

# MENTELLE NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER OF CLOUDY BAY AND CAPE MENTELLE

## Eating Habits

*Glynn Christian examines the foundations of Kiwi cuisine.*

I'll tell you how different New Zealand is today. Kia Ora used to be orange cordial, without which no Sunday-school picnic was a success, ditto beach days, birthdays or Christmas day. I was floored later to learn these are Maori words: today everyone says kia ora for hello and some for goodbye, but who drinks the cordial?

To say NZ's food and wine is not what it was, is like describing a great wine as refreshing. As a waiter at one of Auckland's first licensed restaurants I was asked if a bottle of Medoc was very medicinal tasting.

Right through the 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s dinner – or tea as most of us called it – was chops, chops, tripe, chops, pork fillet, steak or chops. The vegetables went on at five so they'd be ready for six o'clock. No chicken, but. That was for Christmas.

Crayfish was as common as snapper, and if we ever went to watch the flying boat take off along Auckland harbour, there was a Maori fella with sacks full. If they appeared for the third time in a week, I swapped my crayfish sandwiches for someone else's peanut butter ones. Whitebait and oysters and mussels came in bulk too, invariably won in a pub raffle.

It was a brave mother whose tins were not weekly crammed with afghans, peanut brownies, ginger crunch, Russian slice and a banana cake for the weekend. Without a largely memorised Edmonds cookbook you were a pariah. They used to say you weren't a real woman if you couldn't make a decent pavlova, and you weren't a real man if you could.

Eating out meant crossing town by tram to Grandma's. There were Chinese



*Lamb chops and Pinot Noir in the making.*

Pic: Kevin Judd

restaurants, tearooms which opened until at least seven o'clock, hamburger joints and a few Italians trying to convince us spaghetti was not always served on toast.

In 1986 I explored New Zealand through its food and drink, for a BBC TV series. Somewhere rural we stood outside a pub and a couple of women and young children sauntered out. Surely that was breaking the law?

—

*‘To say NZ’s food and wine is not what it was, is like describing a great wine as refreshing.’*

—

‘No mate,’ said an elderly man. ‘It’s the wine. It’s civilised us, mate.’ Since wine became acceptable families were welcomed where tarts had once roosted. Pub hours were extended, more restaurants were licensed, even if BYO.

Six years later I wrote in the UK's *Sunday Telegraph* that you were more likely to walk off the street into an Auckland restaurant and get a terrific

meal than in most other big cities in the world. Agreement poured in from all around the world.

It was easier then, a time when using parsley as an ingredient rather than a garnish was enough to get you noticed. Food was, in the very best sense, inward looking and the combination of New Zealand's wine and fresh produce were fertile fields of imagination.

Today our chefs are wider travelled, get inspiration from *Cuisine* magazine, television and the Internet. Properly, Europe's proven classic dishes are attracting interest, but being colonials we must do it differently, like the risotto that was crunchy rather than chewy in the middle. The chef of the famed restaurant defensively uttered those most dreaded words: well, it's my take on a risotto. Oh dear, my take. In Wellington those words bounced back a duck confit that had barely seen salt.

*Continued page 2*

### IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome in summer with this edition of Mentelle Notes:

- Discover the value of Wine Auctions 3
- Meet the new CEO 4
- Travel to China 6
- Shed a Tear with the Cellar Rat 5
- and have a Drink for David 4

**NEW  
RELEASES**

## POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Spring always heralds the advent of the new vintage Sauvignon Blanc. Rather like the unveiling of the latest model of brrm-brrm automobile at the motor show, or the next saga from a top-selling thriller writer... Will the next off the line be better than its predecessor? Will, the sauvignon blanc-ers be satisfied with their favourite tippie?

Well, Kevin Judd and the crew think so – at least with the calibre of the latest release. What will assuredly not impress is the wine's substantially reduced availability, a shortage created by fickle Mother Nature. (See Vintage Report below).

Perhaps it's a timely reminder to us all that wine is a natural product which can suffer crop vagaries just like wheat, or lamb in an Australian drought year.

The solution? Get your order in early to your local stockist. Who was it suggested that less is more?

## VINTAGE REPORT

### Marlborough

There is no avoiding the inevitable – 2003 was not Mother Nature's best endeavour. In fact, the 2003 growing season was punctuated by two severe spring frosts (October and then November) which caused considerable damage to newly formed shoots and grape inflorescences.

The cumulative effect of these frosts and cool weather during the flowering period resulted in very small crops being set. The impact has been significant, with well below 50% of expected yields in some vineyards. Summer weather conditions were settled and dry, but cooler than average temperatures were recorded from January to March.

Marlborough's sunny autumnal conditions came to the rescue ensuring physiological ripeness was achieved across all varieties, even though below average night-time temperatures prevailed throughout the harvest. Mother Nature's final legacy was a very modest crop. Her compensation? To deliver grapes with terrific flavour profiles and great fruit intensity.



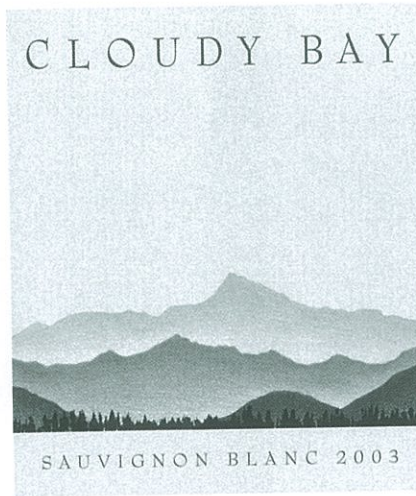
Up close and dangerous – frost damaged sauvignon blanc.

### Pelorus Vintage 1999

*'Aromas of ripe mandarins, warm brioche and roasted hazelnuts introduce this decadent sparkling wine. Pelorus Vintage 1999 has a deliciously mouthfilling palate brimming with crisp apple and savoury cashew flavours that lead to a finely balanced and persistent finish.'*

### Pelorus NV

*'The pale straw colour and aromas of ripe citrus fruits indicate the chardonnay origins of Pelorus NV. A bouquet of apple and lemon complements fresh bread notes derived from two years' bottle aging on lees. The deliciously crisp palate displays toasty, creamy complexity enhanced by a lingering nutty finish.'*



### Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2003

*'Pale straw green in colour and mouth-wateringly fragrant, the Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2003 is redolent of a mid-summer kitchen... ripe passionfruit, juicy limes and freshly picked basil. The palate is pure and refreshing with all the hallmarks of a small but perfectly formed crop... flavours that echo the aromas with piercing concentration, impeccably balanced acidity, and a long crisp finish.'*

## RIESLING UNVEILED

Fans of Cloudy Bay's Late Harvest Riesling know the potential of the variety in Marlborough. It thrives in the silty loams of the Wairau Valley especially in long, cool ripening seasons.

It's no wonder then that the CBV team have finally created a rich almost dry, but not late-picked, Riesling. Only available in limited quantity ex-winery, it's a good portent of things to come. Try a bottle soon!

### Cloudy Bay Riesling 1999

*'Pale gold and fragrant, the Cloudy Bay Riesling 1999 has aromas of honeysuckle and juicy ripe peaches, reminiscent of an old-fashioned summer trifle. The lush, mouth-filling palate has flavours of yellow plums, apricots and a hint of lime juice balanced by a cleansing green apple acidity that leads to a succulent and lingering off-dry finish.'*

## EATING HABITS cont.

It's good to report that food-stackers now earn giggles rather than goggles and fewer chefs believe fame rests on what they can create, rather than what they can cook perfectly: fewer choose vanilla-rum leeks over vichyssoise.

The most thoughtful chefs have realised their greatest resource is time, the time it takes to braise ox cheek, or simmer a perfect beef stew, the time to enjoy the fiddle of making a perfect boneless smoked snapper pie.

With good produce in our supermarkets any amateur can cook *a la minute*. The time to cook old recipes is the time the ordinary household has lost – but they'll pay for others to cook them. Including steamed puddings and milk puddings, please.

Clearly wine did civilise New Zealand, and it still leads us by the nose to challenge the world with revolutionary sauvignon blancs, pinot noirs, pinot gris – and who knows what else.

New Zealand should also be first to show the world what to eat with our wines. Whether centuries-old classic dishes from other cultures or today-fresh creations from our own, we should also cook them better than anywhere else. Because we can. Kia Ora.

*Glynn Christian has been cooking on British television since 1982. After 35 years abroad he now lives back in Auckland where he has written regularly for the NZ Herald, and is updating his Delicatessen Food Handbook.*

## KEEPING VINES IN LINE



Every keen winemaker and knowledgeable wine drinker knows that all good wines are made in the vineyard. Put simply, that means the role of the viticulturist is pivotal in any wine company. They often do not have the profile of the winemaker but they do play an equal and vital part in what goes into your favourite wine bottle.

The Cloudy Bay viticultural team welcomes Siobán Harnett, the new company viticulturist (pictured), who joined the company just after the challenging 2003 vintage. She knows Marlborough well, having worked previously at Villa Maria and Vintech (now Rapaura Vintners). Between tending vines she has managed to secure a Degree in Agriculture, Masters Degree in Viticulture and an MBA. Most recently, Siobán was instrumental in structuring a HACCP safety program for the New Zealand wine industry.

# Anyone For Seconds?

Andrew Caillard MW examines the evolution of Australia's wine auction market.

The secondary wine market in Australia has evolved in ways that would have been hard to predict even ten years ago. When I first joined Langton's in 1989, our specialist wine auction business had a turnover of less than \$1 million. High interest rates, dwindling imported wine stocks, only moderate interest in Australian wine and absurd compliance regulations made it difficult to move forward.

The escalation of imported wine prices, particularly Bordeaux and Burgundy, caused by the combined problem of poor exchange rates and ever-increasing ex-cellar prices, created a vacuum in the secondary wine market during the early 1990s.

Langton's released its first *Classification of Australian Wine* in 1991. Cape Mentelle and Moss Wood Cabernet were the first Western Australian wines to be included. The idea was to create a structure to focus buyers on Australia's top wines.

We half expected the *Classification* to be howled down by the media – but the reverse happened. We even received a positive response from the most negative of wine writers.

In 1994 we released our second *Classification* which included Leeuwin Estate Art Series Chardonnay, Moss Wood and Cape Mentelle Cabernet, Cullen Cabernet Merlot and Pierro Chardonnay. The inclusion of Henschke Hill of Grace and Mount Mary Cabernets alongside Penfolds Grange was sufficiently controversial to create diplomatic tension within Southcorp.

The reality, however, was that the market was changing irrevocably – and Grange could no longer be distanced from the rest of the market, despite its extraordinary reputation and consistency.

The second *Classification* generated huge confidence to the market – illustrated by the exponential increase in interest of Australian wine during 1995 where some wines literally doubled in value. The difference between that market phenomenon and the cult wine scene of 1999/2001 was that prices held and continued to increase.

Then in 1996, while driving down to Margaret River with David Hohnen, I discussed emerging issues of regional definition and the wonderment of Margaret River cabernet and chardonnay. By the time we got there, the first *Great Estates of Western Australia Auction* was pretty well sorted.

Langton's would take a similar position to the *Classification* and select wineries and wines which either were classified or had some form of profile on the secondary wine market.

Probably the most remote auction in the world, it has had the effect of generating a wider and stronger presence for top Western Australian wines on the auction market.

By late 1999 shiraz was emerging unassailably as Australia's trump card. The cult wine scene – a market phenomenon propelled by the exuberant reviews of America's Robert Parker, further exacerbated this trend.

In early 2000, Langton's released its third *Classification*. While it reflected the movement towards shiraz, it also embraced more wines from Western Australia including Howard Park, Plantagenet and Xanadu. Cape Mentelle, Leeuwin Estate, Cullen, Moss Wood and Pierro all moved up a notch in the hierarchy, reflecting an eclectic, well-informed market.

The sheer force and excitement of the cult wine scene was also changing market sentiment. Three Rivers, Wild Duck Creek, Duck Muck Shiraz, Torbreck Run Rig Shiraz and Greenock Creek Roennfeldt Road Shiraz – wines with unknown track records but hailed by Robert Parker – suddenly became 'must have' wines, some achieving prices of well over A\$1000 a bottle.

While this cult market came to an abrupt halt in the wake of the re-alignment of the US economy, it widened the secondary market in Australia.

*‘Wine drinkers want value for money, underpinned by a strong sense of place, a reputation for quality and cellaring potential.’*

Langton's recognised that its live and silent bid wine auctions would have to change if it was to remain relevant in this dynamic market. The new on-line system [www.langtons.com.au](http://www.langtons.com.au) deployed in 2002 gives buyers and sellers more flexibility than ever before.

In a single year we have doubled our subscriber base and dramatically increased the overseas buyer base which will help support the value of ultra-fine Australian wine, so vital for the health of quality focused wine producers.

They also need to realise that wine drinkers want value for money, underpinned by a strong sense of place, a reputation for quality and cellaring potential. These factors are elemental to secondary market success.



A word of caution. There are any number of wines which are now being sold through broking and retail outlets with artificial provenance. The ultra-fine wine scene is filled with over-priced wines with ridiculous stories and stupid names. The emerging Australian wine investment market has become a minefield of self-fulfilling fantasies. I worry about many of these new wines coming onto the auction market because while some show promise, others appear to have flawed credentials.

## WINE INVESTING TIPS

- o Wine is an agricultural commodity. Adverse weather can have an effect on yield and quality. Investors generally buy on the basis of 'good vintage/short supply' in the hope the market will rise from 'strong demand'.
- o Provenance embraces the key concerns of reputation, 'regionality' and past cellaring conditions.
- o Reputation is a key factor to wine investment, and is earned through favourable criticism, word-of-mouth, and success at wine shows.
- o A wine's character can reflect the spirit of its place. Hence Barossa Shiraz, Margaret River Cabernet and Coonawarra Cabernet have strong regional provenance.
- o Consider storage conditions – especially if the wine has some maturity. Documented cellaring records could become a feature in the future.
- o Buy 'earliest, lowest and cheapest'. This means buying wine at release, negotiating the lowest price from a retailer, or buying in what is essentially a wholesale wine auction market. The secondary wine market also embraces the high-valued rarity market. This relates to 'must have' wines – usually classic, difficult to find vintages or limited production tin-shack, cult wines. Buyers should keep well clear unless they are wine-flippers (speculators).
- o A diverse and balanced cellar is more enjoyable and easier to sell.
- o Don't borrow money to buy wine. The wine investment market is in its infancy. There are no guarantees of making returns – although there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest many wines do appreciate in value over time.

Andrew Caillard MW is a specialist wine auctioneer for Langton's Fine Wine Auctions.

# A Drink for David

While you're browsing this issue of *Mentelle Notes* it's more than likely that David Hohnen, founder of Cloudy Bay and Cape Mentelle (and stalwart contributor to this august publication), will be out in a paddock chasing sheep, tending his own vines and olive trees, or checking on a pair of nesting swans.

David always said he was a farmer and gets a great deal of satisfaction from growing things. It's just that after nearly 30 years he has decided to shift his focus slightly from growing grapes and winemaking to food production. He recently resigned from Cape Mentelle to pursue a second, more broadly based agricultural career.

One of the quiet achievers and visionaries of New Zealand's and Australia's wine industry, David will be sorely missed by the staff at both wineries, as a leader, adviser and friend.



David Hohnen hangs up his hat...

Morning tea won't be the same without his dust dry laconic wit, which for over 20 years has also underpinned the pages of *Mentelle Notes*.

Before leaving he issued the Editor particular instructions...no space should be allocated to charting the past. So I've only allowed one more paragraph...

David is simply one of life's exceptional people

– a man who won two consecutive Jimmy Watson trophies, a driving force in Marlborough's and Margaret River's international reputation, a man who never sought the limelight, a master of understatement who knows the power of quiet pride and humility.

So, pull the cork on one of your favourite Cloudy Bay wines in a toast to his next venture. No fandango, just another good glass of wine to mark another day. Here's cheers, David!

The Editor

## WINERY GROWS



Cloudy Bay's new underground press facility.

The 2003 vintage saw the commissioning of Cloudy Bay's new gravity-based press facility, needed (at least in bountiful vintages) to facilitate the efficient management of the annual harvest. Designed to meet the highest production standards, the installation is configured to handle half-tonne picking bins with speed and ease while retaining a 'kid gloves' oh-so-gentle approach to fruit treatment. By all accounts the new press passed its first test with flying colours.

## PINOT TAKES PROMINENCE

Pinot lovers are known to go to considerable lengths in pursuit of their passion. So come **28 – 31 January 2004** many will undoubtedly be heading to Wellington for **Pinot Noir 2004** the second international conference dedicated to this beguiling grape.

The event is no accident. Production of Kiwi pinot noir is booming. Over 2000 hectares are already yielding excellent quality grapes and another 1282 hectares are planted, but yet to produce their first crop. Simply put, there will be plenty more pinot to accompany the world's duck risottos.

The Pinot Noir 2004 program will tickle even the most perspicacious palate. International speakers include UK writers Robert Joseph and Tim Atkin, UK masters of wine, Jasper Morris and Phil Reedman, and the Antipodes' own James Halliday, Huon Hooke and Bob Campbell MW. Specialist pinot winemakers attending include Burgundy's Dominique Lafon and Patrice Rion, Austrian Michael Wenzel, Claudio Radenti from Freycinet in Tasmania, and George Fromm from Switzerland via Marlborough.

Delegates will also have a day out 'on location' across Cook Strait to explore the pinots of Marlborough. Not to be outdone, other pinot producing regions have packaged up regional exploratory tours to precede and follow the conference.

The conference fee is \$1350 which encompasses all sessions (including the Marlborough trip) and cuisine program (excluding the Chef's Dinner). Details and bookings: [www.pinotnoir2004.co.nz](http://www.pinotnoir2004.co.nz)

## MEET THE BOSS

Dr Tony Jordan, a leading figure for over 20 years in winemaking and viticulture on both sides of the Tasman and other parts of the winemaking world, has taken up the helm of Cloudy Bay and Cape Mentelle.

Tony's appointment as chief executive is in addition to his role as the head of Domaine Chandon/Green Point in the Yarra Valley, which is also part of the LVMH group of wine companies. Needless to say, like David Hohnen, he will be spending a great deal of time commuting between the various wine estates overseeing their quality, continued growth and success.

After receiving a PhD in chemical physics, Tony had a brief stint as a research scientist in the USA and UK before joining Charles Sturt University in New South Wales, where he helped establish the oenology and viticulture course.

After six years, including sabbatical in Giesenheim, Germany, he left

academia to establish Oenotec Pty Ltd with fellow lecturer, Brian Croser (of Petaluma fame). The company played an important part in introducing advancements in contemporary Australian winemaking that have, in part, led to the current success of Australia's global wine reputation.

In 1985, Tony established Domaine Chandon in the Yarra Valley, a leading New World sparkling wine producer which has more recently moved into still wine production under the Green Point label.

In 1987 he became chief executive of the company and also took on the role of overseeing other Chandon wineries in the USA, Argentina, Brazil and Spain.

When not in a winery, walking in vineyard rows or commuting at 30,000 feet, Tony, who regularly judges at the main Australian wine shows, enjoys the relative solitude of his small vineyard and mini arboretum in the Yarra Ranges.



## MUSTS

### Pinot Noir 2004

28-31 January 2004  
Wellington

Details: *Verve Consulting*  
PH: (04) 4999 6909

### BMW Marlborough Wine Festival 2004

Saturday 14 February 2004, 10am - 6pm  
Brancott Estate, Marlborough  
Tickets \$35 from NZ Post outlets  
Details: PH (03) 577 9299  
Email: [events@wine-marlborough.co.nz](mailto:events@wine-marlborough.co.nz)

# Two for the Road



## THE CELLAR RAT

### Adios, My Three Amigos

Dearest Mentelles,

This year is a bit of a landmark for CBV, one year out from our 20th anniversary and three of the mainstays of CBV won't be around to toast it. David Hohnen, Ivan Sutherland and James Healy have decided to do their own things.

Be it James and Ivan making funky wine, or David grazing sheep and raising pigs, they want to do it at their own pace. With James that's about the speed of his old Morrie Minor with wife Wendy at the wheel. (I'll buy you a whip Ivan.)

The Rat has spent more waking moments in the last 15 years with one or all of these gentlemen than his family, and it's been a pleasure. I'm not saying being with my family hasn't been. C'mon Trace don't be like that. Kev, help me out here!

So, Dear Mentelles, kick back and let me write this thank you note to the three Amigos.

Ivan, the thing I've liked about you over the last 15 years is Marg your lovely wife. Yep...that's about it. Oh, and your failed attempts at crop estimating.

At harvest I've always worked on the well-understood theory 'expect the unexpected, then the unexpected becomes the expected and is therefore not unexpected.'

You always offered help and knowledge to anyone who asked, you looked after our growers with the diligence of a mother. One in particular was a bit of a problem child and your attention could only be seen as above and beyond the call of duty. But that's a hoary old tale. Hell, with you and James leaving who's going to look after him? Not me.

Your humour and enthusiasm for CBV, wine and rowing I'll miss. Who will ever forget the 1991 Rowers Rough Red, a tidy little earner for NZ Rowing? Well, no-one who tasted it with a palate. Unfined, unfiltered, undrinkable...maybe a little hard, on the wine you say? Only on the finish.

Thanks for all the broken grape posts and the use of the post driver and tractor. Trace has the best all-weather dressage arena in Marlborough! Shit, you weren't supposed to know about the tractor.

James, aka mad dog, the dog, two dogs, wandering dog or Jimbob, the things I like about you I haven't got room for. Yep, that's right, your cooking (Trace still hasn't recovered from that Thai green curry). Your enthusiasm for wine and food is only exceeded by the girth of my stomach.

And we know about your pinot passion. Supposedly, Jancis Robinson once said you have to taste 50 pinot noirs before you get a truly exceptional one. (James, perhaps you could suggest a couple to her.) Obviously she has never dined with James or done a vintage at Cloudy Bay.

When it comes to pinot, well all wine actually, JB is the ultimate enthusiast with a cast-iron constitution that leaves many in his wake. Personally, I think pinot noir is a fantastic bubbly base.

James, I remember the time, at the height of your mad dog phase in 1991, when Winston tried to register you as a dog. When the dog registration person asked whether you were 'Working or Other' he couldn't continue for the tears of laughter streaming down his face.

You never said no to any request from anyone in the NZ wine industry, whether it be what wine goes with some damn food, the stuck ferment on the neighbour's gorse wine, judging the fruit wine section at the Dipton A&P show, or jetting to LA to taste 1000 wines.

In fact, CBV should have made your direct dial an 0900 number and charged \$1 a minute. If Graham had had the extra capital from this venture the vineyard guys would have had cabs and air-conditioning in their tractors years ago.

Your lovely wife Wendy is a very understanding person, oh yeah. One day she is going to find out that all those

Take a good look at these two gentlemen, because it's likely to be the last time you'll see them featured in Mentelle Notes. Ivan Sutherland (right), Cloudy Bay's ever-vigilant viticulturist since the company's inception, and pinot passionate winemaker James Healy have joined forces to establish a new Marlborough venture – Dog Point Vineyard. We wish them luck...and will miss them. You'll fully appreciate why if you browse the Cellar Rat's latest musings.

invoices for Henri Jayer Cros Parantoux and Echézeaux were not sent to you by mistake and were not for Cloudy Bay. The wines actually reside in your cellar.

Dave, thanks for letting me be part of your vision. The frustration of trying to make a cabernet sauvignon in Marlborough mate, would drive me to raising sheep and pigs too. I'll miss your quiet humour and the interesting shirts, but I won't miss the one raised eyebrow. It usually meant I'd done or said the wrong thing (a frequent occurrence).

When I went to Cape Mentelle for the 1989 harvest, you met me at the bus stop with an ice-cold beer, an act of kindness only equalled in WA by the bus driver making a comfort stop in Busselton.

We've shared cold lagers since then but that's the one I remember the most. It made me feel welcome and at home, and that about sums up the Cloudy Bay Cape Mentelle culture.

I remember how you gave me your car, filled the boot with wine and told me to discover the Great South West. I actually discovered Walpole, fishermen who party really hard, that too much Zinfandel without equal amounts of water will end in tears. And if you stuff up, it's best to confess early and avoid the pain and the bill. You never did tell me if the motel sent the account.

I'm buggered where those mud crabs dining on the mixed vegetables came from.

Sandy, you've finally got the bugger home and if he gets too pesky the darn critter can go and muck out the stable.

Many thanks to the three amigos and as Jerry Garcia said, 'It's been a strange and unusual trip.'

Love, light and the Pecos,

PS. This Rat Column is dedicated with love and respect to David, Kevin, Ivan, Al, Sue, Jane, Marion, Winston, James, Julie, Dianne, Chris, me and those old enough to remember that the good old days were just that. Cheers.

# Cultural Revolution

*Cape Mentelle marketing manager Robin Birch has just returned from a reconnaissance mission to China.*

In the West we have a lot to thank China for. Everyday objects ranging from the neck tie, spaghetti, the first kite, the original parachute, to the more exotic cloisonné, silks and jade, all had their origins in Chinese culture and have had a lasting impact on Western lifestyle. To say nothing of Chinese cuisine and its exotic regional diversity.

Not commonly known is the fact that many varieties of table and wine grapes found their way back to Europe courtesy of that famous traveller, Mr Polo. Even as far back as 1260, when Marco was on his travels, he was enjoying various fermented beverages with his Chinese and Mongolian hosts.

One wonders what he would think of more recent developments as more and more wine traders beat a path to China, keen to introduce the Chinese to the pleasures of New World wine. It is a task being taken seriously by many New World producers, including Cloudy Bay.

I visited China last month to check out the market and am happy to report that slowly, but surely, a cultural revolution is taking place.

Although wine is not part of a daily mealtime ritual, there is no doubt that knowledge and appreciation of wine is growing. Given the potential number of new recruits, it's no surprise that New World wine companies are jumping on the wine bandwagon. But they are not alone, the Chinese domestic wine industry is also growing apace.

Brands like Great Wall offer cheap red and white wines but they are all of dubious provenance. Unlike most things in China, the Chinese wine industry is not heavily regulated, and wine producers may include up to 30% of non-grape products in their blends. It is also common to purchase tanks of bulk wine, usually at bargain prices, from countries like Chile, and there is no obligation to declare regional origin on wine labels.

The favourite Chinese brew is known as 'yellow wine', a golden brown, fortified wine that is quite sweet and almost madeirised – hardly a wine for MN connoisseurs, however it does match happily with various Chinese dishes.

It is hardly surprising that the Antipodean wine industry is keen to develop the Chinese market, especially when you consider the size of the Chinese population – currently at around 1.3 billion. If a mere 1% are potential wine drinkers, it is not hard to deduce the lucrative untapped potential.

The current political climate also favours the development of the market because there are no barriers imposed on foreign trading companies by the Chinese government. Indeed, around 300 foreign companies have invested in plant and personnel in Shanghai alone.



The latest figures show that 225,000 cases of bottled wine were imported into China during 2001. France dominated, with 46%, followed by Australia at 20%. Based on current growth, this latter figure is expected to increase to 30% by the end of this year, albeit founded on a small base. There is very real market potential for New Zealand and Australian producers.

Limited production and world-wide demand for Cloudy Bay and Cape Mentelle decrees that any business in China will necessarily remain conservative in the foreseeable future. Only the wine-willing residents and travellers in Shanghai and Beijing will be able to enjoy our wines, and even then, sales are restricted to 5-star hotels, and a few restaurants.

While in China I hosted two wine dinners, one in the Cantonese restaurant at the Portman Ritz Carlton Hotel in Shanghai, the other at the very fine Aria Restaurant at the China World Hotel, Beijing.

—

*‘The current political climate also favours the development of the market because there are no barriers imposed on foreign trading companies...’*

—

The first turned upside down the notion that Chinese food and wine are incompatible, a fascinating taste experience for many of our Chinese guests. The match of the night was steamed crab claw and eggwhite, paired with *Cape Mentelle Semillon Sauvignon*. Freshness backed by subtle oak complexity played a perfect balancing act with the rich yet delicate flavours of the crab and the subtlety of the sauce. The egg white – only just set – was a perfect textural partner for both the wine and the crab meat.

Fans of Luke Mangan's Sydney Salt restaurant may well make a beeline for Beijing when they learn that two ex-staff have taken up residence at the stunning Aria restaurant at the China World Hotel.

This, the venue of our second wine dinner, offered a superb Mod Oz menu, setting new standards in Beijing.

Australian wine is already recognised in China as good value for money – thanks to the hard work and energy of the big boys like Penfolds and Wolf Blass. However, we still have a lot of work to do at the top end of the market convincing Chinese wine drinkers that we can offer good alternatives to premier and grand cru Burgundy and Bordeaux.

Let's hope that one day the presentation of *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon*, or Leeuwin Estate Art Series Chardonnay, at a corporate banquet will command as much 'face' for the Chinese as a first growth Bordeaux.

## CASK FORCE

The appearance of casks of non-vintage Marlborough sauvignon blanc on the shelves of UK supermarket chain Tesco has set off tremors in the Wairau Valley, home of New Zealand's leading ambassadorial wine export.

It's not that the region's vignerons wish to deny the English their regular draughts of crisp, zingy fresh sauvignon blanc. Indeed no, given the plantings of 3655 hectares of the flagship variety, 50% of Marlborough's grape crop, there is an imperative to encourage the Poms to drink more of it.

The main concern is the packaging format, seen by most producers to denigrate the quality and reputation of the wine that has become as synonymous with New Zealand as butter and lamb. More important, in fact, is the quality of the product.

Jeni Port, of the Melbourne *Age* wasn't impressed when she turned on the cask's tap, writing 'The wine had none of Marlborough's renowned vibrancy or pungency. It was thin, faintly suggestive of florals and herbs and quite acidic.' Ouch.

Doesn't sound like one would want to drink too much of a wine like that, which inevitably will be reflected in consumer response.

Meanwhile, Marlborough's premium producers have been galvanised to deal with the integrity issues inevitably raised by their extraordinary international success.

# Marlborough's Secret

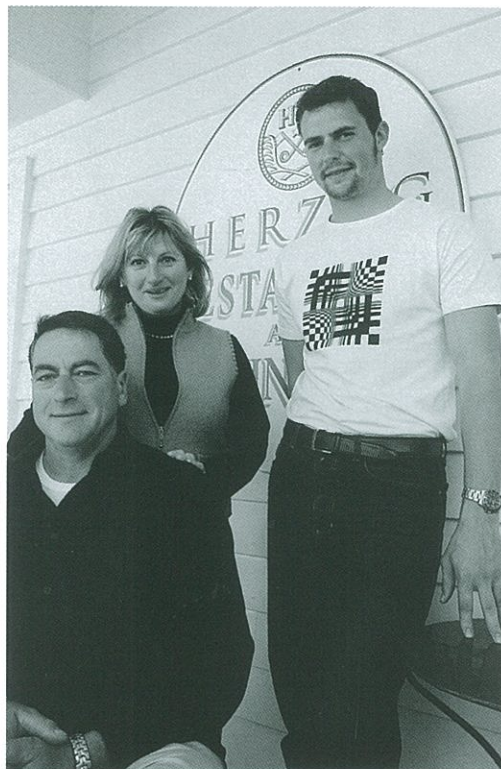
The French gastronomic Michelin touring guide has a category called 'worth a detour'. Well, you don't have to travel as far as France to test the theory. A mini-detour down the Rapaura Road of Marlborough's Wairau Valley will bring you to Herzog, one of New Zealand's hidden jewels.

This small family winery is arguably better known for its food than its estate wines, a situation partially redressed since being declared the national winner of the New Zealand Wine List of the Year Awards. The award highlights Herzog's global approach to hospitality, their list featuring a broad selection of New Zealand and imported wines, as well as their own premium portfolio.

That's not surprising given the Swiss origins of Therese and her husband Hans who have adopted Marlborough as their new home. A meal at Herzog is very reminiscent of the finest European tradition – with a twist. Much of the produce for chef Louis Schindler's degustation menu is grown on the property or sourced locally. So expect to enjoy dishes including fennel artichoke ravioli, a crispy leg of guinea fowl garnished with garlic confit and tarragon jus, farmhouse New Zealand cheeses and Herzog's own extra virgin olive oil.

The wine list also features the exemplary estate wines made by Hans, whose family have grown grapes in Switzerland since 1640.

Rest assured a meal at Herzog is well worth the detour.



Therese and Hans Herzog with chef Louis Schindler.

## ALL AT SEA

Traditionally sailors drank rum, but things have changed, especially aboard the award-winning liners of Silversea Cruises which launched an innovative wine cruise program earlier this year.

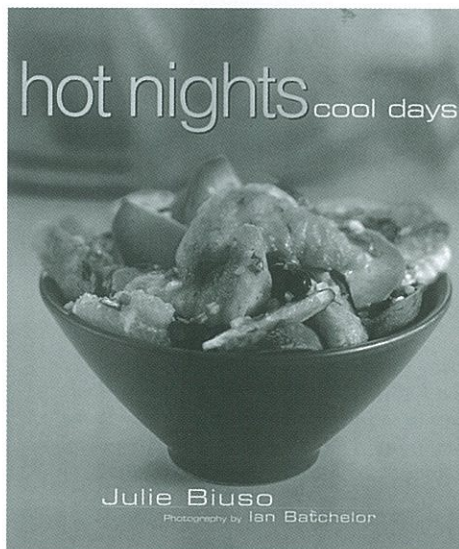
The cruises, hosted by some of the world's leading winemakers, will introduce guests to some of the world's finest wines including Cloudy Bay. Edward Berry, Cloudy Bay's London-based marketing director, will be sailing on one of Silversea's popular Mediterranean cruises in May 2004, where he'll introduce guests to the wonders of Marlborough wine and conduct a series of on-board tastings. Prior to this, guests from the *Silver Shadow* will visit the vineyard during the vessel's call at Picton in early February, a cruise highlight. Details: [www.silversea.com](http://www.silversea.com)

## KEVIN'S BUBBLE

For the record, the winner of the caption competition was: Andrew Bell, Auckland who reckons Kevin Judd said to the PM: 'Now look here, there's no way you're taking that glass with you.'

The in-house best entry goes to Diane Dwyer who came up with just: 'Sorry, Helen who?'

## HAPPY CHRISTMAS



Wondering what to stuff in your best friend's stocking this Christmas? What about a copy of Julie Biuso's new book *Hot Nights Cool Days*? The first five MN readers to answer this very hard Christmas quiz can win a personally signed copy...

- Q1** After what famous icon is Pelorus named?  
**Q2** Which wine does Julie recommend as a match for her turkey breast in verjus?

Email entries to:  
[anna.griffiths@cloudybay.co.nz](mailto:anna.griffiths@cloudybay.co.nz)

## MORE CORK TALK

Take a good look at the next cork you pull from a bottle – it may soon be a thing of the past. New research conducted by Tyson Stelzer in Queensland suggests that red wines mature better when sealed with screw caps than with corks. Apparently he accessed numerous 30-year-old Stelvin seal bottles and analysed their contents, then compared them with similar cork sealed bottles.

His findings are published in a 100-page report titled, *Screwed for Good: The case for screw caps on red wines*. Some Australian wine companies already bottle their reds with screw caps, the charge led (again) by Grosset's Gaia, Cullen and Moss Wood. In New Zealand, Felton Road have put their pinot under the screw.

At Cloudy Bay screw caps are rapidly winning support, both from the winemakers and wine drinkers. Expect to see your next bottle of *Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2003* with a twist-top. The jury is still out on chardonnay, pinot and Cape Mentelle's serious red brigade, but maybe not for all that long.

Rest assured the cork debate is still alive and well, and not just at morning tea. In the UK a recent controversial survey commissioned by the Wine & Spirit Association of 14,000 vintage 2001 wines, found a fall in the incidence of mustiness compared with previous vintages. The survey declares a rate of up to 2.1% contamination and suggests this fall could indicate that more effective cork processing procedures are reducing cork taint problems.

Ultimately, wine drinkers will determine whether we twist or pull, but already the signs and talk suggest we will extract fewer and fewer corks.

Note: Copies [A\$11.95] available from [www.cellaringwine.com](http://www.cellaringwine.com)



## CALIFORNIA DREAMING

Expat Noel Turner has been treating Americans to New Zealand's best produce for several years, and recently he had some help from Kevin Judd who hosted a dinner at the eponymous Turner restaurant in Costa Mesa, California. Guests were treated to premium Kiwi oysters, rock lobster and king salmon matched with a range or the latest release Cloudy Bay wines.

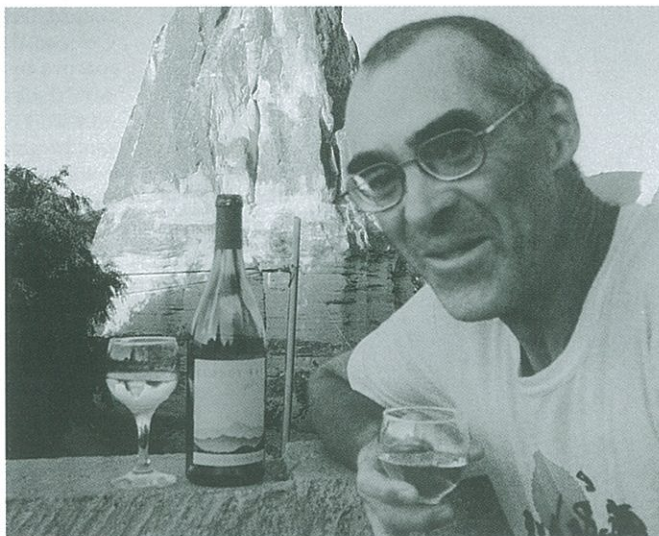
# Turkish Delight

Keeping up with *Mentelle Notes* globetrotters isn't always easy; there seems to be no limit to their adventurous spirits and quest for ambassadorial status. Take Malcolm Wade from Beachhaven who found himself in Goreme, Cappadocia, Turkey, clutching a refreshing bottle of *Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc* at the end of a day's sightseeing.

*Mentelle Notes* is keen to encourage all would-be aspirant ambassadors to take or buy a bottle of *Cloudy Bay* wine on their next trip. Snap a photo of yourself with the bottle capturing that special moment which may secure you honorary *Mentelle* Ambassador notoriety. And the reward? A celebration case of *Cloudy Bay*.

You too can be part of *CBV's* export effort...It's easy. Next time you're far from home and spot a bottle of *Cloudy Bay* – in a deli in Dubai, a sushi bar in Shanghai or

Malcolm Wade tripped to Turkey...



the front bar of a Scottish pub, buy it and take a photo. Then send it to The Editor, *Mentelle Notes*. Taking a bottle with you is also highly commended and encouraged. *MN* will publish the best and most alluring photo and the winning *Mentelle* Ambassador will receive a FREE mixed case of *CBV* wine. All entrants receive a *CB* T-shirt.

## POSSUM MAGIC

*Cloudy Bay* has won lots of fans over the years – but *MN* wonders if this is the first furry critter customer of *Cloudy Bay Chardonnay*? The thirsty possum was snapped in action at Cradle Mountain in Tasmania after tussling with three of his mates for a lick of *Marlborough's* finest. Reports tell he then joined the party but was asked to leave when he rudely nipped one of the guests on the toe. We've heard of rat cunning – is this the first recorded sighting of possum sipping?



## HO! HO! HO!

...has Santa got a deal for you... but only if you've been very good all year round. Just kidding, there are no behavioural limits set for *Cloudy Bay* drinkers, we know you are all angels.

*Marlborough's* Santa and the sleigh crew have made the following careful selection for all you goody-two-shoes: single bottles of *Pelorus NV*, *Pelorus Vintage 1999*, *Sauvignon Blanc 2003* and the new *Cloudy Bay Riesling 1999*, plus two bottles of very roast-turkey-friendly *Cloudy Bay Pinot Noir 2001*.

They won't fit in a stocking but the Christmas gift team promises to get your present delivered in good time for the season's celebrations, so you can share your cheer with friends and family.

### MENTELLE NOTES

is the free publication of  
CLOUDY BAY & CAPE MENTELLE  
VINEYARDS

For further information please contact the winery  
PO Box 376, Blenheim, Marlborough  
Tel (03) 520 9140 Fax (03) 520 9040  
email: info@cloudybay.co.nz  
web: www.cloudybay.co.nz

## FRENCH CONNECTION

Meet Eric Broggin, proprietor of *La Cave sa Rebiffe* in Reims, whose global vision sees his wine shelves stocked with the best picks of the new world and old, and of course wines from the *Cloudy Bay* stable.



## Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2003

'This is simply sensational sauvignon, arguably the finest ever under the *Cloudy Bay* label. The absolute purity of varietal character and sweetness of fruit can only be compared with kabinett-level Riesling, yet it tastes dry and obviously sauvignon blanc.'

19/20 points Geoff Kelly,  
CARO BROTHERS DIRECT

## Cloudy Bay Chardonnay 2001

'A tense distinctly cool-climate *Marlborough* wine, richly flavoured and already very harmonious but set for a long and graceful evolution.'

4.5 Stars, Michael Cooper, WINESTATE

'Nice leesy, nutty wine with some barrel fermentation complexity, a good texture and impressive length. Fine, tight and elegant wine with cellaring potential.'

87 points, Bob Campbell MW, CUISINE

## Cloudy Bay Te Koko 2000

'If this bouquet doesn't intrigue you I guess you don't like wine much, because it is emphatically vinous, embossed with fat lush fruit and a patina of gentle nutmeg and mace spice. It has exotic notes that set it apart from other wine, yet the mouthfilling flavours and satin texture are as luxurious as the finest chardonnay, especially the rush of fruit, the nutty nuances of oak, the slip of cream...Tastes great with your eyes open.'

Keith Stewart, THE LISTENER

'Creamy, mouth-filling wine with spicy oak, sizzled butter, yeast lees and subtle varietal fruit flavours. A rich and complex wine that offers much appeal.'

94 points, Bob Campbell MW, CUISINE

'One of the finest oak-aged sauvignon blancs yet produced in *Marlborough*.'

5 Stars, Michael Cooper, WINESTATE

## Cloudy Bay Gewürztraminer 2001

'This is textbook *Gewürztraminer*...and best of all it hits the shelf for the same price as a good *Alsatian* co-operative made *gewürz*.'

93 points, Nick Stock, ADELAIDE REVIEW

'Lovely wine. Rich, concentrated and superbly delicate. *Alsace* in style with subtle *Turkish delight*, ginger and apricot flavours and a drop-dead creamy texture. One of the finest samples ever made in *New Zealand*.'

93 points, Bob Campbell MW, CUISINE

## Cloudy Bay Pinot Noir 2001

'Oozes sweet black cherries and plums layered with spicy hints of chocolate and coffee. The flavours are subtly melded and finish with fine-grained tannins.'

Charmian Smith, OTAGO DAILY TIMES

## Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon 1999

'There is a slight suggestion of *Bordeaux* to it – the nose is complex with unevolved black fruit aromas, along with briar, earth, herbal and cedary notes. The long-flavoured palate is based on dense-packed fruit and classy oak flavours on a firm structure of supporting tannins.'

5 glasses,

PENGUIN GOOD AUSTRALIAN WINE GUIDE

## Cape Mentelle Cabernet Merlot 'Trinders' 2001

'Attacks with a good belt of fruit – plummy becoming loganberry and blackberry while the tannins are firm and chewy. The grip is balanced by plenty of sweet fruit and vanilla to finish...Rates very highly on a purely hedonistic scale.'

91 points Tim White,  
AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW



---

# *A View from the Vineyard*



*The 2003 Cloudy Bay Vineyard Crew.*

*Pic: Kevin Judd.*

*‘Wine makes a man better pleased with himself;  
I do not say it makes him more pleasing to others.’*

SAMUEL JOHNSON

