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THE WORLD'S BEST WINE MAGAZINE

September 2010

Decanter

www.decanter.com

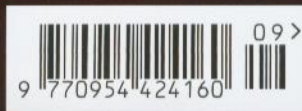
The best of New Zealand

The 20 most exciting producers
& the stunning wines to prove it

Michael
Broadbent's
400th
Decanter
column

**TWO GREAT NEW VINTAGES –
BAROLO '06 AND BEAUJOLAIS '09**

> Bordeaux A-listers abroad > Travelling in Alsace
> Top Sancerre 2009 and new-wave Spanish reds



Hawke's Bay

Te Mata

Te Mata is as focused on quality as it is on innovation. When winery owner John Buck made the first vintage of Coleraine in 1982, he opened the eyes of his peers to the potential for making top wine from a blend of Bordeaux varieties in Hawke's Bay. Good wines are now commonplace, but Coleraine still leads the pack with a style that grows more refined every year.



Te Mata, Coleraine Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot 2008 ★★★★★ (19)

Dense and lively red with layers of berry fruit and blackcurrant, together with a more subtle influence of floral, dried spice and cedar flavours. Now–2018. £37; BBR, F&R, NZH, Swg

Esk Valley

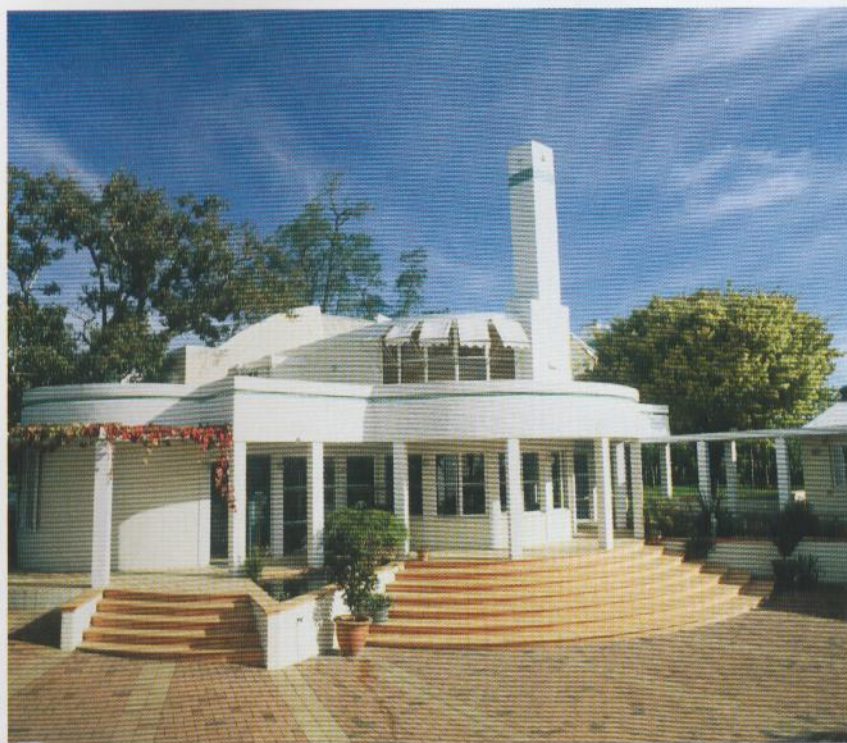
Winemaker Gordon Russell employs traditional winemaking methods such as open concrete fermenting tanks and hand plunging to build individual red wines with great textures and a character all of their own. Although his reds deservedly win more praise than his white wines, quality across the entire range is commendably high.

Esk Valley, Winemaker's Merlot-Malbec-Cabernet 2007 ★★★★★ (18.5)

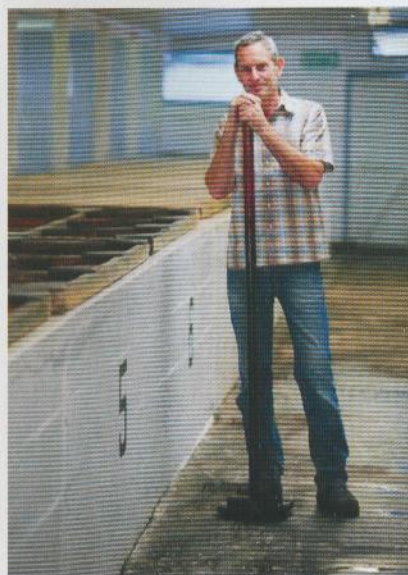
The winery's flagship wine is a small-production red known as The Terraces, but I've chosen a less expensive wine here that can be of equal quality in good vintages such as 2007. Dense, sweet fruit revealing an array of dark berry, plum, pepper, liquorice and spicy oak flavours. Quite accessible now but experience suggests the wine will become silkier and more complex with further bottle age. Now–2015. £8–£12.50; Amp, Cmb, Con, Evi, Fah, Hax, NZH, Ply, SLp, ThF, WDI, Wmb, YoW

Craggy Range

Craggy Range makes so many top wines from a wide number of grape varieties, it was an easy choice in my top 20 list. Choosing a top wine was more difficult. This quality-focused winemaker has developed vineyards in top sites in Hawke's Bay and Martinborough as well



Above: Te Mata is known for its Bordeaux blends. Left: Esk Valley's Gordon Russell next to his traditional concrete tanks



as building strong relationships with growers in Marlborough, Waipara and Central Otago.

Craggy Range, Le Sol Syrah 2008 ★★★★★ (19.5)

It is easy to recognise the power and complexity in this big and foreboding Syrah. Strong, sweet fruit is interwoven with ripe tannins. The wine coats the mouth and lingers long after it has been swallowed. I can identify an array of dark fruits, oriental spices, vanilla, bitter chocolate and very classy oak, but there is a myriad of other flavours yet to be released. This is a very serious Syrah indeed. Now–2018. £30; Far

Trinity Hill

Trinity Hill is one of Hawke's Bay's most innovative wineries, introducing Tempranillo, Roussanne, Marsanne and Touriga Nacional to the region and making top wines from each. Winemaker/owner John Hancock built his reputation on Chardonnay, and although Trinity Hill does make a terrific Chardonnay, it is now better known for its generously proportioned reds from the Gimblett Gravels district of Hawke's Bay.



Trinity Hill, Homage Syrah 2007 ★★★★★ (19.5)

Gerard Jaboulet, from that famed Rhône estate, provided some of the vine cuttings and much of the inspiration for a wine that is dedicated to his memory. Strongly spicy Syrah with dense, sweet fruit forming a solid core. The wine offers an impressive array of flavours. In addition to the black pepper and star anise there is violets, toast, coffee, blackcurrants and black plum. Big but supple with impressive potential. A relatively high (9%) proportion of Viognier adds to the wine's elegance and lifted aromatics. Now–2017. £55–£70; DDI, Hic, Swg





Above: Chardonnay specialist Kumeu River. Below: Nick Nobilo of VINOPTIMA

Auckland/ Northland Kumeu River

Kumeu River's very clever winemaker, Michael Brajkovich MW, has been making spectacular Chardonnay for a few decades. With more than a little help from brothers Milan and Paul Michael he has adapted viticulture and winemaking to produce top results from the Kumeu region north-west of Auckland.



**Kumeu River Mate's Vineyard
Chardonnay 2008** ★★★★★ (18.5)

This flagship wine is the product of a hillside vineyard and fastidious attention there and in the winery. Burgundy is the inspiration – the wine certainly gives a nod in that direction – but the result could more accurately be described as 'sophisticated Kiwi'. Big, yet supremely elegant, with pineapple, peach, mineral, spicy oak and roasted nut characters. Richly textured with a lingering finish. A class act. Now–2015. **£22–£25.95; BBR, Swg**

Gisborne Vinoptima

Armed with the proceeds from the sale of his share of the family winery, Nick Nobilo fulfilled a long-held dream to devote a winery to the production of one single-vineyard wine – Gewurztraminer. He has succeeded spectacularly, and you

only need to walk between manicured vine rows or stroll through his beautiful high-tech winery to understand why.

Vinoptima, Gewurztraminer 2006

★★★★ (18)

Powerful, complex wine with an array of fascinating flavours including liquorice, anise, Turkish delight, dried fruits and oriental spices. Now–2012. **£21.40–£34; BcW, BWC, DDi, Evy, Han, MBW, Neb, SLP, Vtc, W4U, WDi, You, Zel**

Waipara/ Canterbury

Pegasus Bay

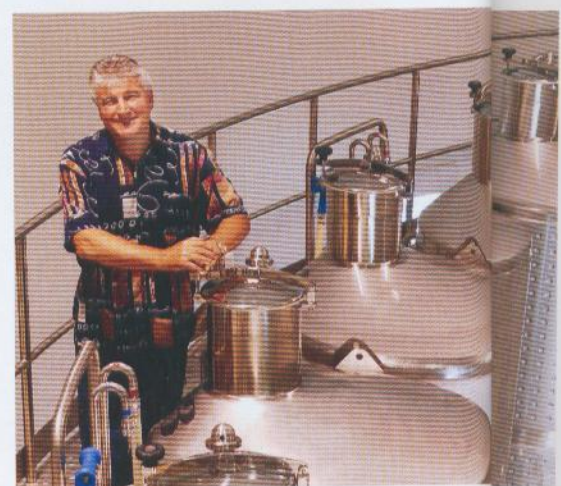
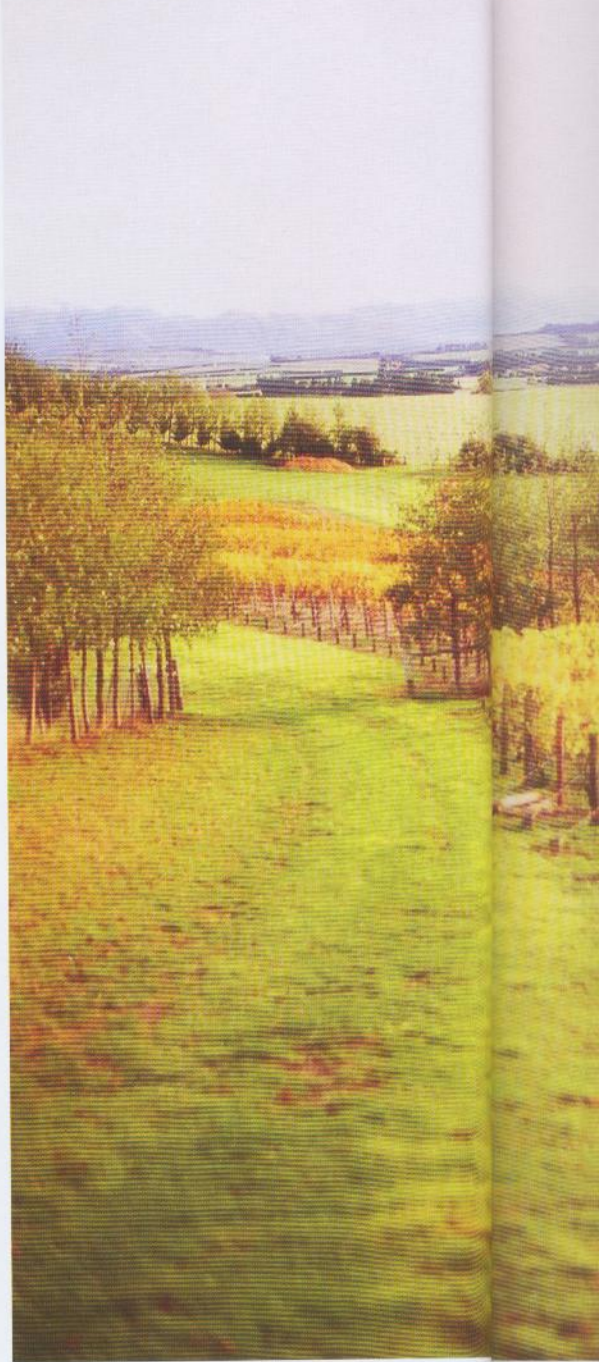
This long-established Waipara winery is the star of its region. Its strengths are experience, a good vineyard site and a husband-and-wife winemaking team who use sometimes unconventional methods to produce very individual wines with masses of character.



Pegasus Bay, Pinot Noir, Waipara 2007

★★★★★ (18.5)

This is not the winery's flagship Pinot Noir, but it sometimes beats its big brother and has been consistently good for many years. A much-lauded style with intensity and an array of plum, berry, oak, toasted nut, mineral and anise spice flavours. There's a delightfully rustic hint to the wine, perhaps from the fine, ripe





Above: cracking wines from Misha's Vineyard. Left: the tiny Bell Hill vineyard

tenacity in extracting top results from it, deserve to be recognised.

Bell Hill, Chardonnay, North Canterbury 2006 ★★★★★ (19)

A small harvest in 2006 produced an intense and very powerful Chardonnay. Vibrant wine with strong chalk/mineral characters interwoven with citrus, nutty lees and spicy French oak. Now–2013.

£39.95; Csr

Greystone

Greystone is a relative newcomer to Waipara but it has hit the ground running thanks to a great vineyard site and the obvious skills of both the viticulturist and winemaker, not to mention the winery's far-sighted founder. The winery's greatest strength is with the aromatic varieties, although Pinot Noir and even Syrah show potential. Greystone is able to consistently make pure, focused wines with impressive nerve.



Greystone, Late-Harvest Riesling, Waipara 2009 ★★★★★ (19)

This is a terrific wine with the finesse and purity of a top German Mosel Riesling. Moderately sweet and exquisitely balanced with knife-edged acidity. Rose petal florals, mineral and citrus flavours linger tantalisingly. A real stunner. Now–2016.

N/A UK; www.greystonewines.co.nz

Central Otago Misha's Vineyard

A new vineyard in the exciting Bendigo district of Central Otago. It's too early to decide whether the winery's quality is due to a stunning vineyard site or the skill

of ex-Ata Rangi winemaker Ollie Masters. Probably a combination of both. Whatever the reason, it's undeniable that Misha's is making cracking wines across the board.



Misha's Vineyard, Verismo Pinot Noir 2008 ★★★★★ (18.5)

Misha's flagship Pinot Noir is certainly the densest and most powerful wine in the range. An array of red and dark fruit flavours with liquorice and oriental spices. Very impressive wine with excellent ageing potential. Now–2015.

N/A UK; www.mishasvineyard.com

Mt Difficulty

Mt Difficulty is best known for its wonderfully intense, vibrant single-vineyard Pinot Noirs produced from vineyards planted at Bannockburn in the tailings of ancient gold mines. While they are undeniably good, I'm a long and ardent fan of Target Gully Riesling. Every vintage of this wine is a winner.

Mt Difficulty, Target Gully Riesling 2008 ★★★★★ (18.5)

Beautiful mineral and aromatic lime flavours with such finesse they tickle the palate with a seductive lightness. The wine defines flavour purity. A truly classic New Zealand Riesling that would raise the eyebrows of many Mosel winemakers. Now–2014. £11.50–£14.25; NZH, Swg, Whd

Felton Road

I'm often asked to name the best producer in a particular region. Felton Road makes it easy to come up with a definitive answer when the region in question is Central Otago. It gets harder when I'm asked to pick the top wine – every Pinot label seems to be a winner. Adding further strength to Felton's iconic status is the fact that it also makes some of the region's best Riesling and Chardonnay.

Felton Road, Cornish Point Pinot Noir 2008 ★★★★★ (19.5)

Cornish Point has dense red and black fruit flavours interwoven with exotic oriental spices and savoury characters that are difficult to describe but easy to appreciate. This is a powerful, richly textured Pinot Noir with an impressively lingering finish. Now–2016. £25–£39.40; Bib, CkO, CPW, CPy, Evy, F&R, Far, FWW, HgD, lmb, NZH, Unc, WDI

tannins, although it's pure class from beginning to end. Now–2015. £19.90–£25; Cdn, Cmb, Evy, F&R, F&M, NZH, Tch, Vik

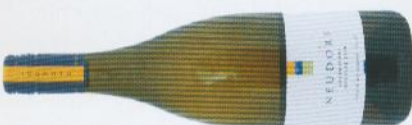
Bell Hill

A tiny vineyard sited on an abandoned chalk quarry in North Canterbury about 15 minutes drive west of Waipara. Owners Marcel Giesen and his wife Sherwyn, who does all the vineyard work, have battled the elements to make small parcels of often fabulous Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in most (though not all) vintages. I'm their biggest fan. Their vision in pioneering a new and exciting region, and their

Nelson

Neudorf

Neudorf makes Nelson's best wines across the board and the country's best Chardonnay (despite spirited challenges from producers such as Kumeu River and Bell Hill, also listed in my top 20). Neudorf has been at the top of its game for at least a few decades.



Neudorf, Moutere Chardonnay 2008

★★★★★ (19.5)

In the best vintages, such as 2008, this wine can challenge the best Burgundies from Puligny-Montrachet in quality and style. Rich, intense and complex with strong stone fruit, grapefruit, mineral, nutty lees and classy oak flavours. A powerful wine that once again leads the pack. Now-2016. £32-£35; F&M, Swg

Martinborough

Ata Rangi

Ata Rangi has been making great wine for almost 30 years. It was recognised at New Zealand's Pinot 2010 conference as one of the country's two top Pinot producers (the other was Felton Road, which I've also included in this list). The award Tipuranga Teitei o Aotearoa translates to 'Grand Cru'. No one could argue with the accolade. But it's not just Pinot it excels at – the Ata Rangi trademark of great finesse extends into its other wines, too, particularly Chardonnay and a red blend called Célèbre.

Ata Rangi, Pinot Noir 2008 ★★★★★ (18.5)

I love the mix of bright cherry and dark-fleshed plum flavours with violet floral characters that mark it as a very classy Pinot Noir indeed. It's a serious wine in an elegant style with good development potential. Now-2018.

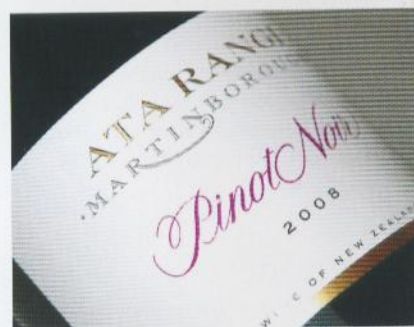
£30.70-£45; AGW, Dim, Evy, F&M, Hai, Hed, Imb, Maj, N&P, NZH, OzW, SLp, Smp, Swg, WBe, WDi, WMn, Wns

Dry River

Arguably New Zealand's most iconic winery. Founder Dr Neil McCallum has an almost fanatical approach to winemaking, using methods that often fly in the face of convention. As a fellow winemaker recently commented, 'I may



Above: Campbell's top Kiwi Chardonnay comes from Neudorf. Left: New Zealand Pinot stalwart Ata Rangi



not agree with his methods but there's no question that he makes outstanding wine.' I chose the Gewurz but could have easily picked Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Pinot Noir or Syrah.

Dry River, Gewurztraminer 2009

★★★★★ (19.5)

This has great power and subtlety. Rather shy on the nose but the palate displays a peacock's tail of exotic flavours that transcend the lychee/Turkish Delight characters normally found in other local examples. It's hard to describe the array of floral and spice flavours which are conversely easy to appreciate. Wonderful gentle texture and a finish that lingers tantalisingly. Now-2015. £26.50; J&B, Rae

Escarpment

Escarpment founder/winemaker Larry McKenna is regarded as 'Mr Pinot Noir' in New Zealand, recognising his long and passionate affair with the variety. He builds power, complexity and longevity into his wines to such a degree that he is the envy of many winemakers. McKenna left Martinborough Vineyards nearly a decade ago to develop his own vineyard and winery in nearby Te Muna where he continues to make great Pinot Noir.



Escarpment, Kupe Pinot Noir 2008

★★★★★ (18.5)

Escarpment's top Pinot, made only when vintage conditions allow. More elegant than blockbuster, with great purity and minerality through cherry, plum, floral and spice flavours. Supple with subtle power. Great potential. Now-2017. £19.95-£22; Evy, Har, Hax, Hed, L&S, PLG, Swg

Martinborough Vineyards

One of a small band of producers, like Te Mata and Neudorf (also listed here), that has been making great wine for a long time – 20 to 30 years is a long time by Kiwi standards. Martinborough Vineyards' wines have always excelled and are quietly gaining greater quality and sophistication with every vintage.

Martinborough Vineyards, Pinot Noir 2007 ★★★★★ (19)

An elegant yet dense wine with candied cherry, plum, oriental spices and nutty oak flavours. Powerful and rather linear with a very long finish. A super-classy wine made with a light touch. Now-2015. £22-£25; Har, Maj, NZH, WSo

For full details of UK stockists, see p114

Bob Campbell MW has been New Zealand's foremost wine authority for 40 years. He is a wine judge, educator, author and writer