose for a standout vintage. Initially not quite as intense as I would have expected – attractive and commendable but not dramatically better than other vintages. Nicely balanced and a lovely drink for now. Creeps up on you! Pretty impressive peacocks tail of intensity on the end. Quite sweet.

Drink 2016-2030

18- (/tastings/view/624163)

- **Kumeu River, Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay 2009 Kumeu**

(/tastings/view/624164)

Glowing straw gold. Light and fresh on the nose. Sweet start. Pleasing and flattering without being absolutely true to house style. A tad duller. Grinds to a halt on the end rather. Sweet finish.

Drink 2015-2025

17 (/tastings/view/624164)

- **Kumeu River, Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay 2008 Kumeu**

(/tastings/view/624165)

Fully evolved nose. Just a little long in the tooth even though there is great freshness. A bit angular and has lost real focus. But there is very charming fruit.

Drink 2014-2023

17.5 (/tastings/view/624165)

- **Kumeu River, Maté's Vineyard Chardonnay 2007 Kumeu**

(/tastings/view/624166)

Melba's favourite wine and served for her 80th birthday.

Green gold. Hint of dishrags on the nose – first remotely off odour since the Estate 2011!! Quite rich and soft. Maybe slightly too much so. Pure green gold on the palate. Rich and round. Coppery end.

Drink 2013-2023

17.5 (/tastings/view/624166)