

Wine & Cheese by TCC's August 2008 Wine Club

This month we're bringing you two selections from New Zealand that will quench your thirst during the height of summer. Marlborough is New Zealand's most acclaimed winemaking region. It has a unique combination of free-draining, stony soils, long hours of sunshine, and a moderate coastal climate. Even though New Zealand vineyards are the most southerly in the world, they share latitudes similar to Italy and a climate similar to Bordeaux or Burgundy only cooler. This climate allows grapes to ripen at a slower pace and gain rich fruit flavors while maintaining a balancing acidity.

The first selection is the Dashwood Sauvignon Blanc. Dashwood is a second label for Vavasour Wines, a well renowned winery that was the first to plant vines in the Awatere Valley, a premium grape growing region of New Zealand. Dashwood wines are a blend of grapes from the Awatere Valley and the neighboring Wairau Valley. The Awatere Valley fruit adds a cleansing minerality to the wines while the Wairau Valley fruit adds lovely aromatics. The chief winemaker for Vavasour and Dashwood Wines, Glenn Thomas, has a direct tie to our second selection, Stoneleigh Vineyard Pinot Noir. Thomas was involved in the making of the first Sauvignon Blanc out of Marlborough in 1986, release by Stoneleigh Vineyard.

The Stoneleigh Vineyard is situated in the heart of Marlborough. Stoneleigh Vineyard wines are said to be "made with the magic of sunstones" since the vineyards are located on sunstones that were once the bed of an ancient river. The sunstones cover the vineyards and reflect heat upwards to help speed up the ripening process. The stones also stress the vineyards, only allowing the vines to produce a small amount of fruit using the plants' full resources. This coupled with the cool evenings of the region allow for intensely flavored wines with distinct minerality and structure.

In the following pages, there is some information regarding your wine club selections. First, you'll find a map* showing the region from where the wines were produced. Next, you will see a description of each wine, some technical information on the wines, and food pairing suggestions.

As always, your feedback is encouraged. Please call us or stop by with your comments regarding our selections.

Have a great month!
The Gang at TCC



Wine & Cheese by TCC



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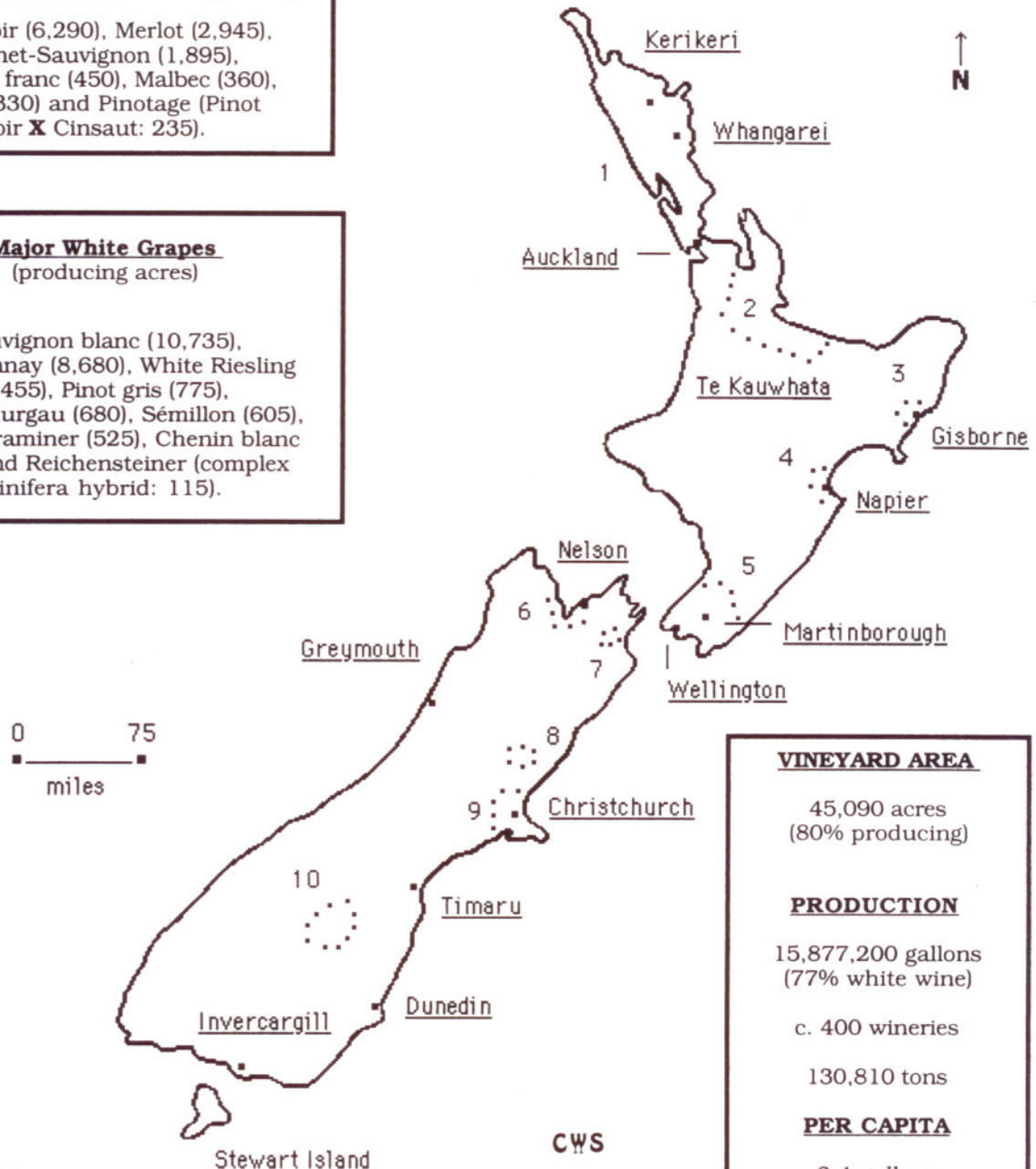
#132 -- NEW ZEALAND

Major Red Grapes (producing acres)

Pinot noir (6,290), Merlot (2,945), Cabernet-Sauvignon (1,895), Cabernet franc (450), Malbec (360), Syrah (330) and Pinotage (Pinot noir X Cinsaut: 235).

Major White Grapes (producing acres)

Sauvignon blanc (10,735), Chardonnay (8,680), White Riesling (1,455), Pinot gris (775), Müller-Thurgau (680), Sémillon (605), Gewürztraminer (525), Chenin blanc (290) and Reichensteiner (complex vinifera hybrid: 115).



VINEYARD AREA

45,090 acres
(80% producing)

PRODUCTION

15,877,200 gallons
(77% white wine)

c. 400 wineries

130,810 tons

PER CAPITA

3.4 gallons

2002

OFFICIAL WINE REGIONS (percent of total vineyard land--major varieties in order *)

NORTH ISLAND -- (43.4%)

1. Auckland (incl. Northland: 3% -- Ch/M/C-S/Cf)
2. Waikato/Bay of Plenty (0.9% -- C-S/Ch/Sb/ChB)
3. Gisborne (11.7% -- Ch/M-Th/Mus/M)
4. Hawke's Bay (24.2% -- Ch/M/C-S/Sb)
5. Wellington/Wairarapa (3.6% -- Pn/Ch/Sb/R)

SOUTH ISLAND -- (54%)

6. Nelson (2.9% -- Ch/Sb/Pn/WR)
7. Marlborough (43.1% -- Sb/Ch/Pn/WR)
8. Canterbury (3% -- Pn/Ch/WR/Pg)
9. Waipara (0.6% -- Pn/Ch/Sb/WR)
10. (Central) Otago (4.4% -- Pn/Ch/Pg/WR)

(* the remaining fraction (2.6%) is in areas listed as "Unknown")

Dashwood Sauvignon Blanc

Type:	White Wine
Varietal composition:	100% Sauvignon Blanc
Vineyard Location:	57% Awatere Valley, 43% Wairua Valley, Marlborough
Vintage:	2006
Country:	New Zealand
Alcohol:	13.5%
Age-ability:	Drinks best now

Winemaking Philosophy and Vinification Details

Glenn Thomas is the winery's Chief Winemaker. He studied Oenology in Australia and worked at Australian wineries before making his much anticipated move to New Zealand. He quickly developed a love for New Zealand wine. "The concentration and intensity of fruit flavours from New Zealand were amazing, it was so exciting and vibrant".

The 2006 growing season in Marlborough was one of the earliest on record since bud break occurred several weeks earlier than average. The region also experienced warmer than average temperatures that spring and summer. This, coupled with the cooler temperatures before harvest, allowed for the Sauvignon Blanc to ripen fully yet maintain a balancing acidity.

The wine is aged in stainless steel to allow for the crisp fruit flavors of the wine to come through.

Tasting Notes

This is a very classic, New Zealand style Sauvignon Blanc. It has ripe citrus, grapefruit, passion fruit, and a hint of green pea on the nose. These aromas follow through to the palate, rich and round with a long finish balanced by the perfect amount of acidity and minerality.

Pairing Suggestions

Try with Caprese salad made with fresh mozzarella and garden-fresh tomatoes. Also, pair with grilled halibut, roast lemon chicken, sushi, and fresh guacamole. A fabulous match for arugula salad sprinkled with feta cheese!

For this month's cheese club selection, pair this wine with the Buttermilk Blue cheese. The tangy lemon of the cheese matches perfectly with the citrus and passion fruit flavors of the wine.

Stoneleigh Vineyard Pinot Noir

Type:	Red Wine
Varietal composition:	100% Pinot Noir
Vineyard Location:	Rapaura area, north side of Wairau Valley
Vintage:	2006
Country:	New Zealand
Alcohol:	13.2%
Age-ability:	Drink now or cellar for 5 years

Winemaking Philosophy and Vinification Details

The grapes for this wine were machine and hand-harvested. In order to fully extract the flavor and color of the grapes, they were cold-soaked for five to six days. The wine was then put through primary fermentation and then malolactic fermentation. The wine was then aged for six months in French oak to add a subtle toastiness to the wine. The winery believes in a minimalist winemaking approach to highlight, not mask, the fruit's unique characteristics.

Tasting Notes

This wine has a lovely deep ruby red color with aromas of black cherry, raspberry, and red plums. Dark cherry and red berry fruit are the dominating flavors with a hint of toasty spice on the finish. It has a well-structured richness yet maintains the softness of a wine true to the Pinot Noir varietal.

Pairing Suggestions

This wine is a perfect match to marinated grilled Portobello mushrooms, grilled salmon, hamburgers, and gnocchi with Gorgonzola. Also, try with aged Provolone, Morbier, and Trugole cheeses.

For this month's cheese club, pair this wine with the Montasio Oro del Tempo. The nutty, fruity, butterscotch notes of the cheese are a delicious match to the red berry fruit of the wine.

Enjoy!