



JAMES HALLIDAY

### Rising to the challenge

**H**OW COULD A JAPANESE lawyer turned diplomat end up as a hands-on grapegrower and winemaker in New Zealand's Martinborough? And how, without speaking a word of

German when he decided to enrol at Geisenheim's famed wine course, did he duly graduate, having worked a vintage at Nicholson River (Gippsland) and one at Domaine Lejeune in Pommard along the way? Well, here goes.

Hiroyuki Kusuda began his law course in Japan in 1983 at the age of 19, completing the first three years before taking a break to spend a year backpacking around the world, resuming and completing his studies in 1987. The following year he joined Fujitsu, spending four years with the company. But the need for new challenges led to him joining the Japanese Department of Foreign Affairs, and he was posted to the Japanese consulate in Sydney in 1992.

Over the next four years his fascination with wine grew exponentially. Having married, and with a seven-month-old son, he abandoned his secure job as a diplomat and enrolled at Geisen-

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heim. Research for his thesis took him to Schubert Wines in New Zealand; owners Kai Schubert and Marion Deimling had searched the world for the perfect place to grow pinot before choosing Martinborough.

Thesis completed, graduation followed in 2001. Having exhausted his savings during his four years at Geisenheim, Kusuda leased an unirrigated pinot vineyard near Martinborough, and made the first vintage (and all subsequent vintages) at the Schubert Winery in 2002.

While pinot noir remains the principal focus, he makes a similar amount of syrah (3000 to 4000 bottles of each if the vintage is kind), and made his first riesling in 2009. It is here his Japanese army comes into play: every year 20 to 30 friends fly in from Japan at their own expense. One tonne of pinot grapes will typically take two days to hand-pick and thereafter undergo a berry-by-berry inspection (after passing through the destemmer).

Even the slightest imperfection will result in rejection; the true cost of production is many times the price of the wine. It is dedication beyond passion, and is shared by Bell Hill and Pyramid Valley.



### 2008 KUSUDA PINOT NOIR

This was one of 32 pinots from 2008 blind-tasted at Martinborough, and was one of the standouts in a distinguished field. The colour is deep, the spice and dark berry fruit supple yet intense, the 30% new French oak not too obvious. The outstanding feature of the wine is its length, in turn supported by its texture. Available through Ultimo Wine Cellars, Sydney; 3700 bottles made. 13.5% alc/vol; cork

**Rating:** 94 points

**Drink:** to 2016

**Price:** \$89.95



### 2007 BELL HILL PINOT NOIR

This is another exercise in miniaturism, from an ultra close-planted 2ha vineyard set up by Marcel Giesen and Sherwyn Veldhuizen in 1997 in a hitherto untried region in North Canterbury. The colour is deep, the fragrantly spicy dark cherry and plum fruit perfectly poised and balanced; like a great Burgundy, it has absorbed the 100% new French oak in which it was matured. Available (in limited quantities; 1200 bottles produced) through Whole Bunch Wines, East Sydney. 13.4% alc/vol; screwcap

**Rating:** 96 points

**Drink:** to 2017

**Price:** \$150



### 2007 PYRAMID VALLEY EATON FAMILY VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

Mike and Claudia Weersing are still the only growers in the limestone-rich Pyramid Valley north of Christchurch, having begun to plant their biodynamic micro-vineyard in 2000. This is one of their Growers Collection series from Central Otago and (in this case) Marlborough; 9600 bottles were made. It is an exquisitely perfumed wine with red flowers and violets, the texture of brocade silk, the palate pure, fine and extremely long. 14.2% alc/vol; screwcap

**Rating:** 96 points

**Drink:** to 2014

**Price:** \$80

## Boccaccio Pella

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WHITES	
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PIKES CLARE VALLEY RIESLING 2009	\$18.95
SHAW AND SMITH ADELAIDE HILLS SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009	\$18.95
DE BORTOLI ESTATE SAUVIGNON 2008	\$17.95
DE BORTOLI ESTATE CHARDONNAY 2007	\$23.95
TAHBILK GOULBURN VALLEY MARSANNE 2008	\$12.95
PETALUMA HANLIN HILL RIESLING 2009	\$19.95
GIESEN MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009	\$13.95
VAVASOUR MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2008	\$15.95
PETER LEHMANN SEMILLON 2006	\$8.95
OYSTER BAY MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009	\$13.95
STONIER MORNINGTON PENINSULA CHARDONNAY 2008	\$19.95
HEGGIES EDEN VALLEY RIESLING 2009	\$14.95
PEWSEY VALE EDEN VALE RIESLING 2009	\$14.95

SPARKLING	
CHANDON NON VINTAGE	\$19.95
GRANT BURGE NON VINTAGE	\$19.95
JANZS NON VINTAGE	\$19.95
CHANDON VINTAGE 2006	\$27.95
TALTARNI VINTAGE BRUT	\$18.95
DEUTZ MARLBOROUGH CUVEE	\$18.95
FREIXENET CORDON NEGRO	\$12.95
YEUVE CLIQUOT NON VINTAGE	\$62.95
MOET CHANDON NON VINTAGE	\$54.95
POL ROGER NON VINTAGE	\$59.95
TRILOGY NON VINTAGE	\$11.95
MORRIS SPARKLING SHIRAZ DURIF	\$15.95

REDS	
PALLISER PENCARROW MARTINBOROUGH PINOT NOIR 2008	\$17.95
BRANDS BLOCKERS COONAWARRA CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2006	\$17.95
THE STORY GRAMPPIANS SHIRAZ 2008	\$19.95
DE BORTOLI ESTATE YARRA SHIRAZ 2008	\$24.95
GLAETZER THE WALLACE SHIRAZ GRENACHE 2008	\$17.95
GLAETZER BISHOP BAROSSA SHIRAZ 2008	\$26.95
GUIGAL COTE DU RHONE ROUGE 2005	\$17.95
STONIER MORNINGTON PENINSULA PINOT NOIR 2008	\$23.95
TORBRECK WOODCUTTERS BAROSSA SHIRAZ 2008	\$17.95
CAPE MENTELLE MARGARET RIVER SHIRAZ 2007	\$29.95
RINGBOLT MARGARET RIVER CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2008	\$17.95
PICARDY PEMBERTON SHIRAZ 2007	\$23.95
BOWEN ESTATE COONAWARRA CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2007	\$23.95
PIZZINI KING VALLEY SANGIOVESE 2008	\$22.95

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