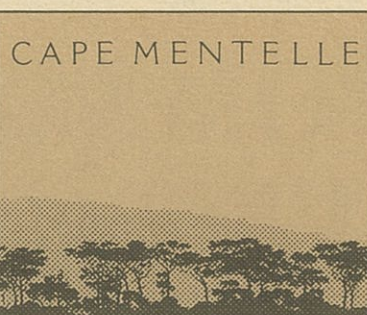
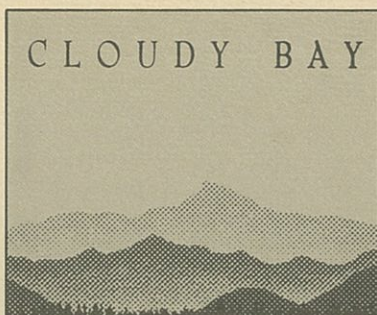


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# MENTELLE NOTES

DECEMBER • 1989

The newsletter of Cape Mentelle Vineyards Limited

## Celebrate with Cloudy Bay

### A Fifth and Some Firsts to Quench Your Thirsts

No oom pa pa bands yet but the November release of the 1989 Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc is something of a milestone.

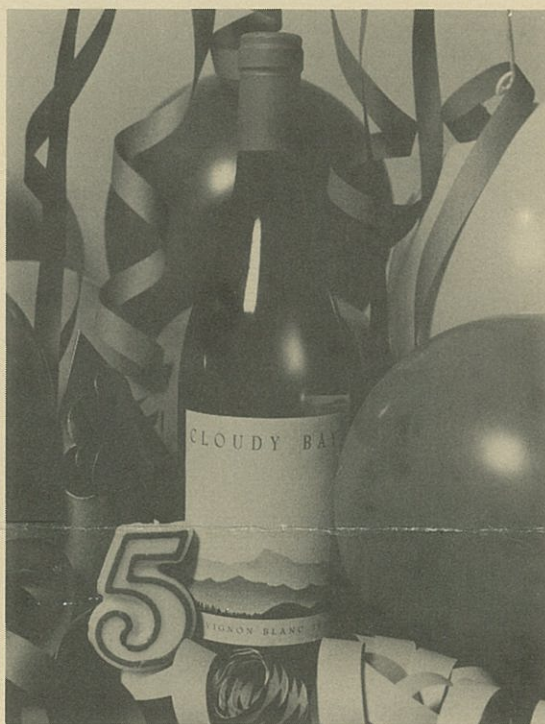
Cloudy Bay is five years old. (If you don't believe us count the streamers.)

We celebrate the occasion with one of the best vintages yet. The season started early and in retrospect it seems the valley was impatient to deliver a bountiful harvest. The vines basked in a warm, dry summer and delivered a great vintage four weeks earlier than usual.

Chardonnay was March's child with full ripe flavours and exceptional balance. Then in early April came the Sauvignon Blanc with ripe radiant tropical fruit characters reminiscent of the '85 vintage. Late but not last the Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, deep dark and intensely flavoured reds ready to give Western Australia's Margaret River a run for its money.

This fifth birthday celebrates a number of 'firsts' for Cloudy Bay and inter alia Cape Mentelle. It is our first vintage incorporating the fruit of estate vines, grapes planted three years ago that have now reached fruit bearing maturity. It also saw the production of the first ever late harvest rhine riesling.

After four years of needling and near black-mail, Kevin Judd was allowed to let ten tonnes of perfectly ripe, succulent rhine riesling grapes turn into what looked, late in May, like wizened dags hanging on leafless vines. But there is nothing daggy about the wine



produced from those botrytis infected grapes. Watch future issues of *Mentelle Notes* for news of its progress.

Kevin also had a first chance to try his theories on Marlborough pinot noir. A few tonnes of first harvest grapes were crushed and wine now rests in a small stack of barrels labelled with a ? mark. Judd remains tight lipped on the subject but he has taken to wearing berets, has swapped his Stuyvesants for Gauloises and has been heard brushing up his Franglais, "eh, c'est magnifique..."

Yet another first was the installation of the German Willmes press. This is the

Mercedes SE450 of the range and it's a case of, 'look Mum, no hands...' Allan Stanbury, hard toiling assistant of Judd misses the late nights of previous vintages and curses the Krauts for their efficiency.

A good year all round and it could well have been purrfect.

But for the last and least of our firsts - the winery cat. A defenseless black feline rescued from certain death and the slobbering jaws of Kevin's incredibly dumb but very handsome canine, Rhiannon the Weimarana. Spook, who literally arrived at the winery door cat in mouth, has added a whole new dimension to the term 'cat's pee' (a pong sometimes associated with older sauvignon blancs) and Al Stanbury, complete with gas mask, spent his spare time (while the press cycled automatically) in pursuit of the less than purrfect purveyor of unwanted and indelicate aromas.

While Al prowled, Kevin Judd, to whom cleanliness is second only to the six pm Steinlager, found a quiet moment far from Spook to jot a few notes:

*"It was an almost ideal vintage, the warmest and driest yet experienced at Cloudy Bay. The fruit arrived at the winery with a perfect sugar-acid balance and excellent ripe fruit characters. The wine, which reflects the fine sunny ripening period shows tropical pineapple and ripe melon in combination with greener capsicum notes; the palate has a spicy dry finish. The 1989 Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc is an extremely elegant wine."*



# THE POMS OPEN A BOTTLE

## THE LATEST DROP

**Mentelle Notes** ' modesty rules out idle boasts but with this last issue of the decade ( and because it's Cloudy Bay's 5th birthday ) we'll make an exception and share some recent applause.

### From America:

" New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc is the zappiest, fruitiest, freshest, crispest, most varietal balanced sauvignon blanc being made in the world today; Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc has lovely green pepper fruit and incredible balance; one of the driest, most harmonious of the lot. We're telling you about it because we've heard it's coming, and we want you to fight off the crowds when it comes in." - *David Rosengarten, The Wine & Food Companion*

### From Australia:

" Cloudy Bay is in many ways in a class of its own ; one of the few genuinely international brands emanating from Australasia. The '89 Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc has sweet gooseberry fruit, a hint of smokiness and a tingling, clean acid finish." - *James Halliday, Weekend Australian*

### And closer to home:

"Cloudy Bay - New Zealand's Most Successful Wine" - *Bob Campbell, Cuisine*



*Mentelle Notes* does not waste space with voyeuristic descriptions of wines that readers have a snowball's chance in hell of ever tasting. Hence a recent tasting of forty two 1985 /86 Meursault Premier Cru white burgundies would go unreported if it were not for the fact that a bottle of Cloudy Bay 1987 Chardonnay had been slipped in on the sly. The pork chop in the synagogue.

The tasting was one of regular such sessions organised by a group of the 'young turks' of the London wine trade. No crusty old geezers with hyphenated names and gouty big toes in this mob. Names such as Simon Loftus, Clive Coates and Jasper Morris mean about zilch on St. Georges Terrace and Collins or George Streets but in the U.K trade these characters have sway.

The wines were tasted blind after which the group of a dozen or so 'opened a bottle' and sat down to compare notes. (To 'open a bottle' is quaint English wine trade jargon for popping the cork on a bottle of bubbly. ) To an outsider, possibly the most fascinating and alarming observation was the disparate range of opinion and scores for any single wine. Further proof of the subjectivity of wine tasting, even at the palates of professionals.

Some interesting conclusions evolved. The wines on the whole were good, and some,

outstanding. A few years ago a higher proportion would have been expected to show 'ze pong' that so often results from traditional winemaking techniques. On the contrary these wines showed complex and intriguing fruit with the added dimensions derived from wild yeast and malolactic fermentations in the best French oak barrels. On the palate they were medium to full-bodied, firm but not tannic and dry in the admirable French style.

And the Cloudy Bay ? It was scored sixth overall behind a formidable top four from the house of Lafon and another from Remoissenet. But in the usual modest way let's put this in context. The Cloudy Bay stood out like a dunny in the desert, albeit for the right reasons. Lifted, distinctive fruit characters not dissimilar to the French but crystal clear with the tell-tale Marlborough acidity on the palate giving the younger wine freshness and zest.

So obviously a 'New World' wine in a traditional heavyweight line up that one wonders if the tasters were being overly generous with their high score. Or perhaps the Cloudy Bay's prominence is simply a reflection that among the younger members of the U.K wine trade 'New World' chardonnays have found a place alongside the French originals. Certainly their price is right as most sell for half the cost of the French equivalent. If so *we* can open a bottle ! ■

## SPOOK'S DEBUT



## FESTIVAL NOTE

**Marlborough Food and Wine Festival**  
10 - 11 February, 1989  
Brancott Estate

Celebrate Marlborough ....  
"The Gourmet Province"

*Sample wines ... fresh produce ... local foods*  
*Live music & lively entertainment*  
(See the Cloudy Bay team defend the tug o' war title)

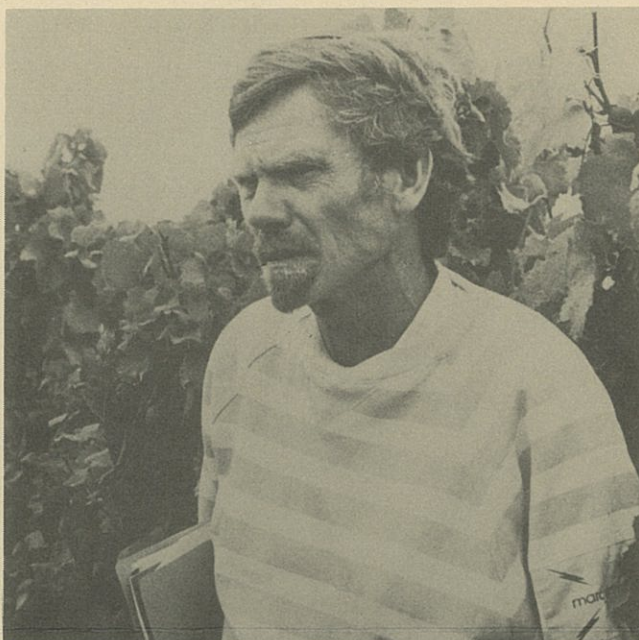
Entrance: \$10 adult \$5 child  
Festival tokens (francs) 50c each

• Details •  
MARLBOROUGH FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL  
P.O. BOX 551, BLENHEIM • (57) 89 251



# GET

## Richard Smart the man at the forefront of New World viticulture shares some grape ideas with Mentelle Notes



Richard Smart viticulturalist, winemaker, poseur.....

Some people are born with grape expectations but luckily not all of them want to make wine. One man of great vision content to work "in the field" is consultant Richard Smart, Dr Cool Climate Viticulture himself. With a string of degrees and a PhD from Cornell University Richard has spent over twenty years in quest of the ultimate grape, a search that has led him from Israel to Chile, from Oregon to South Africa. Sometimes he's to be found closer to home tampering with people's canopies or coaching oenologists wishing to squeeze better quality from their grapes. During a recent visit to Marlborough to stimulate and challenge a bunch of dedicated but sceptical Cloudy Bay growers Richard consented to give this vineyard view.

*MN: Today's winemaker is more likely to pose for a photo in the vineyard than the winery. To what do you attribute this phenomenon?*

Having taught viticulture to at least half those Antipodean winemakers posing amongst the vines I feel quite sure it's the first time they've been back between the rows since college. What's more I take umbrage at the term 'winemaker', it doesn't give due recognition to the viticultural component in the product. It takes oenologists AND viticulturalists to make wine. To be specific, oenologists now recognise that quality starts in the vineyard. Viticulturalists always knew it.

*MN: Winemakers, oops, oenologists, in Australia and New Zealand seem to be reverting to traditional winemaking techniques and vines seem to be getting closer and closer. Is this smart or not so smart?*

I reckon close spacing, along Bordelais or Burgundian lines, was invented by clever nurserypersons and pine post salespeople.

As a general non-technical statement it is fair to say that in many situations traditional close spacing isn't ideal. Contrary to popular opinion it does not reduce vigour and it is yet to be proven that proximity produces superior grapes. Close spacing is not a Smart recommendation.

*MN: Well, if close spacing doesn't necessarily produce the goods, what about the notion that vines must struggle to produce great wine?*

If struggle means just a bit of a fight but not a major battle then the answer is yes. A vine should be under slight moisture stress during ripening. This ensures that the growing tips are not active and the goodies sourced from the roots go into the grape rather than the vegetative growth. The lack of late summer rain in regions like Margaret River and Marlborough is a distinct advantage.

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*"Close spacing is  
not a Smart  
recommendation."*

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*MN: Informed consumers are demanding a pure product, free of chemical residues. How pure can you grow grapes?*

It depends on the climate and the variety. The popular vinifera varieties are difficult to grow without using fungicides. Parts of Australia and New Zealand with rain free

# SMART

summers only require minimal use of chemicals but we're a long way off 'organic grapes.' This will one day be achieved by selective vine breeding.

*MN: The whole wine world seems to be transfixed on a small number of premium varieties of French origin. Is this a good thing?*

No, varieties are the spice of life. From a consumer view we should encourage diversity of flavour and aroma but the marketing view is slightly more complicated. The marketeers have invested heavily in cabernet, chardonnay, pinot noir and sauvignon blanc but how do you think they'll go selling sangiovese? Sounds more like something you'd find at an Adelaide Grand Prix than on a wine list. But with a bit of effort there's no reason to deny the trendoids the pleasure of sounding knowledgeable about viognier, malvasia and muscat blanc à petits grains.

*MN: Given the inevitability that these trendies will one day abandon the very 'in' chardonnay and cabernet, can you pick the red or white grape to plant for the wine buffs of the '90's?*

I'm punting on the re-emergence of traditional Italian varieties, such as sangiovese and nebbiolo. More importantly I believe we will see a de-emphasis of varietal labelling and a move to estate names like Henschke's Hill of Grace and Penfold's Grange. If you look at the example of countries with a long history of wine production you'll find wines are named after districts or vineyard sites, not varieties. With maturity certain regions will become associated with specific varieties, as Marlborough is becoming with sauvignon blanc. The varietal approach was really a Californian initiative, an easy cop for the marketing people.

*MN: One for the row. Could you expand on the importance of the viticulturalist as a winemaker.*

Technology in winemaking has reached a level which is hard to improve on. The knowledge and gee whizzery exist to produce good wine from good grapes and in many cases, OK wines from not so good grapes. So attention has now turned to improving the quality of the grapes. We now understand the importance of soil nutrition, adequate moisture and exposure to sunlight in the production of grapes with optimal flavour and aromas. Winemakers, that is oenologists and viticulturalists, are much better able to combine their nous, to improve quality by growing better bunches. ■



# PRICE LIST AND ORDER FORM

WINE	DESCRIPTION	PRICE PER CASE	PRICE PER BOTTLE	AMOUNT ORDERED	COST
Cloudy Bay 1989 Sauvignon Blanc	Tropical pineapple and melon fruit aromas with a spicy palate and tingling clean finish. An elegant wine	\$220.00	\$18.33		
ADD FREIGHT COSTS (SEE BELOW)					
<b>TOTAL</b>					

## DELIVERY

FREIGHT CHARGES	1ST CASE	2ND CASE
Auckland	\$7.00	\$6.00
Wellington	\$5.00	\$4.00
North Island Provincial	\$8.00	\$7.00
Christchurch	\$3.00	\$2.50
South Island Provincial	\$7.00	\$6.00

### PLEASE NOTE

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

## Send a friend a Mentelle Note

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

Name: .....

Address: .....

Name .....

Address .....

Tel:.....Fax: .....

Signature .....

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

Name: .....

Old Address: .....

### REMITTANCE DETAILS

- Cheque                       Bankcard  
 Visacard                       Mastercard

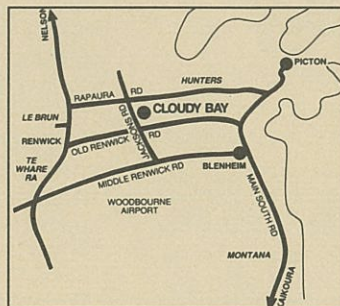
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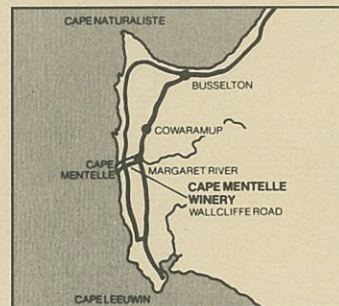
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