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the world's best wine magazine

# Decanter

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## BEST VALUE BURGUNDY

★ The names that  
deliver more for your  
money, year after year

★ Best white buys from  
the new 2004 vintage



**CLARET, NEW  
WORLD STYLE:**  
30 delicious reds for  
Bordeaux lovers,  
from Chile & Argentina



**PLUS: WESTERN AUSTRALIA CABS RATED**

# 10 best new releases

**■ Ata Rangī, Craigshall Chardonnay 2004** ★★★★★

An outstanding result from a difficult vintage. Powerful Chardonnay with plenty of weight and richness restrained by an exquisite balance of fine acidity. Up to 2010. £17.10; FWN

**■ Dry River, Chardonnay 2004** ★★★★★

Wonderfully tight and elegant wine with obvious cellaring potential.

Attractive mineral characters with citrus, mealy and nutty complexity. A true classic in the style of Burgundy. Very integrated and harmonious. Up to 2012. £20.57; J&B

**■ Dry River, Gewürztraminer 2005** ★★★★★

One of the country's very best examples in an opulent style. Don't be fooled by its accessibility - this wine should cellar for up to a decade under good

storage conditions. N/A UK; J&B

**■ Escarpment, Kupe Pinot Noir 2003** ★★★★★

The first Pinot Noir made entirely from grapes grown on Escarpment's own vineyard. Very concentrated wine with a firm tannic structure for cellaring potential A classic! Up to 2013. N/A UK; +64 6 306 8305

**■ Escarpment, Pinot Noir 2004** ★★★★★

One of the best from a challenging vintage. Fine grained and subtle with

# new faces

**ESCARPMENT**

Established in Martinborough satellite Te Muna by Larry McKenna. Pinot Noir is the star, occupying 70% of the real estate with the balance shared equally between Chardonnay, Pinot Gris and Riesling. The vines are close-planted at about twice the region's average density.

Why Te Muna? 'We share the same alluvial gravel soils as the Martinborough Terraces region but have slightly cooler weather conditions thanks to a marginally higher altitude,' explains McKenna. 'Our vines seem less vigorous than those grown on the terraces possibly as a result of stonier soils plus cooler, windier ripening conditions. Te Muna Pinot Noir seems to have more pronounced colour and more tannins although that could be partly due to young vines and new clones.'

McKenna's first Pinot Noir from his new vineyard, Kupe 2003, strongly

endorses his faith in the area. This first taste of success combined with McKenna's past form has created high expectations for this new producer.

**Craggy Range**

Craggy Range established its wineries and much of its vineyards in Hawke's Bay, in an investment rumoured to exceed NZ\$70 million. At the same time it secured growers in Marlborough and planted 90ha in Martinborough to make high-quality Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir. Viticulturist and general manager Steve Smith MW chose Te Muna to plant a vineyard on two levels of river terraces that include a north-facing hillside area. There's also a rugby field-sized reservoir to supply an elaborate sprinkler system for frost protection.

Smith found that his land had two distinctly different soil types. 'The soils determined the varietal mix on our vineyard. One soil type perfectly suited Pinot Noir while the other is ideal for Sauvignon Blanc.'

The vineyard has exceeded Smith's expectations. 'I'm really excited about the quality of Pinot Noir we're getting. Martinborough has demonstrated an ability to produce great Pinot Noir but the full potential of the region has yet to be realised. I'm also pretty enthusiastic about the potential of Sauvignon Blanc - our 2005 is a real cracker!'



Hiroyuki Kusuda is a sake expert with a passion for Pinot Noir

**KUSUDA**

Hiroyuki Kusuda is New Zealand's first Japanese winemaker. He studied winemaking at the Gelsenheim Institute in Germany where he met Kai and Marion Schubert. The Schuberts moved to Wairarapa, north of Martinborough, where they started Schubert winery. Hiroyuki worked with them for several vintages before starting his own label, initially using grapes grown on a leased vineyard.

Hiroyuki Kusuda is a recognised sake expert who devotes the same enthusiasm to understanding and making high-quality wine. His passion is Pinot Noir although he has also made Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah under his label. Kusuda wines are intense, complex, and exhibit a daring funkiness that I find very appealing. Most of his production is sold for high prices in Japan. Kusuda has an exciting future.

PHOTOGRAPH: BOB CARROLL

plum, red cherry, strawberry and exotic spice flavours. More in the style of a wine from Oregon than Martinborough. Up to 2010. £15 approximately; C28, G&G, Mar, NZH, Sat

**■ Kusuda, G Pinot Noir 2003** ★★★★★

Big, oaky Pinot with firm, plump plum and cherry fruit plus dried herb flavours. Initial fruit sweetness leads to a drying finish. There's a developed forest floor character that adds interest. Up to 2009. N/A UK; +64 6 306 8083

**■ Ata Rangī, Kahu Botrytis Riesling 2005** ★★★★★

Luscious, concentrated wine with an array of dried fruit, floral, tropical fruit and citrus flavours. Not available in the UK thanks to EU wine regulations. Up to 2009. N/A UK; +64 6 306 9570

**■ Martinborough Vineyard, Pinot Gris 2004** ★★★★★

Oak-fermented Pinot Gris with pleasing richness and length. Some pear with sizzled butter and a solid influence of spicy oak. Up to 2008. N/A UK; +64 6 306 9555

**■ Palliser, Pinot Noir 2003** ★★★★★

Soft, savoury Pinot Noir in a supple, pleasantly dry style. Plum, earth and mixed spice flavours add complexity. A sensuous silky texture. Up to 2008. N/A; enquire J&B

**■ Te Kairanga, Runholder Pinot Noir 2004** ★★★★★

Soft, accessible and pleasant cherry and strawberry flavours together with a savoury complexity that appeals. Up to 2008. N/A UK; +64 6 306 9122

# 10 best value wines

**■ Palliser, Sauvignon Blanc 2005** ★★★★★

Masses of tropical fruit and stone fruit flavours. A power-packed Sauvignon Blanc that leaves many Marlborough wines gasping in its wake. Up to 2008. £8.82; J&B

**■ Craggy Range, Te Muna Road Chardonnay 2004** ★★★★★

A complex wine with grapefruit, bran biscuit and hazelnut. Impressive length and a silky texture. Up to 2009. £16 approx (available Feb 06); BoW

**■ Craggy Range, Te Muna**

**Sauvignon Blanc 2005** ★★★★★

Soft-textured Sauvignon with some luscious peach and other stone fruit flavours. A mouthfilling wine with a distinctive chalky minerality. Up to 2008. £11 approximately (available Feb 06); BoW

**■ Escarpment, Pinot Gris 2004** ★★★★★

A Chardonnay look-alike with oak and yeast lees adding complexity to pear-like flavours. Up to 2008. £11.10; Wbc

**■ Martinborough Vineyard, Te Heru Pinot Noir 2004** ★★★★★

Soft-textured, peppery Pinot Noir with cherry and plum flavours. Balanced wine with subtlety and style. Up to 2008. N/A UK; +64 6 306 9555

**■ Palliser, Chardonnay 2004** ★★★★★

Rich, weighty wine with strong peach and grapefruit supported by subtle nutty complexity. Up to 2008. £6.96; J&B

**■ Pencarrow, Pinot Noir 2004** ★★★★★

Great value Pinot Noir. Supple, savoury wine with ripe plum and spicy oak flavours. Up to 2008. £9.90; J&B

**■ Ata Rangī, Sauvignon Blanc 2005** ★★★★★

A fleshy, full-bodied style with a hint of sweetness that leads to a drying tangy finish. Up to 2008. N/A UK; FWN

**■ Burnt Spur, Pinot Gris 2005** ★★★★★

Luscious Pinot Gris in a medium/dry style with honeysuckle and musk. Up to 2008. N/A UK; +64 6 306 9555

**■ Escarpment, Pinot Blanc-Chardonnay 2004** ★★★★★

Smooth-textured wine with pear and grapefruit flavours. A unique blend in New Zealand. Up to 2007. N/A UK; +64 6 306 8305

For UK stockists, see page 107.

## MARTINBOROUGH VINTAGES: A GUIDE

- 2005 ★★★★★ A small vintage with a wet March. Reds better than whites, which were botrytis affected.
- 2004 ★★★★★ The wettest February on record although March and April were fine. Generally good with some dilution.
- 2003 ★★★★★ A low crop thanks to spring frosts. A good summer produced excellent flavours, especially in the reds.
- 2002 ★★★★★ The wettest summer on record. Some dilution although most escaped rot.
- 2001 ★★★★★ Drought conditions produced the best results from irrigated vineyards
- 2000 ★★★★★ A generally good vintage without problems.
- 1999 ★★★★★ A small crop produced concentrated wines with ripe flavours.
- 1998 ★★★★★ A drought produced fantastic ripening conditions. Perhaps too warm for some examples of Pinot Noir.
- 1997 ★★★★★ A small crop had to be picked early thanks to late rain.
- 1996 ★★★★★ A classic vintage with a long, warm summer that suited all varieties.
- 1995 ★★★★★ Very wet in the week before harvest. Botrytis-affected.



Escarpment is Larry McKenna's project in the Te Muna district of Martinborough

NEXT MONTH:  
SONOMA, CALIFORNIA