

the
INDEPENDENT *wine* MONTHLY

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Whilst we enjoy the process of tasting and writing up our notes, neither of us relished uploading the latest issue onto our website, a undertaking that required the patience of a saint.

So we have decided to publish future issues as a .pdf file that can be downloaded. Hence our uncontained joy in finally being able to taste, write up our reviews and publish all in the same calendar month, something that has eluded us to date.

Hawksheadwww.hawksheadwine.com

2009 Bendigo Riesling	Central Otago	\$22.00	16.0
2009 Single Vineyard Gibbston Pinot Gris	Central Otago	\$26.00	16.5
2008 Pinot Noir	Central Otago	\$39.00	16.0
2008 First Vines Pinot Noir	Central Otago	\$43.50	16.5↑
2008 Bannockburn Pinot Noir	Central Otago	\$48.00	17.0

A chance encounter at a wine trade fair in Taupo (who would have thought?) gave us our first glimpse at Hawkshead Estate. The folder that enclosed the technical details was illustrated with beautifully painted birds and caught our eye. It turns out that the painter is an ancestor of proprietor Denis Marshall, who has established the Gibbston Valley estate with his partner Ulrike Kurenbach.

Sampling the lively, crisp 2008 riesling, the delicate yet nicely textural 2008 pinot gris and the two lighter bodied and prettily fragrant pinot noirs (the 2007 estate label and First Vines) we agreed this was a producer that seemed to be heading in the right direction. So it was with interest that we received a second selection of the wines, noting a third pinot noir had been added to the mix.

With a moderately intense crunchy green apple and citrus fruit salad nose, a bright freshly fruited palate and some stony mineral notes, the **2009 Hawkshead Bendigo Riesling** is just off-dry (residual sweetness of 9.5g/litre). Moderate length and nice crispness, this is a cheerful and uncomplicated wine. Whilst not particularly complex, the **2009 Hawkshead Single Estate Gibbston Pinot Gris** displays baked pear and ripe stonefruit with a just off-dry palate and again, as with the previous vintage a nice texture. A lightness of touch to the winemaking and a degree of elegance suggest it would be more food-friendly than some of the more weighty examples of pinot gris out there.

Three pinot noirs are on offer from the Hawkshead label and first up was the **2008 Hawkshead Pinot Noir**. This is a lighter bodied style with plenty of red cherry and strawberry fruit and while showing some nice savoury fruit, the nose and palate seems a little dominated by rather heavy-handed oak giving an obvious mocha/coffee/toast character. The **2008 Hawkshead First Vines Pinot Noir** comes off the first vines to be planted (though there is no mention of age). A slight step up in concentration, there is a bit of black cherry and plum to this wine but a similar lighter bodied, savoury style.

The third pinot of the trio, the **2008 Hawkshead Bannockburn Pinot Noir** is quite different, with the deepest colour, not as advanced as the previous two, more spicy and perfumed. A bigger step up in concentration on the palate with a degree of lush silkiness to the fruit. Some toasty oak evident but more in keeping with the fruit concentration and wine style this time.

When the pinots were unveiled we discovered that the Bannockburn wine was made by Steve Davies, formerly winemaker at Carrick Estate and now at Wild Earth Wines, whereas the other two were made by Grant Taylor. And indeed the wines show the mark of their makers as much as their geographical provenance. A cast of thousands approach seems to be the way for Hawkshead as further reading of the accompanying release notes revealed the Riesling and the Pinot Gris were made by Christopher Keys (Gibbston Valley) and there is now a Marlborough Sauvignon too, made by Jules Taylor. Though in fairness it now appears that Christopher will handle all winemaking, it does seem a little at odds perhaps with a label purported to be single estate and its owners vigneron?

Camshorn Vineyards

2008 Glasnevin Gravels Classic Riesling	Waipara	\$26.99	17.0
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After all the kerfuffle regarding riesling labeling, it is interesting to see Camshorn adopt the Framingham model i.e. 'Classic' denoting a spätlese style, rather than the hotly debated number-based system.

A very bright and focused wine, the **2008 Camshorn Glasnevin Gravels Classic Riesling** has crisp lime and Granny Smith fruit, a chalky minerality and firm acid balanced by underlying residual sugar. Lime marmalade with a touch of honey in the finish. Very easy to drink, with just a mere touch of kerosene hinting at its two years in the bottle, this wine is fresh with a certain succulence and should continue to develop nicely over the next one to two years.

Sacred Hillwww.sacredhill.com

2009 Pinot Gris	Marlborough	\$20.90	15.5
2009 Chardonnay	Hawke's Bay	\$20.90	15.5
2009 Merlot Cabernet	Hawke's Bay	\$20.90	15.5↑

Rather confusingly named as the Reserve range on the website, despite no mention of it on the wines' actual labels, we always refer to these bread-and-butter wines as the "orange labels". The entry-level of the four-tiered Sacred Hill portfolio, they are frequently heavily discounted from their suggested RRP of \$20.90 in supermarkets and generally offer good value and typicity.

The **2009 Sacred Hill Pinot Gris** is a pretty, off-dry example with clean stone fruit and some vanilla and spice; a good everyday-drinking wine. The **2009 Sacred Hill Chardonnay** opens up to a pleasant, biscuit-scented nose with a fruit-driven palate of melon, peach and a hint of grapefruit. Again, easy to drink and pleasant. The youthful purple hue of the **2009 Sacred Hill Merlot Cabernet** hints at its fresh, fruity style accompanied by a light dash of oak and some supple tannins. Great for casual drinking now and no doubt, given a year or so in bottle, will offer a little more complexity.

Vidal Estatewww.vidal.co.nz

2008 Reserve Chardonnay	Hawke's Bay	\$30.00	18.0
2007 Syrah	Hawke's Bay	\$28.00	17.5↑

Vidal Estate seems to fly somewhat under the radar and yet, as well as being one of the oldest estates in the region, also produces some of Hawke's Bay's loveliest wines.

A fine example is the **2008 Vidal Estate Reserve Chardonnay** with an inviting floral and jasmine edged nose with brown biscuit, oatmeal and restrained stonefruit. The palate is taut and linear, very well-balanced with some nice minerality to the ripe fruit. Although stylish and delicious, it is still very youthful and will no doubt repay handsomely further time in the bottle.

Judging by the amount of medals and trophies that have been awarded recently, it would seem that Hawke's Bay and Syrah is a good match and there is no doubting that Hawke's Bay Syrah is the 'in' red wine at the moment. The **2007 Vidal Estate Syrah** offers an almost textbook example with rich ripe black and red fruits laced with plenty of black pepper and spice, a palate of plum and blueberry, super ripe though with nice balance and an attractive tobacco leaf note. Well-integrated oak, supple tannin and good length – a bold style; youthful and appealing.

Church Roadwww.churchroad.co.nz

2008 Reserve Chardonnay	Hawke's Bay	\$36.99	18.0
2008 Reserve Syrah	Hawke's Bay	\$36.99	17.5
2009 Reserve Noble Viognier (375ml)	Hawke's Bay	\$36.99	17.0

Always a rich forceful wine, the **2008 Church Road Reserve Chardonnay** is true to form, offering a powerful nose of struck match, lots of stonefruit and melon, new oak and mealy brown biscuit. The palate is bold with roasted hazelnut and buttered toast layered through the ripe fruit. This is a big wine but balanced with fresh acidity adding vibrancy. Though it is likely intended to repay cellaring, it is hard to see why you would need to given how approachable and appealing it is now.

The **2008 Church Road Reserve Syrah** is no shrinking violet either with an ultra-perfumed aroma of plums, blueberry and raspberry, cracked pepper and beef stock. After the opulent nose, the palate seems surprisingly restrained though is still very ripe and spicy. Plenty of tannin and well-judged oak, nice

freshness and an attractive black olive/savoury note on the finish. Just pulls up a little short but a good effort. Viognier is the new darling of fashionable white wines and Church Road have made a good fist of the **2009 Church Road Reserve Noble Viognier** retaining identifiable varietal character amongst the heady rich botrytis influence. Intense sweetness balanced with cleansing acidity, masses of poached apricot, mango, jasmine and honeyed spice, this is a delicious wine that while not massively complex or lengthy, delivers a pleasingly rich and decadent finale.

Montana Letter Series

www.montana.co.nz

2007 Patutahi Gewurztraminer	Gisborne	\$36.00	17.0↑
2008 Ormond Chardonnay	Gisborne	\$33.99	16.5
2008 Terraces Pinot Noir	Marlborough	\$40.99	17.0↓

The **2008 Montana Patutahi Estate Gewurztraminer** is a very well-established label that helped set Gisborne's name for the variety. The nose is not as opulent and lush as some but amongst the creamy/peachy/rock melon fruit is a dusting of spice and rosewater. The palate is medium sweet, with a good clean finish, and again has creamy stonefruit with some spice. Nice length. Gisborne is also the self-styled chardonnay 'capital' of New Zealand and the **2008 Montana Ormond Estate Chardonnay** is a classic peaches and cream number with spicy French oak and crème brûlée high notes. A ripe creamy palate and with the benefit of some bottle age, there is now good integration of fruit and oak. It doesn't quite have the intensity or poise of the Vidal or Church Road Reserve tasted for this issue but still has some elegance and style.

Marlborough pinot noir is often overlooked in favour of its more glamorous cousins from Central Otago and Martinborough but in the right hands can provide some lovely examples. The **2008 Montana Terraces Pinot Noir** is a pretty and fragrant wine, not hugely complex but very drinkable and appealing with plenty of cherry and redcurrant, some nice spice, slightly baked but warm generous fruit and soft oak tannins. It is a little pricey but nevertheless a safe bet.

Ti Point

www.tipoint.co.nz

2009 Chardonnay	Hawke's Bay	\$20.90	15.5↑
2009 'Two' Merlot Cabernet Franc	Matakana	\$20.90	16.0

We tasted a number of Hawke's Bay chardonnays this issue which revealed the range of styles now being made there. The **2009 Ti Point Chardonnay** is very much at the lighter end of the spectrum, a fruit-driven style, fresh and crisp with rockmelon, manuka honey and peach notes. There is some subtle oak and a nice creamy palate. The **2009 Ti Point 'Two' Merlot Cabernet Franc** is a perfumed wine with a floral lift to its soft plum and blueberry nose. Soft and approachable, medium bodied with gentle tannins, this is an easy to drink wine that is smartly priced and with its cabernet franc freshness and florals is something just a little outside the norm.

Both the Ti Point wines were very nicely judged and well-made, suggesting a sensitive approach to both fruit and style in the winery.

Framingham

2009 Sauvignon Blanc	Marlborough	\$21.95	17.0
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Despite his love for riesling (can't hold that against him - js) Andrew Hedley shows that he is just as conscientious when making sauvignon blanc. The **2009 Framingham Sauvignon Blanc** clearly displays its Marlborough heritage but somehow manages to harness the vivid character into something more restrained and elegant. Aromas in the yellow citrus, fresh pea and nettle spectrum, crisp and with a rather delicious creamy texture. Vibrant acidity and good length.

Tolaga Bay Estatewww.tolagabaywines.co.nz

2009 Muscat	Gisborne	\$14.95	15.0
2009 Unoaked Chardonnay	Gisborne	\$14.95	14.5
2009 Lightly Oaked Chardonnay	Gisborne	\$14.95	15.0

A cheerful clean, simple and nicely made range of wines with fruit to the fore. The **2009 Tolaga Bay Muscat** is straightforward with grapey, white flower and melon aromas off-dry and light in body and alcohol (10%). The **2009 Tolaga Bay Unoaked Chardonnay** is perhaps not Gisborne's answer to Chablis as stated on the back label, but instead offers uncomplicated fruit flavours with banana, ripe apple and honey dew melon, light and fruity. The **2009 Tolaga Bay Lightly Oaked Chardonnay** is exactly that; dry with only a hint of oak, clean and straightforward.

Appropriately priced, it is a bit of a pity the accompanying notes make them out to be more serious than they are. Sensibly priced at \$15 and cleanly made, so where's the shame in stating they are offering simple, fruity uncomplicated drinking?

Grasshopper Rockwww.grasshopperrock.co.nz

2008 Pinot Noir	Central Otago	\$29.90	17.5
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Made by Central Otago winemaker *du jour* Carol Bunn from Alexandra fruit, the **2008 Grasshopper Rock Pinot Noir** is fresh and youthful with a nose of rhubarb, black cherry, raspberry and herbs. The palate is taut with firm acid, red liquorice, dried thyme, red plum and stemmy notes. Fine tannin and well-integrated subtle oak, this is a miles away from the super-lush, dark and silky wines Carol Bunn is usually associated with but loses nothing for it. Not overly complex but attractive and enjoyable drinking now and should continue to shape up nicely over the next couple of years. Smartly priced.

Sileni Estateswww.sileni.co.nz

2009 The Don Riesling	Hawke's Bay	\$24.95	16.5↑
2009 The Straits Sauvignon Blanc	Marlborough	\$24.95	16.5
2009 The Woolshed Sauvignon Blanc	Marlborough	\$24.95	16.5
2009 Trinity Vines Sauvignon Blanc	Marlborough	\$24.95	15.5↑
2009 The Cape Sauvignon Blanc	Hawke's Bay	\$24.95	16.0
2008 The Lodge Chardonnay	Hawke's Bay	\$35.00	16.5↑

Sileni burst onto the Hawke's Bay wine scene over a decade ago with a large and striking winery/restaurant/food shop complex and comprehensive portfolio of wines. Judging by the labyrinthine website, the range of wines has since significantly expanded and we were somewhat surprised to see that there were even more sauvignons than we had been sent for review. There is no doubt Marlborough is awash with sauvignon blanc at present so we have some sympathy for the sales manager tasked with shifting Sileni's array.

First up, the **2009 Sileni Estate The Don Riesling**, which has upfront lime, satsuma peel and musky floral notes. Dry and light bodied, there is moderate fruit intensity but well balanced and with surprisingly good length. The **2009 Sileni Estates The Straits Sauvignon Blanc** is textbook Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc with a crisp herbal nose, light tropical fruit and a fresh brightly fruited palate. The **2009 Sileni Estates The Woolshed Sauvignon Blanc** is not entirely dissimilar, though perhaps a tad more tropical fruit on the nose leading to a gooseberry and lemon palate.

The theme continued with the **2009 Sileni Estates Trinity Vines Sauvignon Blanc**, again a little more pineapple and passionfruit, though still underpinned with gooseberry and capsicum. Slightly broader palate, moderate intensity and length.

The fourth wine was a departure hailing as it does from Hawke's Bay, and given the prominence of the region's oaked Cape Crest sauvignon from Te Mata, we were a little surprised in the choice of name of the **2009 Sileni Estates The Cape Sauvignon Blanc**. No obvious sign of oak in this wine though there is a slight spiciness and richness to the palate, presumably from the time on lees and stirring it receives during its élevage. Fruit more in the white peach, guava spectrum though the wine retains the variety's characteristic firm acidity. A nice change in style from the first three but possibly not as popular with the consumer.

The final wine is the more classic **2008 Sileni Estate The Lodge Chardonnay**, golden in colour with a ripe golden peach and melted butter nose. Seems a little developed but for fans of the bold, barrel-fermented style, this is likely to offer a comforting, cuddly type of appeal. Nice acidity gives a clean finish, needed to cut through the opulent sweet fruit.

Walnut Block Wines

www.walnutblock.co.nz

2009 Collectables Sauvignon Blanc	Marlborough	\$18.00	16.0
2009 Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc	Marlborough	\$22.00	15.5

Gently pungent with fresh mown hay, red capsicum, nettle and pineapple, the **2009 Walnut Block Collectables Sauvignon Blanc** has a subtle yet zingy palate with a crisp wet stone finish. It seems to have a little more freshness than its sibling the **2009 Walnut Block Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc** which while the technical notes show only 2g/litre residual sugar seems a little broad and sweet in the mid-palate, though it does display a zesty lemon finish.

Walnut Block deserves extra kudos for having such a navigable and smart website.

Paritua Vineyards

www.paritua.com

2008 Riesling	Central Otago	\$28.00	15.0
2007 Red	Hawke's Bay	\$37.00	17.5
2007 21.12	Hawke's Bay	\$52.00	18.5

The **2008 Paritua Riesling** offers some rather green fruit alongside a curious creamy, wet-wool and dried hay notes which one would expect in aged chenin blanc but a little out of place in this wine. Palate is light bodied with slight bruised apple flavours, moderate fruit intensity and the same creaminess. When NZ riesling often offers purity to the point of boring, it is quite a mood shift to taste a wine where the winemaker has aimed for such a distinct style. And though full marks for attempting something out of the ordinary, this wine just didn't manage to pull it off.

In contrast, the **2007 Paritua Red** tastes exactly how you would expect a high end Hawke's Bay red presented in a smart, heavyweight bottle to taste. The nose is immediately inviting with boysenberry, blueberry, dark plum aromas, some cedary oak and an almost luxurious glossy edge. The palate is rich and warming with lots of dark berry fruit flavors and some silky tannin just balancing the opulence. With time in the glass the wine became more savoury and tight, the exuberant fruit replaced by some earthy, brambly notes. Delicious now though would definitely benefit from cellaring. Further confirmation that in 2007, Hawke's Bay produced some truly exciting wines that will definitely go the distance.

Stepping up in the heavyweight bottle stakes further again is the flagship red: **2007 Paritua 21.12**. A blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc the wine lacks the immediate appeal of the Red but instead offers a complex restrained aroma where notes of graphite, cigar box and sandalwood dominate. Less obviously 'fruity', there is some blackcurrant and red berry and (hurray) a touch of cabernet leafiness. Bigger impact tannins but well integrated and with refreshing acidity lifting the palate. The back label states 14% alcohol and whilst you couldn't mistake this wine for Bordeaux, it does have subtlety and grace. Tremendous length and intensity. Built for ageing, the 21.12 needs a good few years yet.

Anchorage Wines

www.anchoragewines.co.nz

2008 Riesling	Nelson	\$17.00	15.0
2008 Sauvignon Blanc	Nelson	\$19.00	16.5
2008 Pinot Gris	Nelson	\$20.00	16.0
2008 Viognier	Nelson	\$20.00	16.0
2008 Reserve Chardonnay	Nelson	\$24.00	15.0
2008 Pinot Noir	Nelson	\$22.00	15.5

Anchorage Wines is the sort of producer where one is almost desperate to like the wines. The owners are friendly, likeable and diligent; they have a user-friendly website, great label, smartly-priced wines and are based in lovely Nelson. All of which go to show just how difficult it is to make an impression and get by in today's competitive wine environment. Anchorage appears to have had received little fanfare in this country; and the wines themselves range from average to pleasant. It is difficult not to wonder how in this tough market, producers such as this keep in the black, but one can only wish them the very best with their endeavours and hope that the wines continue to evolve and improve over the vintages.

The **2008 Anchorage Nelson Riesling** is light, 8.5% alcohol but unfortunately the lack of fruit intensity leaves a slightly wishy-washy character. Fairly firm acidity, crisp apple, citrus and white peach with moderate length. As well as needing more fruit, it could also have done with more delicate floral aromas and residual sugar (it is quite dry) to really carry things off. Mostly overshadowed by its more famous and overt neighbour, Nelson sauvignon blanc can be delicious in its own right. And indeed, the **2008 Anchorage Sauvignon Blanc** is the pick of this bunch. More tropical than most Marlborough sauvignon blancs but still with a direct crispness and focused palate, good fruit intensity and balance, the wine's mineral texture and elegance gives a relatively sophisticated style. Nice to see the moderate (12.5%) alcohol level, too.

Nelson emphasises its success in aromatics and the **2008 Anchorage Nelson Pinot Gris** is a nicely defined example of the variety with a fruity pear drop and baked apple nose with some floral honeysuckle notes. The palate is light in body, dry with moderate fruit intensity and length, crisp acidity and a lemony stone fruit finish. Viognier tends towards heady, heavy wines with fairly high alcohol but in keeping with the modest alcohol levels throughout the range the **2008 Anchorage Nelson Viognier** weights in at a mere 12% - perhaps this could be the dieter's Viognier? The overall character of the wine is moderate with enough (light) apricot, white flowers and stonefruit to provide varietal character, quite crisp acidity, just off-dry and some body and length. It is pleasant and quite nice not to have that alcoholic punch but it also lacks that viscosity and roundness generally associated with the variety. The **2008 Anchorage Reserve Chardonnay** has a pleasant though light and undistinguished nose of peachy buttery fruit with a bit of toasty oak but is let down by an unfortunate almost rancid undertone to the creaminess. This follows onto the light, broad and creamy palate. There is an impression of sweetness at the end which may find favour amongst novice wine drinkers but does create a slightly cloying finish. The **2008 Anchorage Nelson Pinot Noir** is again light, with moderate varietal expression and some length. Hints of spice and a bit of sappiness; a nice food-friendly style at a fair price but not especially memorable.

Bouldevines Winewww.bouldevineswine.co.nz

2009 Sauvignon Blanc	Marlborough	\$19.95	17.0
2009 Riesling Marlborough	Marlborough	\$19.95	16.5
2008 Pinot Noir Marlborough	Marlborough	\$30.95	16.5

Bouldevines produces six different varieties under its main label and chose to send us three for review. On this showing we were left with the impression this is a reliable producer of solid, true-to-type wines, with flashes of real potential. The **2009 Bouldevines Sauvignon Blanc** is made in a style that we here at the IWM particularly like: restrained redcurrant and fresh nettle, direct and crisp with an appealing crunchy texture. The release notes state the **2009 Bouldevines Riesling** won an Elite Gold at the 09 Air NZ Wine Awards which came as a bit of a surprise. Certainly the wine is delicate and succulent, off-dry with a lovely purity but lacks the length that you would expect of a top example. The **2008 Bouldevines Pinot Noir** has simple cherry and raspberry fruit, with perhaps just a little too much creamy sweet oak but nonetheless an appealing, early drinking style.

Mahiwww.mahiwine.co.nz

2008 The Alias Sauvignon Blanc	Marlborough	\$29.00	17.5
2008 Twin Valleys Chardonnay	Marlborough	\$34.00	17.5↑

Although we are independent, there are times when we feel it would be nice to award extra points to winemakers we like and, if that was the case, Brian Bicknell would only ever be awarded golds. Though we have yet to write it up (blush), we had an excellent visit to Mahi last September where we spent a good couple of hours with BB discussing winemaking philosophies, single vineyard wines and if true be told, quite a bit of general gossip. Thankfully, tasting blind means we can't be influenced by personality. The **2008 Mahi The Alias Sauvignon Blanc** has a muted, though complex nose with a smokey soft fruits evident. The palate shows good weight and texture, with a certain creamy quality and fineness. There is evidence of some barrel ferment but very subtly done. Sophisticated. The **2008 Mahi Twin Valleys Chardonnay** provoked much discussion. At first it seemed quite tight with only a very light aroma. But it opened up to reveal light, fresh lemon and mineral notes, high toned but again with a creamy silky texture. Not as immediate as some but a wine that would be delightful given a quick decant. Naturally we can't award extra points for being nice (otherwise we'd also have to do the opposite and there would be some wines that would struggle to get away from the starting block) but these are thoughtful, complex wines that whilst remaining true to their Marlborough roots, manage to stray away from the mainstream.

Locharburn Wineswww.locharburnwines.co.nz

2009 Pinot Rosé	Central Otago	\$22.95	16.0
2008 Pinot Noir	Marlborough	\$34.95	16.5↑

Another new label from Central Otago, Locharburn is owned by Chris and Jenny Hill who grow pinot noir themselves but contract Carol Bunn to do the winemaking (does the woman ever sleep?).

The **Locharburn Rosé** has some pretty strawberry fruit, quite a woosh of warm alcohol and some residual sweetness filling out the palate. We thought it a little too sweet but it was the clear favourite when served to friends at dinner, a good lesson in remembering that wine drinkers are not always after a cerebral experience.

The **2008 Locharburn Pinot Noir** is a supple wine with lots of dried herbs, black plums and morello cherry. An immediate, fleshy style whose charm lies in its upfront appeal.