

WINE News

Our latest Direct Imports from New Zealand, incredible values from South Africa, and some old vine classics from Australia.



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Small Production and Big Value

By Ryan Woodhouse

New Zealand is a category that has been expanding rapidly for us. Indeed, most of the U.S. has seen demand for Kiwi wine steadily growing in the last few years. Much of this growth, on the national level, has been driven by large corporate brands and mass-produced wines—most of them, Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. Some of these represent good values and have become staples on our shelves at K&L, as well as becoming household names across America. However, what is really exciting for me is the impressive growth of our selection of smaller, boutique and family-run wineries that are scattered across New Zealand's fairy-tale landscape. These are wineries often making just a few thousand cases of wine. They are places where friends come to help pick

and stomp on grapes, where quality always comes before quantity, and where people toil by hand year-round to craft liquid gold. By importing these wines directly from the source, we cut out extra expense—meaning that we can deliver these artisanal wines to you at very competitive prices! This Direct Import program has also allowed us to diversify our selections and seek out those winemakers who are experimenting with unique vineyard sites, unusual varieties, and dynamic winemaking techniques. The pages that follow contain some of the latest wines that we are now importing from New Zealand, plus some exciting new wines from South Africa and Australia. All that, and a bonus from the Northern Hemisphere—the return of the English bubbly!

BUBBLES *From the Ends of the Earth!*

New Year's celebrations may be done, but here at K&L we encourage you to drink bubbles all year round. Celebrate life!

NV Colmant "Cap Classique" Brut Chardonnay Franschoek South Africa (\$22.99) Colmant's traditional method Cap Classique is made from 100% Chardonnay, hand-picked from vineyards in Franschoek and Robertson. This wine spends a staggering 48-plus months on the lees before disgorgement, and is a screaming deal—this quality in Champagne would probably cost you twice the price. 92 points RP.

NV Quartz Reef "Zero Dosage" Central Otago New Zealand* (\$29.99) Organically and biodynamically grown Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are the basis for this beautiful sparkler from Central Otago. The Zero Dosage bottling is only made in minuscule amounts—in fact, these 120 bottles were hand-disgorged just for K&L! We are the only store in the U.S. to have it! The wine is bone-dry, racy, and very mineral-intensive. It has laser-like focus, very elegant mouth-feel, and a fascinating schist-influenced texture and luminosity.

2010 Wiston "South Downs Cuvée" Brut West Sussex England* (\$39.99) After tasting the top producers quite extensively, I believe Wiston is making the most serious and high-quality English sparkling wines on the market. The wine spent four years on the lees and has a dosage of 8g/L. This has a fine counterbalance between toasty richness from the wine's *élevage* in Burgundian oak barrels, and its racy, lemony acidity, tension, and chalky minerality. Exceptional quality.



New Zealand Road Trip

By Ryan Woodhouse

Last year I spent several weeks in New Zealand, seeking out our new Direct Imports. Here they are:

Quarter Acre

Quarter Acre was my first stop. Quarter Acre is one of a few projects for veteran winemaker Rod McDonald. Self-confessedly, Quarter Acre represents Rod's most experimental and "edgy" wines. The fruit that goes into these bottles represents tiny, specific parcels that have unique qualities. The winemaking philosophy is "minimal intervention," to let these special places show through in the wines. Production is very small and I am stoked to be working directly with Rod and his business partner Mike Farrugia on these exciting wines.

2013 Quarter Acre Sauvignon Blanc Hawke's Bay* (\$14.99) NZ Savvy with a difference. Fruit for this wine was selected from vineyards on stony, alluvial terraces overlooking the Ngaruroro River. It was pressed straight to neutral oak barrels without settling. This full-solids, wild yeast ferment has given the wine so much richness of flavor and texture plus a flinty, mineral, wild edge. Dynamite stuff!

2013 Quarter Acre Viognier Hawke's Bay* (\$14.99) From 30-plus-year-old vines by the sea in Haumoana, another wild yeast, full-solids fermented aromatic white with complexity and richness. This has lots of savory lees components to balance Viognier's natural exuberance and floral notes. 93+ points Raymond Chan.

2011 Quarter Acre Syrah Hawke's Bay* (\$19.99) This Syrah comes from a parcel of pure river gravels in the heart of the Gimblett Gravels. Vines are low-yielding, giving power and concentration. The wine shows exotic berry fruits, smoke, liquored raspberry, and that distinctive cracked black pepper nose. A lovely, balanced expression of world-class Syrah. 95 points Raymond Chan.

2011 Quarter Acre Bordeaux Blend Hawke's Bay* (\$19.99) A Bordeaux blend from a small, organic vineyard in the Havelock Hills, this shows deep, juicy black and blue fruits, pipe tobacco, bittersweet chocolate and warm earth. There's a lovely, aromatic lift and freshness to the wine. 93+ points Raymond Chan.



Elephant Hill

One of the best visits on the trip was Elephant Hill. This boutique property, located right on the oceanfront in the Te Awanga subregion of Hawke's Bay, is simply stunning. Upon turning up the driveway at Elephant Hill it is very clear this place is about precision and quality. The vineyards are manicured and the winery is pristine and fitted out with the very best equipment. The tasting room and top-notch restaurant are architectural masterpieces, clad with copper and surrounded by infinity ponds. However, I have often found that with "swanky" places like this, the stainless steel tanks and crystal glassware shine

far brighter than the wines. Thankfully, Elephant Hill stampedes right through that stereotype, and then some. The investment has been put in all the right places, such as custom wooden *cuvés*, crossflow filters for gentle handling of the wines, and, most significantly, some of the best parcels of vines in the country. The estate includes coastal vineyards (within 50 yards of the ocean) in Te Awanga, and another parcel in the heart of the famed Gimblett Gravels, an old riverbed with 30-plus feet of river stones into which the vine roots penetrate. Bordeaux blends and Syrah from this region have gained international recognition for their concentration, power and structure.

2013 Elephant Hill Syrah Hawke's Bay (\$24.99)* Champion Wine of Show, 2014 Spiegelau International Wine Competition. Grapes were hand-picked from Gimblett Gravels and Te Awanga vineyards. 94 points Wine Orbit (Sam Kim): "This is a hugely promising Syrah. The wine exhibits outstanding fruit purity with elegant complexity—black plum, blueberry, smoke and cedar. It's concentrated and refined on the palate, showing gorgeous fruit weight and velvety texture, and finishes superbly long and smooth. Supple tannins provide excellent structure and length."

2013 Elephant Hill Sauvignon Blanc Hawke's Bay* (\$16.99) A lovely, pure expression of Sauvignon Blanc, from an oceanside site in Te Awanga. Fruit is whole-bunch pressed and fermented with only wild yeasts. It shows juicy, ripe citrus flavors and some more tropical notes of guava and kumquat, complemented by stony minerality and a crisp cut of fresh acidity. Really serious NZ Sauv Blanc.

2012 Elephant Hill Pinot Noir Central Otago* (\$24.99) Sourced from top growers in Central Otago. Soft, elegant and a real crowd-pleaser with ripe cherry and baking spices, finishing with supple tannins and bright, crunchy acidity. 93 Wine Orbit (Sam Kim) and 93 points Raymond Chan.



Soil in the Gimblett Gravels is composed of 90% rock!



Elephant Hill Winery, Te Awanga, Hawke's Bay.

2013 Elephant Hill “Le Phant Rouge” Bordeaux Blend Hawke’s Bay* (\$19.99) I consider this to be one of the best value bottles in the store. It contains fruit from all of Elephant Hill’s estate vineyards, but is driven by the Gimblett Gravels’ distinctive, black/blue fruits and stony, mineral undertones. It’s a highly aromatic wine with cassis, mint and tobacco. Medium-bodied, with great structure and length, this is a must-try for any Bordeaux-lover. Perfect steak wine. 93 points Wine Orbit (Sam Kim) and 93 points Raymond Chan.

Ellero (Pisa Terrace Vineyard)

One of the single most incredible sites that I have visited in NZ has to be the Pisa Terrace Vineyard, the home of Ellero. This tiny parcel sits atop a glacial terrace towering above Lake Dunstan in the Cromwell basin of Central Otago. With snow-capped peaks to one side and glistening waters to the other, a more stunning scene is hard to imagine—and the wines produced from this site are equally spectacular. The magic here is threefold, starting with the soil, a unique mix of glacial deposits composed of schist and quartz. The aspect, a gentle, northeast-facing slope, exposes the vines to dawn’s first light, bringing gradual

warming and long daylight hours. Finally, owners John and Roberta farm the 17-acre parcel with the care and attention some people give to their prize vegetable patch (apologies to the Flowerdays at TWR for stealing their analogy). The vineyard is certified BioGro Organic.

2012 Ellero “Pisa Terrace Vineyard” Pinot Noir* (\$29.99) Fantastic purity and ethereal texture—the tannin structure is superfine and elegant, yet the wine has plenty of depth, power and concentration. It shows lots of exuberant, ripe, red fruits, fresh ground spices and rose petals. It’s medium-bodied and has a silky texture and bright, fresh acidity. I love this Pinot. 92 points JS and 93 points Raymond Chan.

COGNIZANT (by TWR)

I am excited to introduce COGNIZANT. This is a new “house brand” for K&L that will be focused on bringing you high-quality, interesting and great value wines from New Zealand made specifically for us!

2014 COGNIZANT Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough* (\$14.99) The first wine under this new label was made by Jason and Anna Flowerday of Te Whare Ra (TWR) Winery. While I was staying with the Flowerdays in June we put this blend together from Sauv Blanc both off their own organic vineyard in Wairau Valley and their grower’s block in the Awatere Valley. After about a dozen renditions we settled on this composition: 60% Awatere, 40% Wairau fruit; 75% fermented in stainless steel and 25% in French oak puncheon. The wine captures the classic, fresh, citrus, herbaceous and snappy character of NZ SB, but also has rich palate weight and a nice softness that comes from the neutral oak ferment and extended lees contact. Basically, this is a \$20 wine anywhere else, but our direct relationship means we can get it on the shelf under \$15! Only 250 cases exist of this one-off, so grab a couple and see what you think! Top value!



FRAM Wines of Exploration from South Africa

The FRAM wines are some of the coolest, tastiest and best value wines I have tasted from anywhere in the last couple of years. Thinus Krüger, CEO/president/winemaker/sole employee of FRAM, brings us these remarkable “wines of exploration.” Thinus is a rising star of the South African wine industry who was recently awarded a prestigious fifth star (out of five) from the Platter’s Guide (the most highly regarded publication on South African wines). I was truly blown away by the quality, purity, depth and *value* of the entire range!

2013 FRAM Chardonnay Robertson (\$12.99) This unoaked Chard is sourced from a unique vineyard that has some of South Africa’s only calcium soil deposits. This gives the wine a lovely mineral undercurrent to complement the bright, ripe, yellow stone fruits and soft, elegant texture. Thinus blends 8% whole-bunch, skin-fermented Chenin Blanc to enhance texture, structure and add “zippiness”! Great everyday Chard with much more depth and intrigue than the price suggests.

2013 FRAM Shiraz Swartland (\$12.99) This juicy, dense Shiraz is from old vineyards in the Riebeeck Kasteel (decomposed granite soils) and old bush vines west of Malmesbury (“Koffieklip” or “coffee stone” soils rich in iron oxide). The wine is packed with powerful berry fruits, rich spice, some meaty notes and black pepper complexity. Despite its obvious power and concentration, the wine is aromatic, vibrant and balanced. Exceptional value.

2012 FRAM Pinotage Citrusdal Mountain (\$22.99) I have a love/hate relationship with Pinotage. They can be so good, and yet most are so bad! This is one of the best I have tasted. From old vines, it shows wonderful concentration and richness, a juicy mid-palate, super silky, mouth-coating tannins and lovely, soft fruit—it’s powerful yet elegant. This wine does *not* have the “burnt rubber” or “Band-Aid” characters people associate with Pinotage. If you are serious about exploring one of South Africa’s most beloved varieties, this is about as good as it gets.

— Ryan Woodhouse

Australia: Keeping the Faith and Spreading the Word

By Jim Chanteloup

In the fall of 2013 I attended a major event called *Savour Australia*.

There were over 700 people from all over the world for three days of classes, lectures and, of course, tasting! You could feel that there was a sense of purpose behind the event that was focused on creating renewed and inspired vision for this *large* country that creates diverse and exceptional wines. The category has seen tremendous growth in the last few years, and I can only say that they are producing wines that over-deliver at every price point. There is opportunity for all lovers of wine to discover and share the wines of Australia. Here are a few to set you in the right direction.

2012 Hewitson “Ned & Henry’s” Shiraz-Mourvèdre Barossa Valley South Australia (\$19.99), 96 points JH; **2012 Hewitson “Miss Harry” Rhône Blend Barossa Valley South Australia (\$19.99)**, 94 points JH and 91 points WS. I don’t know if it’s that Dean Hewitson spent time at UC Davis with Chave and our friend Rudi de Pins from Château Montfaucon, but his wines may show more Rhône-like character than most other Aussie producers and—dare I say it—some in France, while still having his feet firmly “planted” in Barossa. His wines come from old vine material, and he employs a judicious use of French oak that I have long admired. Both of these wines show impeccable balance, purity of fruit, drive and energy. Miss Harry offers a bouquet of warm raspberry notes, plum, white pepper and new leather. On the palate, boysenberry, earth and a hint of red licorice appear with a dusting of cocoa powder. Ned & Henry’s has a great nose of blueberry, blackberry, leather, dark chocolate and a hint of Herbes de Provence. The wine is dense and powerful, yet has focus and poise, with a cloak of fine, ripe tannins.

2012 Paxton “MV” Shiraz McLaren Vale South Australia (\$15.99)
A new winery for us, Paxton practices biodynamic farming. This Shiraz shows classic McLaren Vale character. Aromas are lifted, with dark plum, raspberry, boysenberry, spice cake, clove, iron and cedar. The palate is medium-bodied, with typical mid-palate acidity and milk chocolate notes for the region, and fine, ripe, gritty tannins. There is a lot of wine here for the money. 92 points JH and 91 points WS.

2013 Mount Trio Sauvignon Blanc Great Southern Western Australia* (\$11.99) Usually in Western Australia, and Margaret River specifically, you see Sauvignon Blanc blended with a hefty dose (40-50%) of Sémillon. Here the expression stays light and vibrant. The nose shows lemon/lime blossom, with gooseberry and an herbal nuance. The palate offers refreshing acidity, with a delicate, creamy texture and fine length. Great with a spicy shrimp or calamari dish. 92 points JH.



Dean Hewitson in the bush vines in Barossa Valley, South Australia.

2012 Jim Barry “Lodge Hill” Shiraz Clare Valley South Australia (\$15.99) This wine has always been a great value. The Lodge Hill is one of the highest vineyards in Clare Valley, known for its warm days and cool nights along with the slate in the soil. The bouquet has notes of dark plum, black cherry and blackberry, with pepper and rosemary accents. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied and elegant, with bittersweet chocolate and a minerality accenting the core fruits, leading to a long, cool finish. 95 points JH, 90 points RP and WS.

NV R.L. Buller “Premium Fine” Muscat Rutherglen Victoria (375ml \$13.99) The “stickies” are one of Australia’s treasures that seem to be off the radar for most people, but they can be *amazing*. And the kicker is how good even the entry-level wines from the category can be—these are fortified wines that use the solera system, as in Spain. Some years back I tasted one component from the 1977 vintage, so the art of blending is huge here, with young and old material used to create the various tiers that houses offer. This is complex stuff, with layers of dried apricot, golden raisin, honey, toffee, molasses, caramel, brown sugar and a hint of orange zest. While rich, sweet and unctuous, the wine is not cloying. Over the years, this non-vintage release has scored 94-97 points in Wine Advocate. This is the next after-dinner dessert wine you need to taste!

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