

## SUMMER SIPPING

Are you a restaurateur, wine group or charity that's hosting a wine event in the Washington area this summer that we should know about? Send your information via fax to Keith St. Clair at 202-459-4994 or e-mail [kstclair@dcexaminer.com](mailto:kstclair@dcexaminer.com).

**SCOTT GREENBERG** *Vine Guy*

# New Zealand's wines pouring into mainstream

A few weeks ago, I received an e-mail from Kerry, a public affairs officer for the New Zealand Embassy here in Washington regarding an article I wrote about an Australian winery. It appears that Kerry is very proud of her native land's ability to make quality wine, and she was determined to prove it to me.

That is how I recently found myself in the lobby of the Rayburn House Office Building, shaking hands with Roy Ferguson, the New Zealand ambassador to the United States, and his lovely wife, Dawn. I had been persuaded (shanghaied?) by Kerry to attend the relaunch of the New Zealand Wine Caucus on The Hill, where she made it clear that, when it comes to wine making, "the Kiwis have a very competitive spirit."

Known mostly for its sauvignon blanc wines, New Zealand is quickly gaining traction in the international marketplace with chardonnay and pinot noir varietals. The diversity of climates and soils found throughout the country allows vintners to add a wide range of styles to those classic wines.

After tasting more than 20 samples from six different producers, I found I owed Kerry a debt of grat-

itude. Many of the wines were remarkable and a few were outstanding. Here's a list of my favorites. Retail prices are approximate.

**2005 Staete Landt Chardonnay, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$25 — available at Schneider's of Capitol Hill in D.C.)**

This chardonnay seduces rather than overwhelms the palate. Aged mostly in older French oak barrels, the wine received just a little influence from the wood. Distinctive flavors of nectarine and lush peaches are prominently displayed on the front of the palate while notes of vanilla and roasted nuts sneak in on the crisp finish. Perfect with grilled Branzini.



**2006 Staete Landt Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$18 — available at Schneider's of Capitol Hill in D.C.)**

If you're looking for a wine to keep the heat at bay this summer, this is your proverbial fire extinguisher. Bright notes of tropical fruits dominate the nose and palate, where flavors of citrus get company from hints of dried grass on the crisp, refreshing finish. Chill the wine, grill the shrimp.

**2005 Staete Landt Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$18 — available at Schneider's of Capitol Hill in D.C.)**

A light but elegant expression of this varietal, this wine features pretty scents of lavender and raspberries on the nose. Malolactic fermentation lends a lush platform for the ripe cherry and dark strawberry flavors to play on and a lingering finish to enjoy. Serve it slightly chilled with roasted chicken.

**2006 Seifried Sauvignon Blanc, Nelson, New Zealand (\$17 — available at Planet Wine and Gourmet in Alexandria)**

An incredibly well-built sauvignon blanc with seamless integration between the passion fruit, grapefruit and pineapple flavors and the lemon-lime acidity. The zesty, clean finish makes it a candidate to pair with fresh oysters.

**2006 Seifried Gewurztraminer, Nelson, New Zealand (\$17 — available at Finewine.com and The Vineyard, both in McLean)**

Lychee nuts jump out of the glass and onto the tongue, where they are joined by dried apricots, pears and melon flavors. The rich, slightly spicy finish and abundant acidity makes it a great choice to pair with most Asian fare.



**2005 Oyster Bay Chardonnay, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$12 — available at area Whole Food stores and Pearson's in D.C.)**



One of the best values in chardonnay I have had in a long time, this Kiwi version delivers loads of brilliant nectarine, peach and apple flavor on a full, round frame. Hints of citrus on the crisp finish keep it light and fresh. Try it with fresh fruit and soft cheeses.

**2005 Oyster Bay Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$18 — available at Pearson's in D.C.)**

The attractive nose of sweet-smelling cherries and violets leads to well-balanced, round flavors of red plums, strawberries and cherries on the palate. This fine example of New Zealand pinot would pair well with grilled salmon.

**2005 Discovery Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$15 — available at area Whole Food stores)**

Notes of slatey minerals provide a terrific underpinning upon which grapefruit and melon flavors coat the palate. Reminiscent of Sancerre, its citrusy finish would be right at home next to a plate of ceviche.

**2005 Te Awa Sauvignon Blanc, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (\$26 — available at Pearson's in D.C.)**

A refreshing, well-balanced wine with prominent scents of tropical fruit on the nose and palate. Pure notes of grapefruit and melon on the bracing finish keep your tongue cool and in the mood for soft shell crabs.

**2005 Te Awa Unoaked Chardonnay, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (\$25 — available at Pearson's in D.C.)**

True flavors of ripe stone fruits are revealed on the nose and the palate in this "naked" (unoaked) chardonnay. Mineral notes on the Chablis-like finish would do grilled swordfish proud.



Do you have a favorite royalty of wine? E-mail me at [scott@vineguy.com](mailto:scott@vineguy.com).

