

Taupo Winetasters Club

R18

The Official Newsletter of
The Taupo Winetasters' Club
Warning: Contains scenes of serious wine tasting!

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Taupo Winetasters' Club, PO Box 690, Taupo

September 2005 Issue

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FIRST TO SEE THE LIGHT



What does the first city in the world to see the sun each day...the Colosseum... and wine...have in common? If you thought Italy was the common denominator, you're wrong!



Matawhero Winemaker Denis Irwin will tell you what he really thinks!

The answer is Denis Irwin, the quirky and innovative proprietor of Matawhero Wines on the outskirts of Gisborne, the first city in the world to see the sun rise. At 7.30pm on the evening of Wednesday 21st September members of the Taupo Winetasters' Club, and visitors, can meet Denis at the Indulgence cafe in Horomatangi Street Taupo.

Denis' version of the famous Roman arena of the gladiators, is the Colosseum Café and wine bar. Undoubtedly there will have been many heroic wine tastings and meals of Gladiatorial proportions hosted at the Colosseum café by Denis and his wife. Wine and food pairing is part of the Irwin's passion, so it should not surprise

you that much enthusiasm goes into this aspect of their business. Sited in the heart of the Matawhero vineyards on Riverpoint Road, The Colosseum Café is the public centre of the Winery these days. It has built a reputation for friendly hospitality and lively food cooked with generosity and talent. The Colosseum Café is also the winery's tasting centre and cellar door sales shop. Matawhero became one of the first boutique wineries in New Zealand in the late 1970's when Denis won his first medals for Gewurztraminer overseas. He entered his 1977 Matawhero Gewurztraminer into a wine show in Paris with excellent results and the 1978 vintage was of even higher standard. The wine was discovered and everyone started to drink it, including the Queen of England. So it came to pass that Matawhero's gewürztraminer launched Gisborne and New Zealand into the international wine arena. The Matawhero Vineyards were established in 1968 and the first wines were produced in 1975. These individualistic wines were all fermented to dryness using Matawhero's unique wild yeast strains and natural malolactic fermentation to produce wines specifically designed to accompany a wide range of food styles and occasions.

But alas, Denis has given up

making Gewurztraminer for the time being at least. In fact he made no white wines at all in 2004, preferring to concentrate on his Bridge Estate Bordeaux blend of Pinot Noir and Syrah.

Already his Bridge Estate Pinot Noir and Merlot really stand out in what many consider to be a white wine-producing region only. This speaks volumes for Denis' determination to defy conventional wisdom.

Denis has been quoted as saying that he was in transitional mode in 2004, having sold a big part of his vineyard, and with it all his white grapes. He expects white wine to flow again from the Matawhero winery in future but just don't expect it to taste like wine made by "people in white coats".

So don't miss meeting Denis Irwin. You will enjoy his warm and wonderful company as he tells you what he really thinks.



NEXT MEETING

**MATAWHERO
WINES**

**With winemaker
Denis Irwin**

**7.30pm Wednesday
21st September
at 'INDULGENCE'**

**The Café at 47 Horomatangi
Street · Taupo
(Opposite the NZ Post Shop)**

Members: \$20

Non Members: \$25

Includes Supper & Raffle

BOOK A SAFE DRIVER

A WARM WELCOME FOR INNOVATIVE WINEMAKER



Gordon Russell taking his daily exercise by hand plunging a small batch of red wine in one of the 70-year old open topped concrete fermenters that are still used at Esk Valley Estate.

Esk Valley Estate wine maker Gordon Russell combines traditional methods with a passion for new ideas to produce unique handcrafted wines.

On Wednesday the 17th thirty members and visitors turned out to the August meeting of the Taupo Winetasters' Club at Indulgence in Heu Heu Street Taupo to extend a warm welcome to Esk Valley Estate's highly successful and innovative winemaker, Gordon Russell.

Over a relaxing starter of Esk Valley Black Label Chenin Blanc 1999 from the club's cellar, members mingled and introduced themselves to Lorraine and Derek Woods who were visiting from Bunnythorpe just outside of Palmerston North. Lorraine and Derek belong to the Manawatu Wine Society and the Palmerston North Wine and Food Society. They had travelled to their Taupo holiday home on this occasion especially to reacquaint

themselves with Gordon Russell after reading about his impending visit in R18. And they were not disappointed. Gordon presented an interesting selection of wine from the current Esk Valley Estate range as he shared his highly successful philosophies on winemaking. As an added dimension to the evening, his selection of wine was supplemented by four contributions from the club cellar, including a collectable classic, the 1995 Esk Valley Terraces.

With his passionate approach to winemaking and the enormous success his wines have achieved in tastings and competitions, Gordon is regarded as one of New Zealand's leading winemaking identities.

Over the past 15 years we have enjoyed watching Gordon go from strength to strength as he has developed innovative ideas that have ultimately contributed to the success of the New Zealand wine industry.

It is innovation that drives Gordon. He assured us that "new things are always happening" and they will keep him interested in pursuing his highly honed craft at Esk Valley well into the foreseeable future.

Gordon was born in New Plymouth and after attending university his desire to travel took him to England and Europe for three years. It was during his time overseas that he developed an appreciation of wine. When he returned to New Zealand in 1986, an opportunity arose to be involved in the wine industry at a small winery in West Auckland, where he learnt both cellar and lab skills. A move to the Villa Maria winery, in 1988, led to him becoming Cellar Foreman.

Gordon's Christmas present for 1989 from Villa Maria founder George Fistonich, was a move to Hawke's Bay as Assistant Winemaker at the company's independent Esk Valley Estate

operation. In 1993 Gordon became the winemaker. Gordon's portfolio now includes one of New Zealand's most collectable wines, The Terraces, which is a blend of Malbec, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc grapes harvested from the steep terraced vineyard behind the winery. Naturally this is the wine Gordon gains the most satisfaction from making, but he also derives great pleasure from experimenting with new wine styles and grape varieties. One is Syrah, a new addition to the Esk Valley range, which comes off the Comerstone vineyard in the Gimblett Gravels. Esk Valley also produces New Zealand's only Verdelho, a white wine that's made with a Portuguese grape.

Apart from the much applauded Merlot based reds and the Reserve Hawke's Bay Chardonnay, Esk Valley Estate has also attracted notice for its Chenin Blanc. Gordon aims to produce premium hand crafted wines that are both elegant and sophisticated and which truly reflect the character of the individual vineyards. He believes that the concept of 'texture' in a wine is as important as the aromas and flavours of the wine. By 'texture' he means the balance and harmony of the wine together with the complexity and palate interest. He achieves this by keeping open as many blending options as possible. He creates a multitude of small batch ferments from the various parcels of grapes he receives in from around Hawke's Bay. These are contained in the historical 70-year

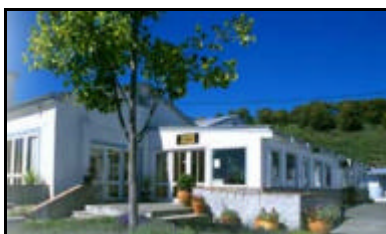
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Taupo Winetasters' Club COMMITTEE DIRECTORY

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old open topped concrete fermenters that are still used for the production of red wines making Esk Valley Estate one of the few remaining wineries that still hand-plunge red wines in the traditional manner to create a softer and more elegant style. Such techniques as barrel fermentation and yeast lees influence complete the process. Esk Valley Estate Chardonnay's are barrel fermented and the red wines are barrel aged for a minimum of one year with the Reserve styles spending at least 18 months in French oak barriques.



The Esk Valley Estate cellar shop manager, Sue Cranswick, won Cellar Door Personality of the Year at the 4th annual Hawke's Bay A & P Mercedes-Benz Wine Awards.

HAWKE'S BAY ON SHOW

One departure from tradition though is the use of the Stelvin screw cap closure system on all Esk Valley Estate wines from the 2002 harvest onwards. It's a move that will keep Esk Valley Estate wines showing off the best Hawke's Bay can offer for many years to come. Have a look at the following wines tasted during the evening with Gordon Russel, as proof of the quality available.

Esk Valley Black Label

Hawke's Bay Riesling 2004:

Gordon insists on making Riesling because he likes drinking it. Three vineyards were used in the production of this wine. The 25 year-old vines in Simon Bennet's vineyard at Clive provided the bulk of the wine. The fruit of these old vines display an intense lime note, and produce age-worthy wine. A small parcel of first crop vines on the edge of the Gimblett Gravels in the Joseph Soler vineyard

produced a very lifted wine with tropical fruit characters. Lastly some Central Hawkes Bay fruit from the Johansen's vineyard at Takapau, provided the crisp acid spine and ripe apple flavours. The resulting blend of the above three wines is a delicious light wine in a Germanic style. Low alcohol and some residual sugar balance the crisp acidity, making for a balanced and very drinkable wine, ideal as an aperitif. The flavours while young are of lime and apple with hints of tropical fruits, which with time will become more complex, with toast and honey notes. Average retail for this delicious Riesling is \$19.95.

Esk Valley Black Label

Hawke's Bay Verdelho 2004:

This Verdelho is one of my favourite summer drinks. Verdelho is a Portuguese variety originating from the island of Madeira, where it has long been used to make a white fortified wine. Recently it has become increasingly popular in Australia where it has been made as a crisp dry white. It is this example Gordon has followed with the first Verdelho to be produced in New Zealand. The pioneering Esk Valley Estate Verdelho vines are planted in their Omaha Gravels vineyard in the Gimblett Gravels district. While the vines have struggled in these poor soils they have yielded a small crop of intensely flavoured grapes. Making a Verdelho wine was a big learning curve for Gordon as the grapes are thick skinned and Botrytis resistant so high brix levels are achievable which results in unusual acid and Ph profiles to balance. It is a floral wine with Riesling expressions that are highly aromatic, exhibiting aromas and flavours of stone fruit, passionfruit and citrus notes. Produced as a dry style with good mouth feel and body and a clean crisp finish. Average retail for this powerful food wine is \$19.95.

Esk Valley Black Label **Hawke's Bay Chenin Blanc**

2004: This is a single vineyard wine from Ron and Glennis Harding's Moteo Terraces vineyard at Moteo Pa. This vineyard is sited on a shingly river terrace above the Tutaekuri River. After a warm and wet summer then a settled autumn, the grapes ripened to full maturity in excellent condition. The fruit was hand harvested, lightly pressed and settled before fermentation with a selected yeast strain. Cool fermentation ensured that the intense fruit flavours from the vineyard were retained and the ferment was arrested to retain a small dose of residual sugar to balance the natural acidity. The wine was then aged on the lees and stirred for a period before bottling. This is a very aromatic wine with intense aromas and flavours of quince, passionfruit and grapefruit. The wine is full bodied and balanced with a crisp finish. The whisper of residual sugar adds an extra dimension to this very pure and potentially long-lived wine and it will gain further complexity with age. Available only at the Esk Valley Estate wineshop for an average retail price \$19.95, the rest is exported to the United Kingdom where it is snapped up by the restaurant trade.

Esk Valley Reserve Hawke's **Bay Chardonnay 2004:**

Gordon boasts that this is the Esk Valley Estate's best chardonnay yet. Mind you he admits to claiming this every year and we hope he is able to make this claim for many years to come. This wine is a blend of Brian Howard's Bay View vineyard and Greg and Fiona Duley's vineyard at Puketapu. The Howard vineyard contributed 75% of the fruit towards the blend with a juice full of the flavours of lime and grapefruit from vines growing on sandy loam. The other 25% of the blend was picked with a high sugar level from the Duley's vineyard situated on sand above

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shingle on the banks of the Tutaekuri River. This vineyard has made Esk Valley Reserve Chardonnay since its first crop in 1996. The fruit for this wine was hand harvested and whole bunch pressed to French oak barriques for fermentation, 40% of which were new. The wine underwent fermentation using both indigenous and cultured yeast and was then put through malolactic fermentation to soften the acidity. The finished wine was left as separate components until blending and then bottled in March 2005. This is a full-bodied and elegant Hawke's Bay style of chardonnay where the fruit predominates over oak. The wine exhibits flavours of stone fruit, pineapple and grapefruit, with complementary characters derived from barrel fermentation and malolactic fermentation. With cellaring this wine will derive even more complexity for an average retail price of \$34.95.

Esk Valley Reserve Hawke's Bay Chardonnay 1991: This classic from the Taupo Winetasters' Club cellar exceeded Gordon's expectations. It has aged really well. The colour is still a healthy yellow gold and the syrupy nose is a blend of ripe peaches and nectarines with smooth spice. It's still a rich and weighty wine showing evidence of very ripe fruit. The palate has a stunning and integrated texture and although the fruit identity has gone it has been replaced by silky honeyed citrus flavours with dry aged toasty characteristics. There is still a nice structure and even after all these years the depth and texture of this wine is very much evident. Recommended retail? See the club cellar mistress, Maureen Sando, for a quote but I doubt if she will supply!

Esk Valley Black Label Hawke's Bay Merlot 2004: Esk Valley Estate is synonymous with red wine and it built its reputation on Merlot. This wine is from a selection of Hawke's Bay vineyards, most of which are on

the famed shingle soils of the Gimblett Gravels. The de-stemmed Merlot grapes were crushed into the iconic open top concrete fermenters Esk Valley Estate uses for fermentation. The muscle building part of the process, hand plunging of the cap day and night, ensured gentle colour and tannin extraction. Once dry the fruit was run off to tanks and barrels for malolactic fermentation, before aging in French and American oak barriques for 11 months. Throughout the aging period each vineyard parcel was kept separate, enabling Gordon to be very selective with his blending. The wine is very deeply coloured and exhibits a nose of red fruits, currants and oak. The palate is full bodied and soft with flavours once again of red fruits and chocolate, with a firm finish derived from fully ripened grapes. Although enjoyable as a young wine it will develop complexity with time in the bottle, and can be cellared with confidence. Average retail price of this solid robust Merlot is \$22.95.

Esk Valley Black Label Hawke's Bay Merlot 2000: This Merlot from the Taupo Winetaster's Club cellar is now in its prime. Made from a blend of grapes harvested from vineyard sites scattered across Hawke's Bay, including the shingle soils of Gimblett Road, the river silts of Moteo Pa and Puketapu and the red metal soils of Bridge Pa. Each of these distinct sites provided grapes with unique flavours and characters. The same process as described for the 2004 vintage above was employed to make this 2000 vintage Merlot. The result is a wine that is deeply coloured and exhibits a nose of black currants and oak. The palate is full bodied and soft with flavours once again of black currants and chocolate, with a firm plummy finish derived from fully ripened

grapes. Its almost French in nature and if you can still get some, expect to pay about \$22.95.

Esk Valley Reserve Hawke's Bay Merlot Malbec Cabernet 2002: Esk Valley red wine on steroids! The 2002 vintage turned around into a cracker when the hottest driest March ever saved the vintage from disaster. By harvest time the sugar levels had taken off producing the highest levels Esk Valley Estate has ever harvested. This wine is from two vineyard sites within the Gimblett Gravels Winegrowing District. These vineyards were planted in 1990 and 1992 respectively, and show a consistency of flavour and tannin development expected from older vines. The grapes for this wine were de-stemmed and crushed into the 70 year old open topped concrete fermenters and inoculated with selected red wine yeast strains. Once active, the ferments were plunged six hourly by hand to ensure a complete and gentle extraction of colour and tannin. When fermentation was complete the new wines were pressed to tank and barrel and underwent malolactic fermentation. The wines were then aged in French oak barriques for 21 months before egg white fining and bottling. This is consistently one of New Zealand's top red wines. The 2002 vintage blend was 56% Merlot for softness, 24% malbec to add spice, and 20% Cabernet to give the wine backbone. The wine is black in colour with aromas and flavours of black fruits and chocolate. Generous in flavour and mouthfeel, it possesses high tannin levels due to the ripeness of the grapes at harvest and vine maturity. The wine will benefit from time in the cellar and is amongst the best wines yet from this Estate. Only 1000 cases were produced and retailed on average for \$49.95 per bottle.

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For courtesy to all attending...
SWITCH OFF your
CELLPHONE at Club Meetings



The Terrace Vineyard on the hillside beside the Esk Valley Estate winery at Bayview.

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Esk Valley The Terraces 1995:

The last red of the evening came from the Taupo Winetasters' Club cellar and Gordon rated it as one of the truly great wines they have made at the estate. The Terraces is only produced in outstanding vintage years and is consistently rated by wine writers and connoisseurs as one of New Zealand's finest red wines. The 1995 blend of Merlot, Malbec and Cabernet Franc has produced an amazing wine with remarkable complexity with heaps of intense fruit.

The summer of 1995 was the hottest the unique hillside vineyard had experienced so by the time the grapes were harvested they had set well.

Yields were deliberately kept at 1 tonne per acre, which equated to about \$12000 per tonne to grow making this wine a real labour of love for Villa Maria group owner George Fistonich, despite the high retail price tag! The fully ripened grapes were harvested in late March before the notorious rains of that year began and a wine of great colour, fragrance and intense flavours with fully ripened tannins was produced. Hand harvested, hand plunged in wax lined concrete fermenters, racked barrel to barrel in 100% new French oak barrels, and lightly egg white fined. Now it has reached the ripe old age of 10 it is still a rich and very drinkable wine with excellent continued cellaring potential. Exhibiting a remarkably dark rich burgundy colour with little signs of aging, and a ripe and smokey nose, the

palate reveals a plummy black and tarry wine with liquorice, spice, and strong berry fruit flavours still evident. Unfortunately the amount made is always very small and it is only available for purchase via En Primeur or by exception, through the Esk Valley Estate Cellar Shop. En Primeur is a traditional method of selling Burgundy and Bordeaux wine that enables you to purchase the wine 6 months ahead of its release. Using this method for The Terraces is the only way Esk Valley Estate can provide consumers with an opportunity of securing a quantity of this exclusive wine.

MAUREEN'S HAIR COLOUR RAISED OVER \$300

Club Cellar mistress, Maureen Sando, shocked everyone who attended the recent evening with Esk Valley Estate winemaker Gordon Russell when she entered Indulgence sporting a new fluorescent pink hairdo.

But never fear, Maureen hasn't reverted to a previously hidden punk rocker lifestyle, the brightly coloured hair dye was all for a worthy cause.

She was one of about 30 locals who were sponsored to dye their hair outrageous colours to raise money for the Taupo/Ruapehu Life Education Trust with the trust's mascot Harold, and his Hair Raising fundraiser.

The Trust needs \$100,000 a year to operate a mobile classroom in outlying areas of the Taupo and Ruapehu districts.

Harold's Hair Raising fundraiser raised \$8153.70. Maureen raised over \$300 and she appreciated the support of the many Taupo Winetaster's Club members who contributed to her personal total.

CONVENTION 2006 PROGRAM UPDATE



Eat Catering set up for out-catering in Taupo

Eat Catering Confirmed For Friday Night

The caterer has now been confirmed for the Friday evening function of the 27th Annual Convention of the Federation of Wine and Food Societies of New Zealand Inc, which is being held in Taupo over the weekend of May 5 to May 7 next year.

The Night In The Cellar is the introduction to the weekend's activities and a chance to mix and mingle with fellow convention goers deep in the famous underground cellar of local wine and spirit merchant, Scenic Cellars. Their state of the art wine cellar will seat up to eighty convention delegates for a dinner surrounded by hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of wine including case lots of many famous en primeur first growths. The dinner will be catered by one of Taupo's finest catering companies, Eat Catering. A relative newcomer, but with a well established pedigree, Eat Catering was set up in association with the hugely popular and successful Replete Food Company to help provide further services to the increasing demand for out-catering in Taupo. The principals, Victoria Chrystall and Chris Johnston, formed the

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partnership because of their love of food and passion for hospitality.

Victoria worked at Replete 7 years ago. She has now completing formal training and spent 4 years cooking around the world where she gained valuable experience from the acclaimed Bayswater Brasserie to catering in London and formal dinners for the Ski Cuisine Company in the French Alps.

Eat Catering aims to provide high quality food, and a friendly and professional service for all occasions from morning teas to business lunches, drinks parties, formal dinners and weddings.

So start saving now for an unforgettable wine and food experience on your own doorstep.

As a dedicated wine and food connoisseur and loyal Taupo Winetasters' Club member, this is your chance to attend this annual Federation of Wine and Food Societies of New Zealand celebration of food and wine without any of the accommodation and travel costs normally associated with this Convention when it is hosted in other parts of the country. Stand by for individual function costs when they are finalised.

Look Who's Having a Birthday on September 30th...



Taupo Winetasters' Club Member

Ley Lewis

Will she join Helen or Don's Army?

NEWS FROM OUR MAN IN THE UK



Taupo Winetasters' Club Member, Blair Potter, pictured with his UK to Kiwi Land airfare earner...Runner Beans!

It's been a while since our Northern Hemisphere members, Blair and Sybil Potter, have let us know how they are getting on. They have been receiving R18, the Taupo Winetaster's Club newsletter, at their home in Suffolk each month so it was exciting to open an email from Blair recently and find some news I could share with you.

He was prompted to write after enjoying another interesting newsletter and being frustrated at not being able to join in the fun of the functions reported on. He would love to come to the Annual Convention of the Federation of Wine and Food Societies of New Zealand Inc in Taupo next year, but May is not a good month for him. However he wistfully states that he still has not given up all hope yet. Hopefully good fortune will prevail on the NASDAQ and all who pin their hopes on it. However if that should fail he has a back up plan to help with the airfare to Kiwi Land, growing and selling runner beans. It sounds a promising proposition as he claims they

are inundated with customers for the beans.

Blair's other big challenge at the moment is his new state of the art Panasonic 26 inch Flat LCD Screen Television and DVD recorder/player he has just taken delivery of. With this new gear he hopes to be able to copy all of his opera videos onto disc before video tape recorders become extinct. He reports that the instruction books have been his main reading material for the last fortnight as he gets to grips with his exciting new toys for big boys.

DIARY DATES

Next Meeting

Wednesday 21st September

Matawhero Wines

Presented by winemaker Denis Irwin

CHANGE OF DATE

Wednesday 12th October

Ngatarawa Wines

Presented by winemaker Alwyn Corban

Wednesday 26th October

Verticals From The Cellar

A Vertical Tasting from the Club Cellar

Wednesday 23rd November

A Knees Up at the Nees

Early Summer Fun and Games in the garden

of Diana and Oliver Nees

Sunday 4th December

AGM & Christmas Luncheon

The shortest AGM you've ever attended followed by a traditional Christmas Lunch with a selection of aged wine from the Club Cellar

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

Sunday 25th September 2005

6.30pm at the home of Ley Lewis
19 Isobel Street, Taupo.

Bring pot luck food and a bottle of wine.

Masked Wine: Alex Harre

Contributions Welcome

Contact Colin Cockburn:

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Deadline for next issue:

Sunday 25th September