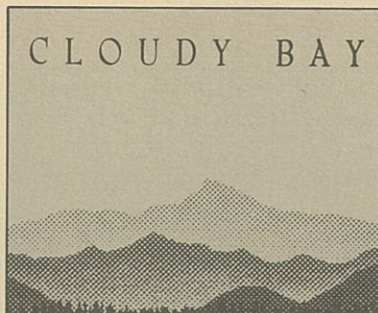


CLOUDY BAY

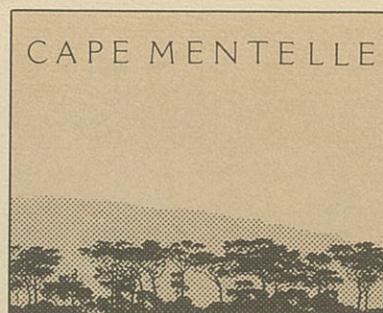
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MENTELLE NOTES

JUNE • 1989

The newsletter of Cape Mentelle Vineyards Limited

Autumn Reflections

Close encounters with fine wines

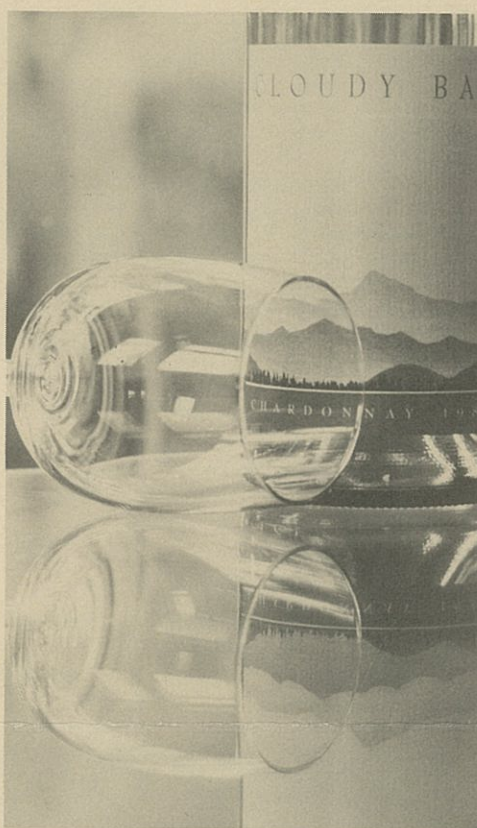
This the third New Zealand issue of *Mentelle Notes* brings you two outstanding wines from Cloudy Bay - the 1987 Chardonnay, already acclaimed by Robert Joseph of London's Sunday Telegraph as being "every bit as good as the same winery's legendary sauvignon blanc" and the 1987 Cabernet Merlot a stylish red wine with rich berried overtones. The Chardonnay is only the second release from the Cloudy Bay winery and proves just how well the variety is suited to the region and how quickly winemaker Kevin Judd has mastered the techniques necessary to induce rich complex intensity from the pernicky chardonnay grape. (For further enlightenment see 'Juddy Bugged'.)

Cloudy Bay Chardonnay 1987

To refresh your memory, 1987 was basically a nasty year. The famous Marlborough sunshine declined to perform according to legend posing a threat to full ripeness of the late varieties - sauvignon blanc and cabernet sauvignon. It was a painstaking and tortuous wait. Down at Lion Breweries the summer sales charts plotted a steep and inexplicable increase in demand round Blenheim. The guys at Lion are still trying to figure it out.

Chardonnay however is an early ripening variety which partly explains why some of the cold miserable regions of the world - Champagne, Burgundy and in 1987, Marlborough are able to produce such good wine.

The fruit came from four vineyards - Chaytor, Rose, Riverbrook and Corbans - and overall quality was excellent. Kevin Judd made some outstanding chardonnays in his years with Selaks and this experience was evident in the '86 vintage. The '87 is another feather in his cap.



Producing Burgundy style chardonnay is every bit as complicated as making a great red wine and takes nearly as long. A proportion of the wine is fermented in barrel and the new wine is left on yeast lees for up to six months. During this time the dead yeast cells break down releasing amino acids, which impart a 'bread yeast' character to the wine. Other portions of the blend are inoculated with bacteria that will, given the correct conditions, convert the natural malic acid (acid of apples) to lactic acid (acid of milk). The process reduces the wine's acid taste at the same time as the bacteria induce complex flavours and buttery aromas. All of the final blend is aged in small French oak which contributes vanillin and coconut characters to the complex harmony of flavours.

Kevin Judd is quite excited about his 1987 Chardonnay and over a bowl of breakfast muesli wrote the following description,

"The Cloudy Bay 1987 Chardonnay is starting to show well in the bottle and exhibits a variety of ripe fruit flavours. The nose has yeasty, toasty, buttery melon / citrus / apple and oak vanillin characters. The palate is full and flavoursome combining creamy barrel fermentation and malolactic characters with fresh crisp natural acidity. A wine that can be enjoyed now or if aged will open out and develop for a number of years."

Cloudy Bay 1987 Cabernet Merlot

Already a wine of undisputed quality this release is further evidence that Marlborough County, renowned for its white wines is also capable of producing fine reds. Kevin Judd is the first to admit that the development of this premium blend of cabernet and merlot has been aided and abetted by the peripatetic David Hohen, who spends almost more time at 33,000 feet than he does with his feet on vineyard soil, who in the true spirit of CER has encouraged a brisk trans-Tasman viticultural and oenological exchange. The lessons from growing cabernet three thousand miles away in Margaret River obviously travel well. You only have to take a sip of this, the second Cloudy Bay vintage to taste the legacy of true West Australian cabernet traditions. The wine is made in the Australian style but boasts a subtle fruit herbaceousness and a fine tannin structure that is definitely Marlborough.

Kevin Judd writes, *"The 1987 Cloudy Bay Cabernet Merlot has an attractive deep red colour with purple tints. The nose has aromas of freshly picked berries combining the blackcurrant, cherry characters of cabernet with the softer raspberry like fruit of merlot. Twelve months in French oak has introduced sappy, vanillin overtones and added fullness to the flavour which has a lively, mouth filling intensity that lingers on the palate."*

TALENT UNLIMITED

Editorial policy decrees that any blow of the trumpet should be limited to wine awards but the rules have been relaxed to tell of two unexpected staff achievements.

Boast Number One

The team at Cloudy Bay outshone themselves at the third annual Marlborough Wine and Food Festival. Not only did they empty over 40 cases of Cloudy Bay for the thirsty 16,000 visitors from all over New Zealand, some flown in on a specially chartered 737 from Auckland, but they scored a first and a second and all it took was muscle and palate power. The gold was for brawn - victory in the tug o' war, the silver for second prize in the wine options game.

Cloudy Bay entered two options teams - the viticulturalists and the oenologists. The growers, who can tell a grape blindfold from ten paces, were out pointed but the winery team, comprising the palates of Kevin and Kimberley Judd, Allan Stanbury and Yankee recruit Harold Osborne tasted and tested their wine wits into second place against twenty local teams and the NZ champions. To be runners-up to the acclaimed NZ National Wine Options champions is no mean feat. The game, held the Thursday before the Festival, was run according to national competition format. The teams had to nominate the variety, country, region, vintage and maker of 4 whites and 4 reds - a fair stretch of the palate.

Two days later the Cloudy Bay team triumphed again, only the players were different. Who would have thought the winery weaklings had it within their combined muscle power to tug their way to victory in the third annual Festival tug o' war? Especially when Kevin Judd and the boys (Ivan Sutherland anchor man, Cliff Pilcher mountain man, Gerald Johnson cellarhand and Peter Radford vineyard hand) were up against the heavyweights from Montana and Corbans (who incidentally boosted their brawn with ring-ins from the Wairau Rugby Club.) The odds were 100 to 1 against and all it took was three pulls. Since V-day there have been reports of strange intermittent huffing and puffing noises 'mongst the district's vines. Informers claim the neighbours have instituted weekly warring tug classes. Lest they forget.

The date for Next year's Marlborough Festival will be held on the 10 - 11 February to coincide with the Auckland Commonwealth Games.



The Cloudy Bay Team — lying down on the job.

Boast Number Two

For those of you who follow keenly the more serious achievements of Cloudy Bay we can report another accolade. The Cloudy Bay 1988 Sauvignon Blanc scored a first in the Dry Sauvignon Blanc class at the '89 Royal Easter Show. This year the Show instituted a new format and divided the conventional varietal categories into three price categories - low, medium and high. What's more the organisers made sure all the major producers were entered - any gaps in the line up were filled by the show officials who went out purchasing bottles of the show circuit shy. That's one way of ensuring the event is consumer oriented and is properly representative of the industry. Second was the '87 Penfolds Fume Blanc Ne Plus Ultra and third, the '87 Villa Maria Reserve Sauvignon Blanc.

Sauvignon blanc, now New Zealand's most exported varietal wine, was recently

the focus of another major tasting. *Cuisine* magazine lined up 59 sauvignons from four countries and again Marlborough performed with distinction. Marlborough wines comprised only 19% of the total entries but half of the top scorers (5 & 4 stars) were Marlboroughian. Of the Cloudy Bay 1988 Sauvignon Blanc *Cuisine* wrote "The wine has typical Marlborough body and acidity with characteristic red capsicum flavours, although there is a suggestion of lush melon ripeness normally found in more northerly wines. A varietal sauvignon blanc which captures the very essence of the grape." Their rating: 4 stars.

Also worthy of mention, another *Cuisine* comment, "Matching sauvignon blanc with food is a bit like trying to find a partner for a very assertive friend who talks loudly in restaurants." But what if you can't? - Ask the maitre d' to turn up the Musak and order another bottle! (Or should one invite Wolf Blass?)

SUPERSONIC SAUVIGNON

We know Cloudy Bay moves fast but last month two cases of the Cloudy Bay 1988 Sauvignon Blanc broke all speed records. In fact they shot across the Tasman faster than the speed of sound, aboard a special British Airways around-the-world-in-23-days Concorde flight. The wine was served to passengers on the Christchurch - Sydney leg of this global charter.

We always knew Cloudy Bay would one day rocket round the world but were perturbed to learn from BA that Cloudy Bay's supersonic Tasman ride co-incided with the unfortunate loss of Concorde's pride and a section of the tail. Could it be that the Cloudy Bay powerful aromatics take on extra strength at high speeds? At least one passenger from Colorado had his priorities right. *The Australian* newspaper

report of the incident read, "Harold Short was a little startled by the bump but managed to finish his lunch of poached fillet of deep sea perch and crayfish tails, washed down with Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc." (Not even a slip between sips?)

At the time *Mentelle Notes* went to press aviation investigators were still pondering the possible aerodynamic effects of the supersonic sauvignon. Meanwhile, Kevin Judd, who has always maintained Cloudy Bay Sauvignon would "blow your socks off!" has offered to assist British Airways with their enquiries. Experiments to date are inconclusive but Judd's graveyard of wine soaked paper planes has prompted a revision of the tasting notes, "Cloudy Bay 1988 Sauvignon Blanca wine of tail shattering proportions."

JUDDY BUGGED

The day science took a back seat

Kevin Judd, a graduate of Roseworthy College (Wine Science 1979) is every bit the product of the modern school of winemaking where science and technology reign supreme. It has been said that these young technobrats can do just about anything with a grape but make it walk upstairs. And Judd might argue with that too! With Juddy at the Cloudy Bay helm nothing is left to chance or rather it wasn't, until Californian Harold Osborne Jr arrived on the scene.

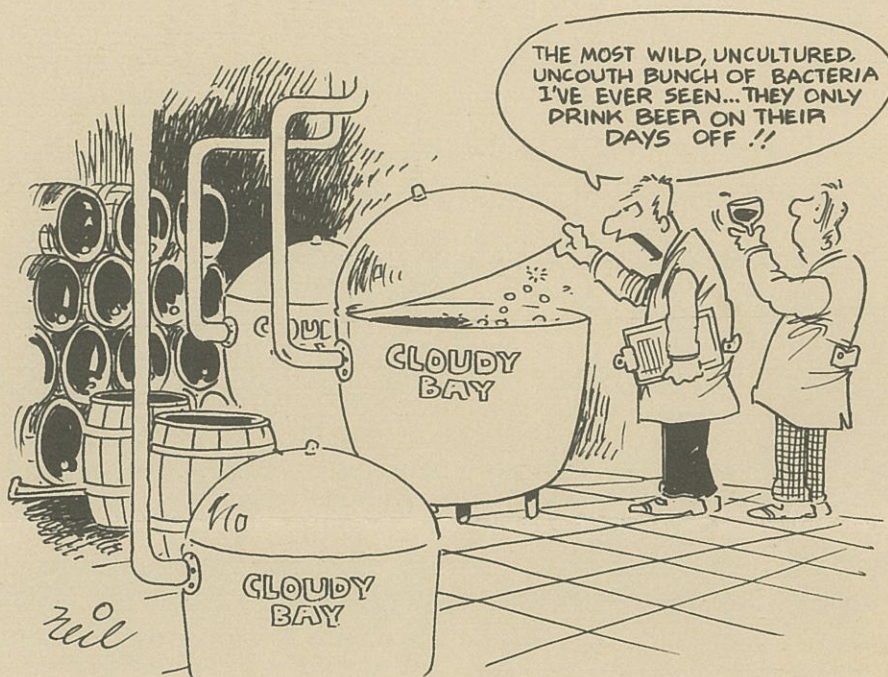
Osborne a graduate of Fresno State University (1972) has been around just long enough to soften his approach to winemaking. He has worked the past three vintages at Cloudy Bay and his laid back methods have begun to infiltrate the winery. Heaven forbid that chance and magic should be allowed to turn grape juice into fine wine!

But Osborne's magic *is* at work and no more than on the Cloudy Bay 1987 Chardonnay. Recall that a proportion of the blend undergoes a secondary fermentation when leuconostoc bacteria convert malic acid to lactic acid. The bacteria that perform this feat occur naturally and are present in both vineyard and winery, just one of the myriad organisms that dwells harmoniously in our environment. In recent times microbiologists have selected favoured strains which are reproduced, preserved and available for today's 'let's not leave it to chance' oenologists to chuck on cue into the desired batch of wine. No more postponed ski trips or golf games.

Trouble is, these cultured, highly bred leuconostoc bacteria are invariably a bunch of elite wimps. They are very choosy about their environment and renowned for their inclination to lay down on the job and die.

But there's no convincing your modern winemaker... it was for months that Judd laboured over brews of every known commercially available strain of *leuconostoc oenos*. Sumptuous quarters were provided, the best vitamins and stimulants, electric blankets and the finest wines.

The cultures would be coaxed up to the requisite viable cell count and carefully introduced to the blushing batch of wine destined for the magic experience. The inoculation consummated, Judd and his eager assistants would watch with dismay as one by one the pampered leuconostoc



cached in their chips and sank to the bottom of the tank never to wriggle again. Meanwhile, visiting Osborne had been given a tank of wine to treat as his own. One wonders if he treats his women similarly...for neglect was the order of the day and it drove Judd nuts.

"a wild, uncultured, uncouth, lowbrow brute"

Not only was he frustrated by the finicky leuconostoc but Osborne seemed hell bent to spoil good pinot noir and chardonnay. Harold, by now back in California in his other job as bartender at the saloon on the end of the Avila Beach pier, would

be phoned for instructions. "Just leave it Fuddy," was the confident reply as Harry mixed another Margherita.

Then one winter morning Judd could stand it no longer and opened the lid of Osborne's tank, convinced the wine was spoiled. Instead he found a seething turmoil of fine bubbles that signalled a secondary fermentation was well underway. It was more than underway, it was raging.

True to Osborne's prediction, a bug, born and raised in the Wairau or transported from France a hundred years previously with Samuel Marsden's first vines, a wild, uncultured, uncouth, lowbrow brute was munching its way through malic acid.

Judd was distraught. Four years of the best training and the highest ideals shot to shreds by this unruly tank visitor. To his credit he swallowed his pride long enough to siphon off a few litres of the fermenting wine complete with the marauding "Leuconostoc Harry." This he tipped into his own virginal tank of chardonnay, where according to Judd it went straight into action, "like a rat up a drain pipe." In a matter of weeks the sour, astringent young chardonnay was transformed into a softer, more supple wine with intriguing aromas and flavours, the legacy of "Leuconostoc Harry", who now dozed replete at the bottom of the tank.

Today "Leuconostoc Harry" lurks in every corner of the winery but just for good measure he is also confined to the freezer in a litre of tank bottoms. Every vintage at the appropriate moment he is invited, begrudgingly, by Judd to dive into selected tanks of chardonnay and perform his little miracle. ■

