

CLOUDY BAY

CAPE MENTELLE

NEW ZEALAND  
CAPE MENTELLE  
NEW ZEALAND LIMITED  
P.O. BOX 376  
BLenheim  
NEW ZEALAND  
TELEPHONE: (57) 28914  
FAX: (57) 28065



AUSTRALIA  
CAPE MENTELLE  
VINEYARDS LIMITED  
P.O. BOX 110  
MARGARET RIVER  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6285  
TELEPHONE: (097) 572 070  
FAX: (097) 572 770  
TELEX: A91410



# MENTELLE NOTES

October 1988

The newsletter of Cloudy Bay and Cape Mentelle.

## Spring into Sauvignon

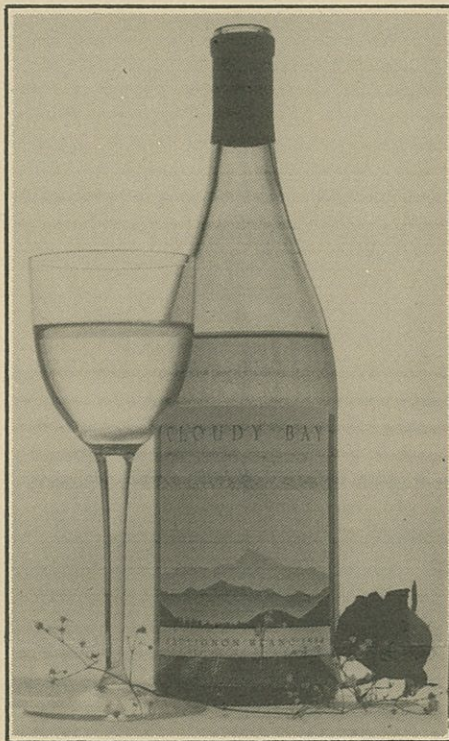
It's Spring in the vineyard at Margaret River! The geese are nesting, the blowflies buzzing (we don't run to gambolling lambs but Vivaldi's Four Seasons is a cellar door favourite) and delicate bright green shoots are pushing through the buds carefully selected during winter pruning.

A time of growth and activity and time to release the 1988 Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc - our fourth vintage.

In the vineyards in Blenheim and Margaret River, Ivan Sutherland and Brenton Air oversee the growth of the vines and the fruit that will ultimately determine the fate of the 1989 vintage. Cover crops are mulched, weeds removed and protective sulphur is sprayed on the young leaves. Young vines require weekly attention. Their vigorous growth needs to be pinched, tucked, trained and coaxed to produce the shape of a mature fruit bearing vine.

That's one part of the seasonal story. In the winery red wines are being "racked" (This is not a form of torture but describes the process of pumping wine from one vessel to another to ensure the sediment of yeast cells and grape solids that have settled during the cold winter months remains behind.) White wines not destined for prolonged barrel maturation are prepared for bottling in time to meet shipping deadlines and pre-Christmas delivery.

Last but not least, our diligent bean-counters work long hour collating the previous year's figures for sharp-eyed auditors and the insatiable tax man. Budgets for the next year are prepared with all the best intentions. Budgets that on the basis of hard experience will be blown to the four winds by the vagaries of interest and exchange rates, the weather and Roger Douglas. (But not necessarily in that order.)



In short, it is a hectic time for everyone. The strain shows in Kevin Judd and his indefatigable assistant Allan Stanbury. Despite their best efforts with funny chewing gum, tempting bets and even bribes, neither has yet managed to reduce their pre-release stress level or to kick the dreadful nicotine habit.

During the past two months these two modest heroes, with the assistance of an able crew of part-timers have earth filtered, bentonite fined, cold stabilised, blended, bottled and packed 15 seainers full of 1988 Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc. And you know.... there was no need for all the smokes and Steinlagers. The wine is a beauty and a great successor to previous vintages. Phew! Let's have another beer.

### Cloudy Bay 1988 Sauvignon Blanc

The '88 vintage in Marlborough turned from a cliffhanger (thanks to Cyclone Bola) to a surprisingly good season. The reliable Wairau Valley sun broke through and reversed what could have been a disastrous year. The season finished fine and cool and the wine shows all the flavour of fully ripe grapes.

With three years to iron out the technicalities of crush-time the vintage was almost hassle free. When needed most, Peter Hohnen, a young winemaker from the German Moselle village of Alf (yes Alf) and distant cousin of David provided light relief.

The family tree runs something like this. While Pete's side of the family stayed home for the *Wurst und Schwarzwälderkirchtorte*, Karl-Josef Hohnen, a master baker, set forth in 1857 to settle in Sydney and establish the Hohnen name. Peter learnt a few Kiwi idiosyncracies (the less said of these the better) and managed to teach Al a bit of German. Al can only remember one word - *scheisse* - and it's stuck.

*Donner und Blitzen!* Let's get back to the wine. Kevin Judd not one to be outdone in any endeavour and obviously inspired by the literary prowess of Cape Mentelle winemaker John Durham, sat with a Stuyvesant Mild in one hand, the Readers Digest Guide to Gardening close to the other and wrote:

*"The Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc has an entrancing green tint. The nose shows powerful varietal aromatics and exhibits passionfruit and citrus along with spicy tomato leaf and blackcurrant aromas. Barrel fermentation of a proportion of the blend has introduced fresh oak characters to the nose and added fullness to the palate. The fruit characters carry through into the flavour of the wine and leave a lingering impression."*

# Where Credit is Due

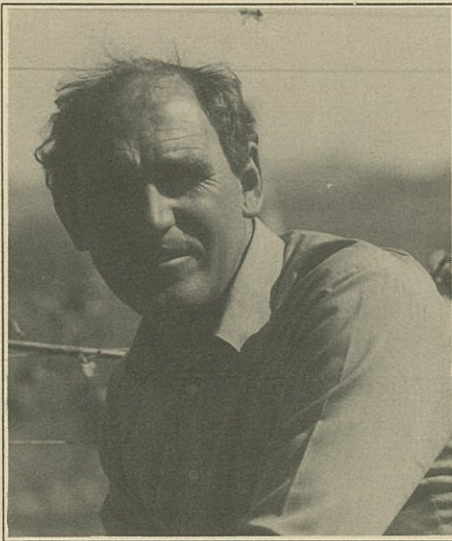
With the fourth release of Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc an unusual and productive association nears an end.

It has been no secret that the magnificent fruit that has played a major part in the success of Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc has been provided from vineyards controlled by Corbans. But the symbiosis between Cape Mentelle and Corbans does not end there. Unknown to many, the Cloudy Bay winery has for the past four years processed Corbans' fruit for inclusion in their "Stoneleigh" and "Private Bin" labels.

Cape Mentelle eagerly anticipates the 1989 harvest when, for the first time grapes will be picked from the Cloudy Bay vineyard. The Cloudy Bay crop, expected to be 50% of the crush, will be supplemented both by grapes from select contract growers and by a reduced tonnage from Corbans. In turn Corbans will have completed their own winery, to be built in partnership with Wolf Blass Wines, only a few kilometres from Cloudy Bay along Jacksons Road.

And so ends an era.

But the story should not end there. The origins of this slightly unconventional relationship need a little explanation and we wish to pay tribute to a man with a vision.



Allan Scott, National Vineyard Manager for Corbans Wines, whose domain stretches from Tologa Bay to Waipara near Christchurch had, perhaps surprisingly for some, more to do with Cape Mentelle's move to the South Island than any other. It was to a large degree, Allan's enthusiasm and assistance that triggered the sequence of events that resulted in the establishment of Cloudy Bay. It follows therefore that Allan has played a significant role in the success of New Zealand sauvignon blanc in Australia and more recently, the United Kingdom.

In November 1984 David Hohnen, inspired by a few samples of sauvignon blanc

left by a carload of footloose and high-spirited Kiwi winemakers passing through Margaret River, made a whirlwind tour of all of New Zealand's major wine producing regions. The tour culminated, purely by chance, with his attendance at the National Wine Show in Auckland (where again purely by chance, he met Kevin Judd.) The conclusion - Marlborough was the mecca for sauvignon blanc!

Enquiries revealed that Montana, held the major sauvignon blanc plantings in Marlborough, and had no interest in selling either fruit or wine to the boy from Margaret River. The only other sauvignon blanc was grown by Corbans. But they had no winery on the South Island and trucked their fruit across Cook Strait and 550km north to Gisborne for processing.

It is hard to believe now but in 1984 the country's wine industry was in a state of gloom and despondency. The quality varieties showed acute over-supply. The few sauvignon blancs that had reached Australia had yet to attract wide attention and even Marlborough had a surplus of sauvignon blanc grapes.

Not one to miss an opportunity, David Hohnen contacted Corbans and so began discussions with general manager Paul Treacher, and Allan Scott. Kevin Judd obviously shared Hohnen's confidence in Marlborough and together they trekked the Wairau Valley looking for a suitable winery and vineyard site. On their last despondent day Allan Scott showed them the bare paddock that is today planted with 110 acres of vines and is the site of the Cloudy Bay winery.

On 26th April 1985 Cape Mentelle commenced operations with a 40 tonne crush of sauvignon blanc grapes at Corbans' Gisborne winery. By 1986 the winery at Jacksons Road had crushed a total of 400 tonnes - Cloudy Bay was established.

Allan Scott has lived in Marlborough 16 years and has seen both good times and bad. As recently as 1986 the government instigated a "vine pull" scheme to reduce the then wine surplus and Marlborough saw its share of vines uprooted. Ironic really, as this spring has seen a stampede to plant hundreds of acres of vines in the Wairau Valley.

Allan's one ambition for Corbans and their growers has been to see a winery in Marlborough. He has a passionate faith in the area's potential and is convinced of the importance of processing grapes "on site".

It is therefore a great pleasure for the team at Cloudy Bay to see the fruition of Allan Scott's ambitions. We wish to thank Allan and his growers, Ewen Robinson and Phillip Neal and wish Corbans well in their new venture.

## Make Merry in Marlborough!

Traditionally wine festivals are harvest celebrations but the vigneron of Marlborough are an impatient lot. In the Wairau the annual wine and food frolic is a summer event.

The third Marlborough Wine and Food Festival will be held on Saturday 21st January - the Wellington Anniversary long weekend - and promises to be bigger and better than ever.

More than a dozen wineries and local food producers will transform Montana's Brancott Vineyard into an open air cornucopia. Marquees will be erected amongst the vines, each one offering samples of latest release wines and delicious local foods.

Admission is \$10. This will include a tasting glass and bus transport to and from the Brancott vineyard from Picton, Renwick and Blenheim. Coupons or 'festival francs' with a 50¢ face value will be sold at booths in the vineyard. These will be your tippie and taste tokens for the day.

The early Maori tribes knew the Wairau as the land of plenty but they had to work for their al fresco lunch. You will simply be able to exchange your tokens for a range of tasty treats. Local food exhibitors will offer selections of fresh seafood, cheese, bread and fruit or if you would prefer you can pack your picnic basket.

Come and enjoy some Marlborough merriment. Mark Saturday 21st January in your diary now! Bring the kids, there will be a day crêche and plenty of entertainment.

## Preview

While the Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc tends to hog the limelight there are two other stars waiting in the wings. The 1987 Chardonnay and 1987 Cabernet Merlot, both due for release next March, illustrate the potential of the Marlborough region.

Wines have been made in the Wairau Valley for only 15 years and with every vintage, valuable experience is gained. The 1986 vintage produced quality chardonnay grapes and an excellent wine but with added experience the 1987 Cloudy Bay Chardonnay promises to be a stunner. The wine is still in tanks and will be bottled in November. It is an outstanding wine.

The 1987 vintage also produced exceptional cabernet and merlot. The 1987 Cloudy Bay Cabernet Merlot is currently in barrels and not due to be bottled until February. It is a wine that will do much to confirm Marlborough's ability to produce quality cabernet blends. These two wines will be offered in *Mentelle Notes* in March.

# Kevin's alter vino

Too rarely do winemakers have an opportunity to speak out on industry issues. Cloudy Bay's Kevin Judd has three successful vintages under his belt and one or two matters on his mind. He spoke during the last vintage to our *Mentelle Notes* correspondent.

It was one of those days specifically designed to remind you how little glamour there really is in the wine industry. Drizzling rain had persisted for two days and looked set to hang on for another day at least. Prospects for getting the last 50 tonnes of sauvignon blanc into the winery before the inevitable rot set in didn't look good.

But after lunch the Maori saying "Ke Puta te Wairau" again proved correct. Loosely translated it means, "the sun always finds a hole to shine through the clouds in the Wairau." The mechanical harvesters moved out into the vines to shake loose the precious grapes. By late afternoon the first batch of fruit was being processed in what would turn out to be a long hard day.

A winery at vintage time is like a battleship at war. When the fruit is coming in it is like a series of direct hits. In between salvos the pace is equally hectic as the crew mop the deck and clean up in preparation for the next onslaught.

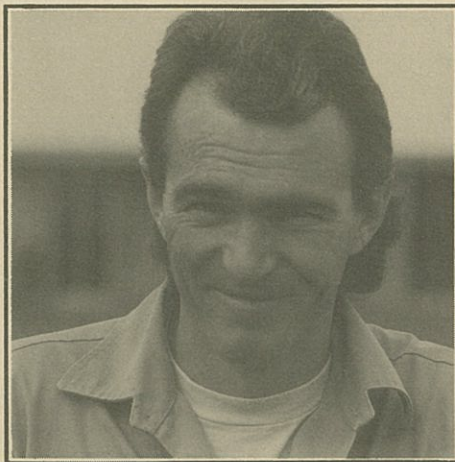
At sundown the first truckload of fruit was safely in a tank and the crew took a thirst quencher. It was probably not an ideal time to seek the definitive interview with winemaker Kevin Judd but your grape stained correspondent made the best of a lull in the relentless activity to ask a few important questions.

*M.N. "After three vintages Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc still enjoys immense popularity around the world, forcing even cynics like David Hohnen to admit reluctantly that it is no longer a "flash in the pan" wine. Are you happy with the way things have gone since you joined Cloudy Bay?"*

K.J. "When I first joined the company it had no name, no winery, no vineyards and not even an office in New Zealand so I felt things could only get better and we have come a relatively long way in a relatively short time.

The fact that we have enjoyed the level of success we have is not really a surprise given the care that has gone into the operation. Before joining Cloudy Bay I spent three invaluable years with Selaks and the experience I gained there has helped enormously. The natural high acid levels and intense fruit characters of New Zealand grapes do require special winemaking skills. But I am convinced we have not yet seen the best of Marlborough nor the best of Cloudy Bay."

*M.N. "Nevertheless magazines like Decanter in the UK have said Cloudy Bay is "arguably the best sauvignon blanc in the*



*world." How do you react to that sort of comment?"*

K.J. "Well that is typical of the flowery rubbish you get from the Poms. They are quite clever you know. They never say your wine is the best in the world but always that it is "arguably" the best. This is designed to ensure that you will feel obligated to pull the cork on a few bottles and sit up all night arguing with them whether it is or isn't the best in the world."

*M.N. "New Zealand sauvignon blanc has now acquired such a reputation that some Australian wine companies are actually transporting it across the Tasman to be blended with fruit from their own vineyards."*

K.J. "Ah yes, the dedicated followers of fashion are now into transTasman blends. I think one of the joys of drinking wine is the appreciation of regional variations and the differences in New Zealand - say between Hawkes Bay and Marlborough - are as great and as interesting as those between Margaret River and Coonawarra. Why people bother to cover up these differences, other than for the dubious purpose of using the strong character of one region to mask the deficiencies in fruit flavour from another, is beyond me."

*M.N. "In giving the name fumé blanc to sauvignon blanc the Californian Robert Mondavi created a whole new market for a previously unfashionable variety. Was that not just a "marketing gimmick" that proved to be very durable?"*

K.J. Mondavi's fumé is not just a marketing gimmick. It is a quality wood aged wine where the fruit character has been tempered to produce a style of wine to accompany delicately flavoured foods. Many Australian fumé blancs are unfortunately poor imitations (with some notable exceptions) - more like fumé plonks. I reckon the tendency has been to use varieties other than sauvignon blanc character with a heap of oak of fruit and substitute for the lack

*M.N. "Despite your obvious enthusiasm for sauvignon blanc do you share David Hohnen's view that Cloudy Bay may become better known for its chardonnay than*

*sauvignon blanc."*

K.J. I think it is perhaps too early to say what is the best variety for this region. Compared to many wine producing areas in Australia or Europe, Marlborough is in its infancy. Certainly both varieties are impressive but we have the potential to produce some exceptional red wines as well. We may not be able to produce a cabernet with the depth of colour and richness of flavour you get in Margaret River but by blending cabernet with earlier ripening varieties like cabernet franc and merlot we are producing wines of exceptional finesse and elegance.

What really interests me is pinot noir. Nobody has really done it well yet, and there have been problems with some of the clones used in the early plantings. Given a few years to trial the better clones now available, we may well see some mind-blowing pinot noir coming from this region."

*M.N. "Mind-blowing pinot? Can you give us an example?"*

K.J. "Off the top of my head I can't. My knowledge of the big name burgundies is smaller than the company budget for purchases of competitors' wines. I imagine it will be as good as my current favourite "She's Gone" by Hound Dog Taylor.

*M.N. "I think I know what you mean. Up to now it's all been Glenn Campbell. So with Marlborough producing good chardonnay and a better selection of pinot noir it must auger well for "methode champenoise" wines."*

K.J. "Méthode champenoise" is a dreadful term, it sounds like a birth control technique. But yes the question has already been answered by the expatriate from across the valley. Danny Le Brun's 1986 blanc de blanc is a ripper and 100% Marlborough.

*M.N. "Cloudy Bay's success has prompted a rash of lookalike labels and probably triggered the trans Tasman habit. Do you think any other Australian firms will take it further and move right in to Marlborough?"*

K.J. "Sure, there have been reports that a dresy little Kraut with a big bow tie has been noticed about the Wairau.

I see no problem with anyone establishing wineries here, even Australians! But I do see problems with the opportunism we discussed earlier in relation to trans Tasman blends. The great wine regions of the world survive on their reputation and integrity. Inter-regional blending does nothing for either. Neither does bulk shipping for bottling elsewhere."

*M.N. "When you say apple it sounds like "epple" and your sixty six sounds like "suxty sucks". It's also rumoured that you're a mean hand with a fly rod. Do you regard yourself as a Kiwi rather than an English born expat Aussie?"*

K.J. "For as long as Adelaide remains the home of Coopers Sparkling Ale and Reynella make vintage port I will hang on to my Aussie passport. Perhaps one day Alan Bond will do the ultimate deal with Brierley and I won't have to worry. We'll all be part of the same conglomerate."

# PRICE LIST & ORDER FORM

WINE	DESCRIPTION	PRICE PER CASE	PRICE PER BOTTLE	AMOUNT ORDERED	COST
Cloudy Bay 1988 Sauvignon Blanc	Passionfruit and citrus-like fruit along with spicy tomato leaf & blackcurrant aromas.	\$215.04	\$17.92		
ADD FREIGHT COSTS (SEE BELOW) AND PACKING CHARGE (IF APPLICABLE)					
				TOTAL	

NAME .....  
(Please Print)

ADDRESS .....

..... Postcode .....

Telephone ..... Fax .....

Signature .....

### REMITTANCE DETAILS

- Cheque     Bankcard     Visacard  
 Mastercard

Credit Card Number

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Valid until .....

## DELIVERY

FREIGHT CHARGES	1st Case	2nd Case
Auckland	\$7.00	\$6.00
Wellington	\$3.00	\$2.50
North Island Provincial	\$8.00	\$7.00
Christchurch	\$3.00	\$2.50
South Island Provincial	\$6.00	\$5.00

### PLEASE NOTE

- Orders must be in case lots.
- Send order to Cape Mentelle New Zealand Limited, P.O. Box 376, Blenheim N.Z. or Facsimile (57) 28065.

## Send a friend a Mentelle Note

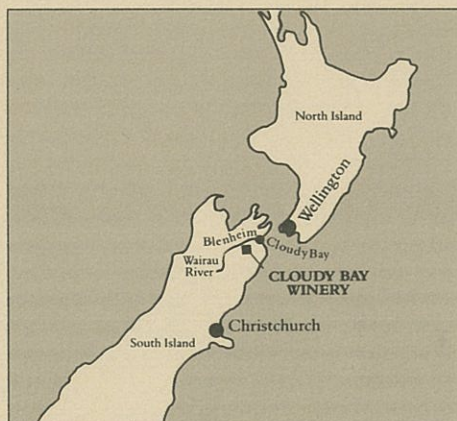
If you have a friend who would appreciate receiving a copy of Mentelle Notes add their name to our list by completing the form below:-

Name: .....

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## Don't make a move without us

If you have or intend to change your name and address please keep us informed:

Name: .....

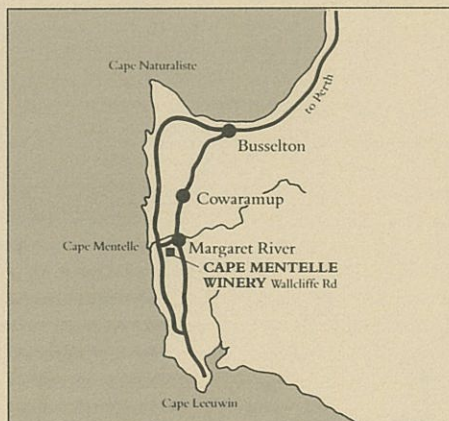
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Cape Mentelle Vineyards (097) 572070  
P.O. Box 110, Margaret River, W.A. 6285.