

THE INDEPENDENT WINE MONTHLY

There is no getting away from the paradox that the manner in one which judges wine, in terms of a critical assessment, is far from how it is intended to be drunk. Wine is meant to be enjoyed with food and friends, in celebration and solace, lingered over and savoured. Clearly, any attempt at impartial assessment rules out most, if not all of this and by association introduces a layer of seriousness and artificiality that is at odds with the convivial aspect of wine. Of course wine engages at an intellectual level and it is from this that critical assessment arises but the slight pompousness and often self-aggrandizing importance (not to mention pseudo-profundity) with which many judgements are made seems rather to miss the point.

The nascent movement away from scoring wine must surely help in this respect (and is a notion we are still debating here at the IWM) and certainly Jane and I live in hope that readers take the trouble to examine the actual reviews rather than just fix upon the score. We also do our very best to make our judgements based on the whole of the wine...its character, its personality, its *feel*. But we are also fully conscious of the curious art we practice and how the way we go about it differs from how we ourselves enjoy wine when it is in its natural context. We try to take that into account, and wherever possible do look at wines over time and with food; we can only hope that our own profound, important appraisals act to convey a wine's true character, not just the sum of its parts.

Rock Ferry Wines

www.rockferry.co.nz

A new label (to us), Rock Ferry Wines was started by Tom and Fiona Hutchinson who planted a vineyard in the Wairau Plains and subsequently extended their portfolio with a vineyard in Central Otago's Bendigo region. The winery website lists a huge number of varieties grown: sauvignon blanc, pinot gris, chardonnay, riesling, pinot blanc, pinot noir, gruner veltliner, viognier, tempranillo and nebbiolo. Whilst the presentation of the wines is impressive, and certainly none of the wines was sub-standard, there really wasn't much to get excited about. Perhaps Rock Ferry is spreading itself a little too thinly?

2010 Sauvignon Blanc

Marlborough

\$25.00

15.5

JS: Quite a tight mineral style, with dried herbs, lemon and chalk on the nose. Tightly focussed on the palate with strong citrus and lemon peel, some savoury edges giving interest dry and with good length. Not showy, but showing a modest level of complexity.

EJ: Lime and talc nose, capsicum and cut grass undercut with a sweet, almost confectionary note. The palate is very dry and minerally/herbal which though slightly at odds with the nose, is pleasant with good length and a crisp lemony finish. Not especially memorable.

2010 Viognier **Central Otago** **\$29.00** **14.0**

JS: A moderately intense aroma of fresh orange blossom, citrus and a touch of musk. The palate is quite dilute and lacks flesh. Firm acid but not much texture.

EJ: Quite a reticent nose of orange blossom & jasmine, very light and with a slightly odd character I couldn't quite place. The palate is equally light and fairly undistinguished; touch of viscosity but little real fruit intensity. Moderate length; not much value.

2010 Pinot Noir **Central Otago** **\$39.00** **14.5**

JS: Mid-ruby. Cranberry, redcurrant and raspberry fruit, very much in the red berry spectrum, but overlaid with quite noticeable vanilla oak. Some pretty florals but wine lacks concentration and ends up being a little clumsy.

EJ: Nose of soft plum and sour cherry with light spice. Gentle palate with moderate intensity, balanced acid and fairly fine fruit tannins but slightly prominent oak. Quite nicely done but again not particularly memorable and nor offering enough value to make you bother.

Rippon Vineyard

www.rippon.co.nz

Perhaps Rippon's path might offer guidance: having started wide, it has over the past 30 years narrowed its varietal focus with the vineyards now dominated by pinot noir and riesling. There can be no doubt the combination of experience and increasing specialisation has paid dividends for the Wanaka producer; the wines show ever more complexity, character, poise and general deliciousness. The impression given is a producer confident in their work and focused on making wines for drinking from grapes expressive of their terroir. A rarer beast than you'd think...

2010 Jeunesse Riesling **Wanaka** **\$25.00** **18.0**

JS: Loathe though I am to use French descriptors for NZ wines (because it always sounds so pretentious), the Jeunesse has more of a whiff of Alsace about the nose. Many NZ winemakers are seeking to make the 'germanic-style' of riesling i.e. with low alcohol and residual sweetness, and whilst there is nothing wrong with that, it is a treat to taste a fully dry wine. There is a whiff of ripe apple, melting butter, mineral and wet stone. Very taut and mineral, mouth-watering acidity, linear and crisp finishing with a pie crust edge.

EJ: Opens with a slight struck match/SO2 character, a creamy nose with granny smith apples and lemons; rich, dry palate with nice weight and length. Elegant, with fine balance and a lovely delicate subtlety, this is very stylish riesling – should be a real stunner with a few years in the bottle.

2010 Riesling **Wanaka** **\$33.00** **18.5**

JS: A step up in concentration, the nose of the 2010 Riesling is slightly more concentrated and dense. The palate is a delight; linear and tight with a strong steely mineral spine, a touch of lime and finishes with an almost dried herb character.

EJ: The initial struck match note dissipates revealing stony apple and touch of beeswax/mineral/petrol complexity. A very inviting nose that you can't help but keep coming back to; lovely evolution. Stylish dry limey palate with excellent, finely balanced acidity and

immense poise; a nicely gentle herbal note on the finish. Lovely intensity and length, this is a superb example of the variety and style.

2009 Pinot Noir **Wanaka** **\$55.00** **18.5**

JS: A heavenly nose of wild strawberry, violets and raspberry that really opens up in the glass, the florals becoming more pronounced with time. The palate is concentrated and dense but has a real spine of mineral acid, so often lacking in NZ pinot noir

EJ: An immediately attractive nose; spicy, showing lots of strawberry and raspberry with a ripe stemmy note. Very pretty and unmistakably pinot. Lovely dry palate with red cherry and again the ripe stemmy character. Fine tannins and lovely acidity give structure and show great balance. Not big or bold or dark and all the better for it.

2009 Emma's Block Pinot Noir **Wanaka** **\$82.00** **19.0**

JS: Deeply fruited on the nose, less florality but more exuberant red cherry and cranberry with a touch of exotic spices too. There is a hint of oak that adds just an ever-so-slightly creamy layer too. The palate is very youthful with the sweet yet mineral edged fruit supported by silky tannins.

EJ: Again, masses of strawberry and perhaps a touch more cherry. Opens up beautifully in the glass too. Gentle spice, oak is a very light touch. Gentle sweet fruit, moderate intensity and surprising length as it seems at first to be quite light. Fine and delicate but with satisfying firmness and a distinct savoury undercurrent – a million miles away from the fruit-bomb styles associated with the greater CO region and sacrificing nothing for it.

2009 Tinker's Field Pinot Noir **Wanaka** **\$95.00** **19.0+**

JS: More brambles and dried herbs on the nose with a touch of the exotic again; cherry liqueur, star anise and cardamom. Beautifully poised with the fruit supported by acid not alcohol nor tannin. But deceptively structured.

EJ: Shows slightly more strawberry on the nose and again a lovely rich and exotic spiciness. Dried herbs too. Slightly denser and richer in intensity on the palate than the EB, and though still very much in the red-fruit spectrum this has more dark cherry. Charming, perfectly composed and displaying a lovely mineral backbone along with excellent length. Sophisticated and incredibly drinkable.

(NB: *Mature Vine Pinot Noir* is in small print on all the above pinot labels.)

Matua Valley

www.matua.co.nz

It was the dim and distant past when we last reviewed wines from Matua Valley so it was something of a surprise to get these two new premium wine releases out of the blue. Perhaps Matua wanted to wait for foreign endorsement before seeking the opinions of local critics and buoyed by success in foreign wine shows, (Decanter World Wine Awards for the Pinot Noir and the International Cool Climate Wine Show for the Sauvignon Blanc), decided to unleash the pair onto the local market. Keen to reinforce the 'sense of place', each wine has geographical co-ordinates printed around the capsule.

2010 Wairau Valley Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough **\$29.99** **17.0+**

JS: Incredibly pungent; freshly squeezed limes but also a spicy, almost curry leaf aroma. A leesy, creamy note, some mealy complexity which I am not sure doesn't detract from the pristine quality.

EJ: Bold nose bursting with tropical fruit and an exotic spiciness. The palate is mercifully dry and very weighty, laden with pineapple, citrus, green bean, cut grass it has a crisp minerally finish and pretty good length. Smart and clearly intended to be 'serious' though I felt this somewhat unfortunately undermined by the label stating 'small parcels of fruit are *unearthed* in our vineyards', which just made me think of peanuts.

2010 Bannockburn Single Vineyard Pinot Noir Central Otago \$69.99 16.5

JS: The colour is huge; very dark luxurious purple, and the nose sits this wine very much in the super ripe opulent damson and plum spectrum. There is no doubt the palate has intensity and richness but at the expense of florals and perfume. The price is a bit of a surprise.

EJ: Very rich and intense nose in the dark & brooding mould, lots of poached plum & blueberry. Inviting with plenty going on but in a fur coat/no knickers sort of way – a 'pinot as merlot' nose. Surprisingly a lighter and tighter palate than the nose would suggest, with sappy dark cherry and a crème de cassis finish. Very sweet fruited, tending to cloying, prompting the glass of water reflex. Likely to please some but too expensive and delivers gloss at the expense of charm.

Forrest Wines

www.forrest.co.nz

Another producer encompassing a plethora of varieties and in this case too, labels. This particular wine hails from John Forrest's eponymous Collection series, which aims to showcase the best 'the land, the vines and the vintage have to offer'. Grapes are sourced from a variety of regions; there is also a chardonnay from Waitaki fruit.

2006 Wairau Chardonnay Marlborough \$50.00 17.0

JS: Pale lemon, the nose has plenty creamy oak upfront, giving a bran biscuit, nutmeg edge. There is a firm backbone of acidity that lifts the citrus and red grapefruit flavours and the wine is surprisingly vibrant. The only downside is the palate is shows a wee bit of heat.

EJ: Delicious nose of lemon meringue, bran biscuit and hazelnut. Finely structured palate with a lemony richness, burnt butter and some stonefruit/yellow apples. Good length. Would have liked a little more complexity and intensity for the price, and age too, but perhaps it is churlish to complain given the effort made to hold back this wine (be good to see more of that) and pleasing to see it looking fresh too.

Neudorf Vineyards

www.neudorf.co.nz

A brace of pinot gris from Neudorf who continue to prove that, in the right hands, this oft-maligned variety can make a very attractive wine.

2010 Maggie's Block Pinot Gris Nelson \$26.00 17.0+

JS: I like this wine for its purity and simplicity; there is plenty of ripe conference pear and red apple fruit flavours, a hint of florals with some jasmine and honeysuckle and a smooth silky palate showing just a touch of sweetness. The charm of this wine lies in its straightforward bright character. An uncomplicated wine and all the better for it.

EJ: Pretty nose of baked apple and ripe pear, white flowers and spice. Off-dry with a lovely fresh, crisp nature, it displays nice weight and length - this is a wine that just hits the spot. Youthful, accomplished and certainly very attractive drinking now. Would that more NZ pinot gris producers would take a leaf out of Neudorf's book...

2010 Moutere Pinot Gris **Nelson** **\$30.00** **17.0**

JS: The more 'serious' of the pair, whatever that means, the Moutere wine was fermented with wild yeasts with a portion in large old oak. Although only a small percentage, this definitely contributes a slight mealy/bran biscuit edge. A more complex, thought provoking wine though perhaps lacks the hedonistic quality of the Maggie's Block.

EJ: A step-up in intensity and a change in style for this label. Fragrant nose, of similar character but more intense and a bit more biscuity complexity with some older oak in evidence; lots of spice too. Again off-dry with a nice crisp apply finish though a tad keen, in a sucking-on-lemons sort of way, on the finish. Good length and certainly smartly done, as you'd expect from this producer, but something about the finish lead me to mark it down a little.

Dog Point Vineyard

www.dogpoint.co.nz

Dog Point are regarded by most wine critics (and wine lovers) as one of the top New Zealand labels yet nudge the average local wine drinker and we would hazard a guess they would never have heard of this Marlborough (though almost certainly would the owners' previous haunts). The admirably succinct website suggests perhaps self-promotion is second to making good wine. Another rare beast.

2009 Section 94 **Marlborough** **\$32.95** **18.0**

JS: A honker of a wine with a huge, multi-layered nose of struck match, lemon peel, a tad of gun smoke, floral, nougat and white peach. Then the palate comes as a bit of a surprise; surprisingly linear and tight with some gooseberry and grapefruit with a limey edge fruit. Very good acidity and tightness. Much too young but with great potential.

EJ: Bold nose of struck match, creamy brown biscuit and mixed peel with an undercurrent of ripe gooseberry and cooked capsicum. Dry, tight palate, quite rich but cut through by crisp lemony acidity. The pithy stony finish is long and has a moreish dryness. Very complex; opens up nicely and while I found it very interesting to taste and drink and it was undoubtedly beautifully crafted, I can't say I actually *enjoyed* it at this point in time, despite this being a personally favourite style. It is also quite fascinating to ponder the (cognoscenti) popularity this wine enjoys given not only its significant departure from the MSB norm but also the fact it is a rather challenging style.

2009 Chardonnay **Marlborough** **\$32.95** **18.0+**

JS: The nose of the 09 Chardonnay is very tight and elegant with some stone fruit and ripe apple but little influence of oak. Very shy at this stage, and really not showing much at this stage. The palate is minerally and taut, with very firm acidity lifting the profile. A lovely creamy texture, a subtle wine with years ahead of it.

EJ: Gentle nose of vanilla-scented melon, some lovely mealy nutty notes too. Rich hazelnut, grapefruit and banana bread palate with a nice mineral thread. Elegant and ripe, this is quite a caressing wine, offering lovely balance and a gentle richness. Great length, like the Section 94, it has a lovely dry finish that leaves you wanting more. Lovely, though still very youthful

& tight at present, would look forward to seeing it in a few more years when one presumes it will really hit its straps.

2009 Pinot Noir **Marlborough** **\$41.95** **18.0**

JS: A really pretty pinot noir. The nose has quite a strong stemmy, almost herbal note which I find very attractive and gives the wine succulence and a savoury edge. Perhaps just a touch of oak poking out at this stage? The palate is refreshing and lifted; cranberry, some stewed rhubarb. Very lifted and bright on entry but with a lovely core of fruit sweetness mid palate. The tannins are beautifully handled, integrated and harmonious. Great length, this wine is much too young and needs a good couple of years in bottle to show at its best.

EJ: Nice sappy nose, with plenty of red cherry, raspberry and cranberry fruit, and a touch of five spice. The palate is quite light and beautifully elegant though with plenty of ripeness; a good spicy richness towards mid-palate, again great length and superb balance. It is heartening to see a lighter, pretty wine that doesn't sacrifice any character and intensity in its delicacy and restraint.

Bannock Brae Estate

www.bannockbrae.co.nz

A solid offering across the Bannockburn winery's portfolio. The Goldfields designation denotes their 'second tier wines'.

2009 Goldfields Dry Riesling **Bannockburn** **\$20.00** **15.0**

JS: Tight, light mineral and lemon. Some citrus and grapefruit. The palate has a nice core of fruit sweetness and though the wine is labelled as dry, there is just a wee hint of sweetness fleshing out the flavours.

EJ: Lightish honey and citrus blossom nose, very light in style and not really all that dry (indeed, the tasting notes show 7g/L residual sugar) and quite nicely handled acid, which makes a nice change from some of the recent enamel-stripping examples we have encountered from CO. A gentle aperitif/lunchtime wine which was solid, if not especially memorable.

2010 Goldfields Cathy's Rosé **Bannockburn** **\$20.00** **15.0**

JS: A pretty, simple wine with a nice strawberry and red cherry character. A touch off dry but pretty and clean.

EJ: Pale strawberry in both colour and aroma, some light candyfloss notes too. Pretty and simple with a slight and spicy palate.

2009 Goldfields Pinot Noir **Bannockburn** **\$25.00** **17.5**

JS: Classic Otago Pinot nose of dried herbs, dark plum almost a touch of liquorice and spice. Fleshy and juicy with a nice core of fruit sweetness cedar and spice.

EJ: Dark cherry and mint chocolate, liqueur cherries, tending to OTT but saved by a nice sappy stemmy palate with dense dark fruit and spice. Palate isn't as intense as the nose implies which lets it down a bit but length is good and a great price.

2009 Barrel Selection Pinot Noir **Bannockburn** **\$45.00** **17.0-**

JS: Double the price of the Goldfields pinot noir, this seems to have double the oak too though the technical specifications show only 35% went in to new barrels. Savoury and dense but just a wee bit lacking florality and perfume, the combination of oak and tannin giving

quite a dry, slightly chewy character. Perhaps the wine will develop and mature with a couple of years in bottle I am not convinced there is the concentration of fruit to support long term ageing.

EJ: Though a similar character to the Goldfields, this is more closed and certainly has more oak apparent on the bouquet, extra grip and weight on the palate, plus darker fruit & a bit more plum. Quite nice handling overall ensures it isn't over the top and I like the stemminess which balances the dark fruit but again just not enough intensity, in this instance to carry off those extra bells & whistles. Trouser the \$15 and grab the Goldfields.

Domain Road Vineyard

www.domainroad.co.nz

Also based in Bannockburn, Graeme and Gillian Crosbie first planted vines on their Domain Road property in 2002. Winemaker Peter Bartle is tasked with producing a range of varieties; his rieslings and pinot noirs seem the most successful and were what was on offer to us.

2010 The Water Race Dry Riesling \$23.00 15.5

JS: A really lovely nose; sherbet lemon, nectarine. The palate is bright and clean, perhaps pulls up a bit short? Steely and clean and a touch of liniment. Fairly dry but not rasping or phenolic

EJ: Very nice nose: deliciously aromatic with plenty of mandarin peel and lime blossom. Palate is just off-dry and surprisingly weighty but alas rather than intensity this brings a certain clumsiness which is a shame as the nose really is lovely. A keen, pithy finish. Although individual components are quite good the whole thing just doesn't quite hang together

2010 Duffers Creek Riesling \$23.00 17.0-

JS: Ripe fruit almost into the tropical spectrum. Mango, pineapple. Very sherbety and bright a touch of residual sweetness. More successful overall than the bone dry.

EJ: Curiously, by contrast the nose of this riesling was rather dull; light and tropical in spectrum it leads to a palate that whilst also light, has a definite, lively riesling character and moderate length. If you were could add the nose of the Water Race to the Duffers Creek palate, you would likely have a much better combination overall. The slightly disappointing nose notwithstanding, this wine was a more coherent and successful example.

2008 Pinot Noir \$38.00 17.0-

JS: A pretty nose. Cranberry, plum and raspberry. Not too much oak, the tannin is ripe and well managed and integrates well with the fruit.

EJ: Noticeable oak elements on the nose (coconutty toastiness) alongside red fruits and a hint of florals/rose petals. Palate is youthful with some pure red fruit and while nicely balanced, not especially exciting. Moderate fruit intensity and length; solid.

Mission Estate

www.missionestate.co.nz

Celebrating its 160th Anniversary this year, Mission Estate is a winery that continues to surprise. Not as focussed on self-promotion as some others, the wines can be delicious (the 2009 Syrah a case in point) and are usually pretty keenly priced too.

2010 Syrah **Hawke's Bay** **\$16.50** **17.0-**

JS: Beautiful vibrant purple with an aromatic nose of damsons, black pepper, a touch of violet florals. Very perfumed without any interference of oak. Silky and brightly fruited with quite firm acidity. Possibly not quite as densely fruited as the '09 vintage (which we both loved so much) but surely this is a good thing as it would be a very worrying sign if all vintages tasted the same. . .

EJ: Fresh, charming nose of blackberries, damson plum and cracked white pepper. Fruity but certainly not frivolous. Medium-bodied, juicy ripe palate, lots of berryfruit and spice with a smidge of well-handled oak; nice balance, fresh acid and a lingering spicy finish. This is a super example of the variety and region and an utter steal.

2007 Huchet Syrah **Gimblett Gravels** **\$100.00** **18.5**

JS: Hawke's Bay reds from the '07 vintage continue to delight. Right across the price spectrum the wines seem to have a juicy dense, almost fleshy fruit character. Surely the skill, when making a super premium wine, is to retain all the characters that make the wines so appealing (opulent fruit, silky sweet tannins) without forcing the wine to wear too heavy a cloak of oak or tannin. The '07 Huchet manages to pull this off brilliantly; densely coloured the nose seemed quite shy at first but then opened up to reveal black pepper, damsons, *crème de mure* and sweet blackberry fruit. The presence of florals prevents the wine from seeming over ripe and there is some secondary notes just starting to emerge.

On the palate the fruit is complemented by beautifully ripe, well-integrated tannins. Such is the opulence that the wine seems almost approachable now and though there is a decent coating of new oak, one would expect there to be so for a wine intended presumably for ageing.

EJ: Complex and at this stage relatively closed nose with some oak showing plus iodine/tomato paste. Opens up to show enticing spicy black fruit plus bottle-aged characters of earth and cigar box. A dense core of fruit offers wonderful intensity on the palate and the oak is seamlessly integrated into this. Clearly NW and 'serious' yet showing impressive lightness of touch giving a lovely fresh, moreish character. Dry, mineral, elegant, this is mature yet with plenty of freshness and potential – a wine only just beginning to hit its straps. Lovely to see this held back too. Striking, and delicious.

Millton Estate Clos de Ste Anne

www.millton.co.nz

Once regarded as an eccentric man of the soil, James Millton now commands respect as one of the forefathers of NZ's biodynamic movement. And perhaps because biodynamics is no longer thought of as a fringe movement or a cult phase, Millton appears to be much more content and sure of himself, and his wines. In the past quality has veered between stunning and decidedly less-than-stellar, with the pinot noir in particular showing an alarming tendency to turn orange within a few years of release. However these latest releases show both confidence and quality.

2009 Les Arbres Viognier **Gisborne** **\$55.00** **18.0-**

JS: Incredibly aromatic blossom, white peach. Almost a touch of exotic indian spices. Has retained a delicacy and fragrance even though the alcohol is up over 14%. Indeed there is plenty of flavour and richness but not once does the wine veer into blowsiness.

single variety specialist) so it is very encouraging to see the '09s were no flash-in-the-pan and the 2010s are every bit as exciting.

2010 Alexandra Riesling **Central Otago** **\$28.00** **17.0**

Tighter and more minerally with some wet stone and mineral notes. Pure and taut. Medium dry, the sweetness is balanced by mouth-watering acidity. Very light and delicate, beautifully poised. Not at all overworked.

EJ: Pretty, ethereal nose of lime blossom, granny smith and light honey. The driest of the trio, though by no means dry at 45g/L. Crisp apply acidity and a light, rather delicate palate. Very nicely handled with good fruit intensity, balance and length.. Nice crisp lemony finish with a touch of honey and orange marmalade. Attractive now and should hold fairly well too.

2010 Lowburn Riesling **Central Otago** **\$28.00** **17.0**

JS: Lemon meringue pie, mineral and stone, with a touch of green plum/greengage to the nose. Slightly weightier, with a touch more sweetness than the Alexandra. Broader, almost fleshy fruit flavours. Lovely counterpoint of acid to sugar. Good length

EJ: Again, a lovely softly fragrant nose. This time more orange blossom and some mineral/stony notes. A touch sweeter and a little more palate weight too (though alcohol is the same at 10.5%) with crunchy green apples and a slightly more stony pithy character to the finish. The same very good balance; the wine finishes clean and leaving you wanting more. Can just imagine this with decent blue cheese...

2010 Aura Riesling **Central Otago** **\$28.00** **18.0**

JS: Very opulent nose; plenty of mango, pineapple, rock melon and a touch of honey and orange blossom too. Unbelievably delicious; masses of flavour, Tremendous length.

EJ: At 8.5% and 104g/L this is firmly in the Late Harvest camp and the nose displays considerably more honey and a touch of botrytis spiciness too alongside sweet citrus and honeysuckle. Palate is ripe fruited with tropical fruit as well as honey; a touch soft, could almost do with a little more acidity but again the hallmark lightness of touch and clean finish makes this accomplished, not cloying. Very good. Aurum know what they are doing with their fruit and have a nice house style. Great to see a specialist approach too rather than the usual jack of all trades - clearly a label to watch:

Gillman Vineyard

www.gillmanvineyard.co.nz

A small family-owned estate, focussing on Bordeaux varieties and winemaking techniques – usually at this point our buttocks begin to clench. And indeed, this Matakana estate even packs its flagship red into the traditional wooden cases, so no expense is being spared. New Zealand wine regions are scattered with such enterprises and most deliver little more than pretentious ambition and overpriced wine. However, to our relief we found Toby Gillman's Ch. Angelus vintage espionage must have been assiduous; while certainly not cheap, the Red does deliver quality, character and perhaps even a certain Bordeaux-esque *je ne sais quoi*...

2009 Clairet **Matakana** **\$30.00** **15.5+**

JS: The nose is very much in the secondary, almost tertiary spectrum: forest floor, wet leaves with some strawberry notes too. Light and crisp, the palate is still quite fresh and bright. Softly fruited, an unusual style for NZ rosé, but would probably be fine with food.

EJ: Cabernet franc/merlot. Unusual nose, almost pinot-like but with tomato paste and liniment. Spicy light plums, nice acidity. On the lighter side of medium-bodied, and has a touch of sweetness helped along by the 14% alcohol (which looks a bit pokey on the finish now that the fruit is fading a little). Really, at its peak now but worth a look if you want to try something different and certainly, it would not be hard to imagine this accompanying a cold game platter for a Sunday lunch.

2006 Gillman Red**Matakana****\$70.00****18.0**

JS: The nose is an encouraging start; some sappy florals, cassis and touch of redcurrant. Lovely acidity, refreshing in the style of good cabernet based wines. Finely grained tannin. Ready now. At its best now as the finish just pulls up rather than gives the impression the wine will continue to develop.

EJ: Rather inviting nose of cassis, cigar box, nice florals plus attractive savoury, gamey elements courtesy of bottle-age. Palate is medium-bodied, nicely crafted and with lovely fine tannins; this is a well-made wine that is drinking very well though likely to be at its peak now than looking to age much further. An attractive, dry, balanced acidity adds freshness and structure, and there is good ripeness to the cabernet franc which gives a floral lift to the palate. Smart wine and stylish packaging but at \$70 this wine is competing with the big guns and the low-profile will not be helping that cause.