

WHAT IS IT ABOUT *Pinot Noir?*

Unhinged devotion has always been a part of the Pinot story, on the part of both producers and consumers, and this tasting certainly raised passions among our panel. The consensus: New Zealand Pinot's power to enthral is only increasing. The 2007s were standouts, but, while not as uniformly strong, the 2008 vintage also threw up plenty of excellent wines from all the principal Pinot regions. No fewer than 71 Pinots of the 244 entered achieved four stars or above... an outstanding result.



NZ PINOT NOIR

- ★★★★★ VIDAL MARLBOROUGH PINOT NOIR 2007 \$24.99
- ★★★★ ALLAN SCOTT MARLBOROUGH PINOT NOIR 2008 \$20-\$22
- ★★★★ BOATSHED BAY BY GOLDWATER MARLBOROUGH PINOT NOIR 2008 \$22-\$23
- ★★★★ DASHWOOD MARLBOROUGH PINOT NOIR 2008 \$19.99-\$22
- ★★★★ SHINGLE PEAK RESERVE RELEASE PINOT NOIR 2008 \$21.95
- ★★★★ TERRACE EDGE PINOT NOIR 2008 \$22.50-\$24.50

TASTING RESULTS NZ PINOT NOIR

5 STARS OUTSTANDING	13
4½ STARS EXCELLENT	18
4 STARS VERY GOOD	40
3 STARS GOOD	60
NO AWARD	113
TOTAL	244



JOHN BELSHAM



KATE RADBURN



DAN DINEEN



ANDREW PARKINSON

TASTING PANEL

Handpicked by regular chair John Belsham, winemaker-owner of Foxes Island Wines, the panel kept its faculties intact under severe Pinot provocation. The judges were the experienced Kate Radburnd (newly appointed chair of judges for the Royal Easter Show Wine Awards) and Dan Dineen, owner-winemaker with his wife, Sarah-Kate, at Maude Wines in Wanaka. The role of associate judge was carried out by Andrew Parkinson, fine-wine consultant for Negotiants.

NIGEL GARDINER

BOTTLE PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON CREAGHAN, FAIRFAX STUDIOS



NZ PINOT NOIRS

- 1 ★★★★★ WILD EARTH CENTRAL OTAGO PINOT NOIR 2007
- 2 ★★★★★ PEREGRINE KAREAREA PINOT NOIR 2007
- 2 ★★★★★ SANDIHURST WAIPARA PINOT NOIR 2007
- 4 ★★★★★ VIDAL MARLBOROUGH PINOT NOIR 2007
- 5 ★★★★★ JULICHER 99 ROWS MARTINBOROUGH PINOT NOIR 2008
- 6 ★★★★★ CLOUDY BAY PINOT NOIR 2007
- 7 ★★★★★ WOONG TREE PINOT NOIR 2008
- 8 ★★★★★ MOUNT DOTTREL CENTRAL OTAGO PINOT NOIR 2007
- 9 ★★★★★ GRASSHOPPER ROCK CENTRAL OTAGO PINOT NOIR 2008
- 10 ★★★★★ THORNBURY CENTRAL OTAGO PINOT NOIR 2008

PINOT ROYALE

Carol Bunn, the winemaker we dubbed the Queen of Pinot last year, is still very settled on her throne, having made 12 of the 71 wines rated four stars or above in this year's tasting, including three in the Top Ten. A regal effort, especially when you consider the number of Pinots she's responsible for as head winemaker of Central Otago contract winery VinPro. "We have around 100 ferments going at one time, which can be a logistical nightmare," Carol says. She recently escaped to a 16-week Celia Hay course at the New Zealand School of Food and Wine. When we spoke to her she was making sourdough bread. "You've got to prepare your yeast properly and have patience... just like Pinot," she says.



★★★★★

WILD EARTH CENTRAL OTAGO PINOT NOIR

2007 \$38-\$42 | 4-6
This was the act that stopped the show. Every judge gave this accomplished Pinot five stars in the first round of tasting; the applause grew with each encore. Broad and concentrated and deft in structure, with highlights of bay leaf and sweet aromatic herbs adding intrigue to a dark berryfruit centre, it trod a middle path between masculine and feminine, urgent and languid, yin and yang. A life-affirming wine, if ever there was one.



2 ★★★★★ PEREGRINE KAREAREA PINOT NOIR 2007

(Central Otago) \$65 | 8-10
This blend from small parcels in various Central Otago sub-regions is only made in standout years. Red and black fruit characters are sensitively framed by warm, spicy oak to offer an elegant, lengthy mouthful. Cellar door and online only.

2 ★★★★★ SANDIHURST WAIPARA PINOT NOIR 2007

(Canterbury) \$29-\$35 | 4-6
Sandihurst is on the Canterbury Plains, but its best Pinots are made with grapes grown elsewhere, in this case Waipara. This suave, virile expression has great flavour complexity and would make any duck meal memorable.

4 ★★★★★ VIDAL MARLBOROUGH PINOT NOIR 2007

\$24.99 | 2-4
Vidal's Pinots (they make another using Hawke's Bay fruit) always offer excellent value. This one has the volume turned down and the charm turned up - a soft, bright, juicy wine that John Belsham described as "very sensitive". Try it with smoked salmon.



5 ★★★★★ JULICHER 99 ROWS MARTINBOROUGH PINOT NOIR

2008 \$27-\$30 | 5
They're calling 2008 a great year for Martinborough Pinot and this wine backs up the claim. Impressive quality at a good price. The vibrant, chunky fruit presence, laced with sweet and savoury notes, comes cloistered in a silky, sophisticated texture.

MINDING HIS PINOTS AND QS

Quintin Quider's mother talked his father out of giving their son the middle name Quincy. It would have been a Q too far, she felt. Californian Quintin and his English-born wife, Avril, took a more grounded approach when it came to naming their children (Chelsea and Wesley), and their Central Otago winery, Wild Earth. "Central Otago is so beautiful and unspoiled. That is our terroir," says Quintin. "We don't manipulate the wine; what you see is what you get." In his earlier years it was the sea, not the earth, that appealed to Quintin: he surfed, took a science degree, became a commercial diver. When he and Avril settled in New Zealand in 1992, initially on

Stewart Island, Quintin dove for paua. But a longstanding dream to own a winery was realised in 1998 when the couple bought vineyard land in Central Otago. The first vintage of Wild Earth Pinot Noir arrived in 2004. The wine is made with fruit from two estate vineyards - one on Felton Rd, the other north of Lowburn on the Wanaka Rd. Wild Earth Pinot (Michelle Richardson was consultant winemaker and blender for the winning wine - Steve Davies is the current winemaker) has built up an enviable record of show success and demand will no doubt rise after this latest triumph. That may mean queues, Quintin.