



New Zealand Journal of Hospitality and Gastronomy

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Jamie Matthewson

*General Manager -
Packaged Food & Drink
Woolworths New Zealand*

Hospitality has always been about more than just what's on the menu. For me, it's always lived in those spaces between service; the cocktail before dinner, choosing the wine, the conversations that start at the table and end up shaping how you see The World - before the morning after debrief. It's where stories are told and, more importantly, where we actually connect.

My first job was a barman in the UK and I'm actually I'm a bit of a mongrel; raised in a Kiwi household in England, finally scratching a lifelong itch by moving back here to Auckland last year. That sense of "where do I belong?" is something I think a lot of us in this industry feel. Hospitality is at that exact crossroads of craft and humanity, art and science. Behind every bottle or dish is a messy, beautiful pile of choices, risks, and personal histories. When we sit down to eat and drink, we aren't just tasting; we're taking in someone's identity, their work and their heritage.

That's the world Table 8 wants to get into.

This inaugural issue isn't about "reviewing" places or documenting products. It's about the people. We've brought together voices from across wine, food, and the arts to talk about everything from the weight of

Burgundy's history to the simple joy of a local café. It's a mix of interviews, recipes, and cultural observations that feels less like a performance and more like a genuine conversation between friends.

The name Table 8 feels right for a few reasons. In any restaurant, there's always that table - the one where the best memories are made, time and time again. But being back in NZ, it also taps into that "Number 8 wire" spirit: that resourcefulness and curiosity, the DIY drive to build something proper and meaningful out of simple things with passion and persistence.

I'm also particularly proud that it's highlighting the voices of those just starting out. Hospitality can be a tough world to navigate when you're young and green and by sharing authentic stories and the realities of the trade, we want to give the next generation a bit of visibility and a sense of where they might fit in.

So, I'd encourage you to approach these pages like you would a long meal with good company. Take your time. Some stories might challenge you, others might make you feel a bit nostalgic, but I hope they all remind you why this industry matters so much. In a world that feels increasingly complex, fast and distracted by social media, there's still something incredibly important about gathering together around a table to share a bit of ourselves.

Welcome to Table 8.

**Regards,
Jamie**

There's a strange feeling that seems to sit beneath modern hospitality at the moment. The industry is still beautiful, still capable of creating extraordinary moments of connection, but for many young people entering it, it can also feel overwhelming, fragmented, and difficult to navigate. The pathways are less clear than they once were. The pace is faster. Expectations are higher. Everyone appears to know where they're going, while many are privately wondering if they belong at all.

I think a lot about those people.

The young commis staying back after service to ask questions. The wine student nervously attending their first tasting (or perhaps the hundredth). The bartender obsessively reading about spirits at two in the morning because something about this world has sparked inside them. The people whose eyes are still full of curiosity and whose hearts are full of love for this industry, even while they're trying to find their footing within it.

Hospitality has always relied on apprenticeship, whether formal or informal. Most of us can trace our careers back to somebody who took the time to teach us properly, encourage us, challenge us, or simply make us feel seen. Somebody who showed us that this industry could become more than just work; that it could become a craft, a community, even a way of understanding people and the world around us.

I believe that responsibility now matters more than ever.

As technology accelerates and artificial intelligence begins reshaping creative and professional spaces, the things that will continue to matter most are fundamentally human ones: generosity, taste, emotional intelligence, conversation, intuition, empathy, and the ability to make another person feel welcome and understood. Hospitality has never simply been about transactions. At its best, it teaches us how to care for one another.

Ironically, Table 8 itself would have been far more difficult, expensive, and laborious to build without the assistance of AI. Like every industry, we are learning to exist alongside these tools rather than pretend they do not exist. But tools alone cannot create meaning. They cannot replace lived experience, mentorship, culture, or human connection. They cannot replicate the feeling of sitting across a table from somebody and hearing the story behind a bottle of wine, a dish, a journey, or a life.

That remains ours to protect.

Part of the mission of Table 8 is to create space for those conversations while also supporting the next generation coming into this world. Not through gatekeeping or performance, but through openness, honesty, and shared experience. The industry giants, the educators, the sommeliers, the chefs, the restaurateurs, the senior staff; all of us carry some responsibility to take younger people under our wings when we can. To offer guidance. To create pathways. To remind people that feeling lost at times does not mean they are failing.

Because hospitality, at its core, has always been about people looking after people.

If this journal can play even a small role in preserving that spirit, documenting those stories, and helping somebody feel a little less alone in finding their place within this industry, then it will have served its purpose.

—Samira (Sam) Kakh



FEATURE ARTICLE

Rustic Luxe: A West Coast Northland Gathering

By Elinor C. T. Birch, *DipWSET Candidate*

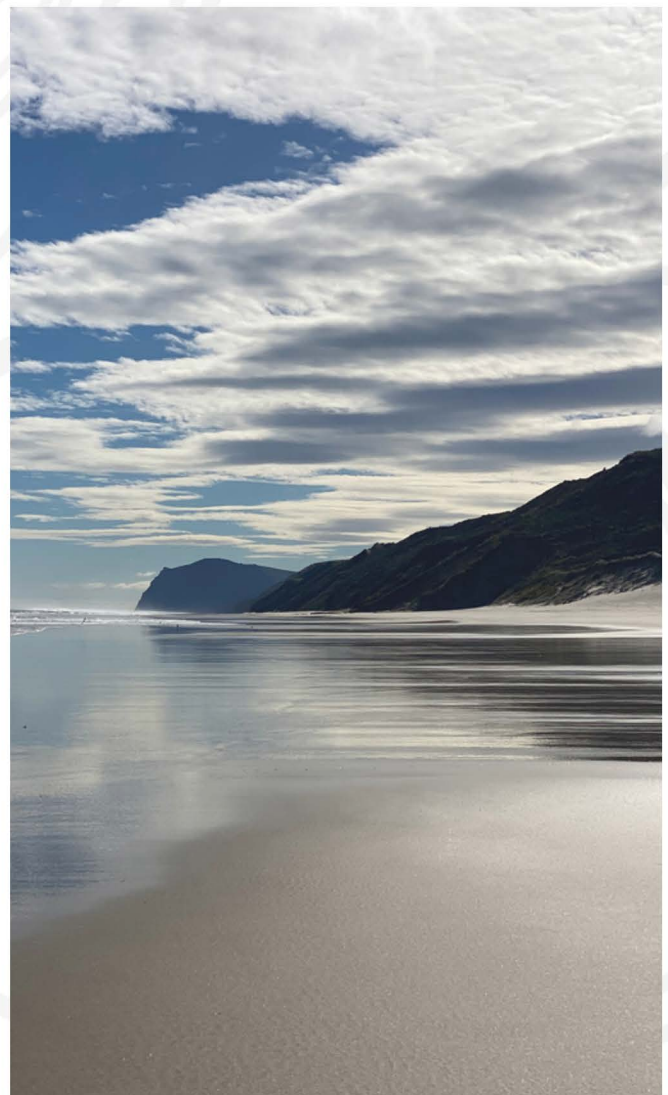
A whole lamb on a spit in a remote corner of New Zealand is far from conventional. In hospitality, we often equate great experience with polished venues, rare imported produce and seamless infrastructure. Yet some of the most memorable gatherings are born well beyond those expectations. In places where logistics are limited and conditions unpredictable, it is creativity, collaboration and a healthy dose of Kiwi ingenuity that take centre stage, proving that true hospitality is not defined by setting, but by the people who bring it to life.

On a remote stretch of Northland's wild west coast, somewhere near Ripiro Beach (although not exactly where, for fear too many people might discover it), a determined group set out to prove exactly that: a gourmet, glamorous experience can be created almost anywhere.

The event had been months in the making, but its final execution came together at a distinctly Kiwi pace. Fresh off a flight from Paris, there were just 24 hours to pull everything together.

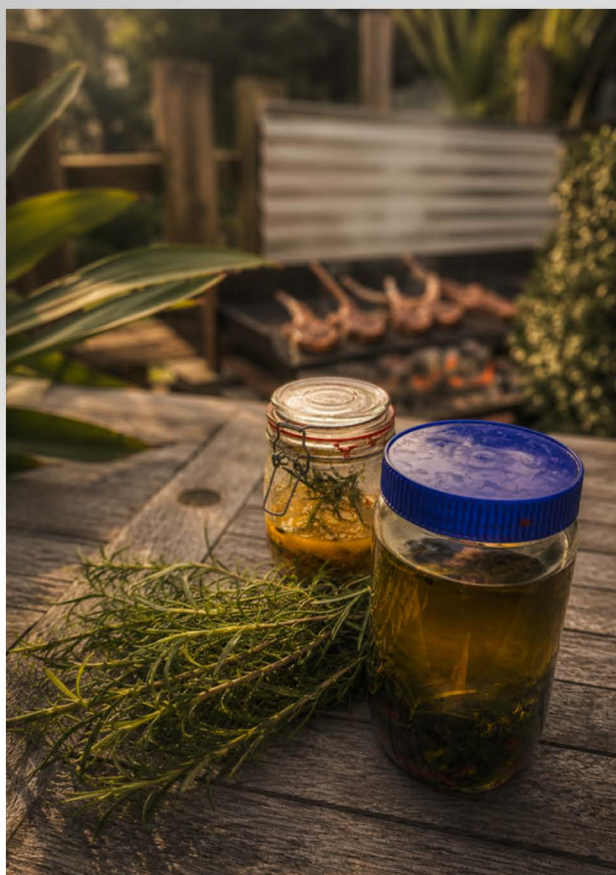
That meant a strategic stop at Fine Wine Delivery Co for the essentials: a couple of cases of Gardet Blanc de Noirs Champagne, plus a magnum for proper effect. Then a roadside pause outside Warkworth for a few boxes of unshucked oysters before heading north.

There was no commercial kitchen, no hired equipment (well some Champagne coupe glasses for the Champagne tower) and no supplier trucks rolling in on cue. Instead, there was a bach built for entertaining, a paddock, an oz trail pop up marquee, a rough plan and a team willing to make it happen.



A spit was fashioned on-site, engineered with classic number-eight-wire ingenuity. The spits centrepiece: a whole locally sourced sheep, prepared for a slow cook over open coals.

A fresh marinade of rosemary, anchovies, oil, sumac and garlic was mixed on the fly and brushed over the lamb throughout the cook, using sprigs of rosemary as a makeshift brush.



As the spit turned slowly, guests took turns basting, tending the fire and keeping the rhythm going in the rain.

Two retired butchers added both expertise and authenticity (if a bit of disagreement about the best way to release the sheep from the spit) stepping in to break down the lamb once it came off the fire.

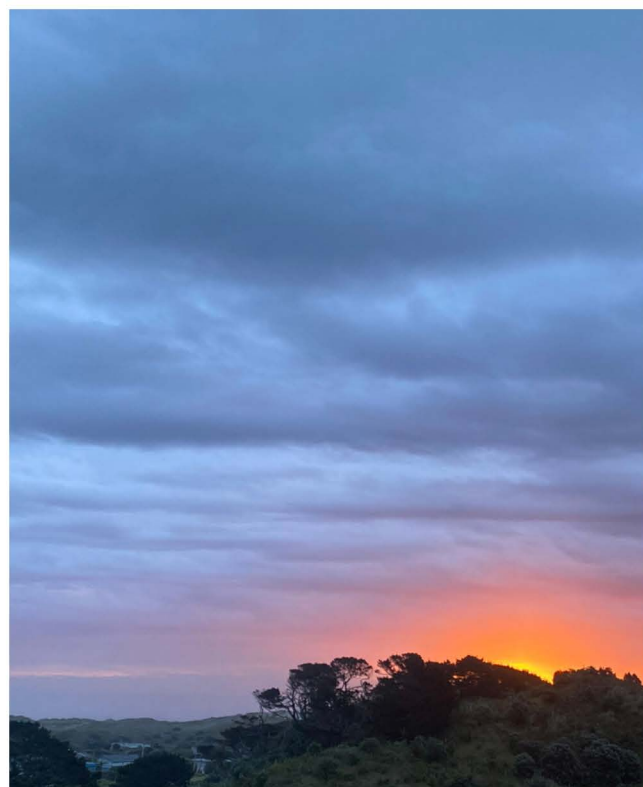
What elevated the gathering from rustic to remarkable was the attention to detail. A Champagne tower rose (teetering slightly on an wonky table) improbably elegant against the rugged coastal backdrop. Offering a moment of theatre and celebration.

Fresh Kaipara oysters were shucked by hand (or at least attempted). Some in the punnet bore a striking resemblance to actual rocks, demanding determination, patience and occasionally a second opinion before surrendering their briny prize. (No shucking injuries were incurred)!

Of course, no outdoor event unfolds without a weather interruption. Rain arrived early and stayed, turning the site into a test of patience rather than comfort. Guests still bore the dress code request and the 1920s/flapper theme sparkled below raincoats and puffer jackets.

As the lamb turned slowly over the fire through the damp evening, guests settled into the pace dictated by flame and weather.

As a Londoner by way of Edinburgh and Melbourne. I'm no stranger to polished events and world-class dining. Yet it was this (somewhat) improvised coastal gathering that made the strongest impression: rustic landscape, collective effort and unapologetically local hospitality combining to create something both surprising and deeply memorable.



Cha Yen (ชาเย็น) - known as Thai Tea

By Kacha Mahayosanan

NZ Diploma in Hospitality Management Student

Thai tea has a surprisingly layered history, shaped by trade, migration, colonial influence, and modern street culture. What many people now recognise as the vivid orange, sweetened iced drink served in plastic cups across Bangkok actually reflects centuries of cultural exchange.

Tea itself was not originally central to traditional Thai drinking culture in the same way it was in China or Japan. The roots of tea consumption in the region came largely through Chinese migration, particularly from Yunnanese and Teochew communities who settled in Thailand and brought tea cultivation, brewing techniques, and café culture with them. Northern Thailand, especially areas near Chiang Rai and Mae Salong, later developed tea plantations influenced heavily by Chinese tea-growing traditions.

Modern Thai tea (cha yen (ชาเย็น), meaning “cold tea”) began to take shape during the 20th century. As black tea became more commercially available, vendors adapted it to Thailand’s tropical climate by serving it over ice. Condensed milk and evaporated milk were added both for richness and practicality; as fresh milk spoiled quickly in the heat before widespread refrigeration. The resulting drink became creamy, sweet, highly aromatic, and extremely refreshing.

Its famous orange colour is partly theatrical and partly commercial. Traditional Thai tea blends often contain food colouring alongside black tea, star anise, tamarind, vanilla, and sometimes crushed spices such as cardamom. The bright hue helped distinguish Thai iced tea visually from coffee and other milk-based drinks sold at busy street stalls and markets.

By the late 20th century, Thai tea had become embedded in Thailand’s street food identity. Served in markets, food courts, roadside carts, and restaurants, it evolved into both an everyday refreshment and a symbol of modern Thai hospitality culture. Globally, Thai restaurants helped export the drink, especially throughout the United States, Australia, and Europe, where its striking colour and dessert-like texture made it instantly recognisable.

Today, Thai tea sits at an interesting crossroads between tradition and reinvention. Contemporary cafés experiment with higher-grade teas, less sugar, plant milks, and specialty tea leaves from Northern Thailand, while still preserving the nostalgic profile people associate with classic cha yen: sweet spice, tannin, creaminess, and cold relief from tropical heat.

See the next page for my recipe.





Cha Yen by Kacha

Ingredients

- Thai tea mix (Cha Tra Mue)
- Sweetened condensed milk
- Evaporated milk
- Ice cubes

Equipment

- French press

Tea Base

Boil 500ml water. Add 35g Thai tea mix to a French press and pour in the hot water. Stir for 1-2 minutes, then steep for 15-20 minutes. Press and strain carefully into a jar.

For a 16oz Cha Yen

- 150ml Thai tea base
- 45ml sweetened condensed milk
- 45ml evaporated milk
- Ice

Mix the tea base, condensed milk, and evaporated milk together. Pour over a glass filled with ice and serve chilled.

Hang On, Brazil Makes Wine?

I've been living in New Zealand for over seven years now, and I've been away from Brazil for more than a decade — although I still go back whenever I can. In that time, I've lived in Italy, Ireland, and Australia. No matter where I go, the reaction is always the same.

Working in the wine and hospitality industry, people often ask where I'm from — partly out of curiosity, as my accent doesn't quite give it away. When I say Brazil, the next question usually comes quickly: "Wait... but you work with wine. Does Brazil even make wine?"

Yes, it does. And it's good — really good. What usually surprises people even more is this: a single state — just one out of 27 — located in the far south of the country, produces more wine than the whole of New Zealand.

For many, Brazil is synonymous with beaches, football, carnival, churrasco, cold beer, and caipirinhas (and they're right — I love that part too). Wine doesn't quite fit the picture. Yet, quietly and consistently, Brazil has been building a wine industry that is now ready to step onto the global stage — not only through quality, but also through innovation. Today, Brazil counts over 1,100 wineries and close to 83,000 hectares under vine, reflecting the scale and growing maturity of the industry.

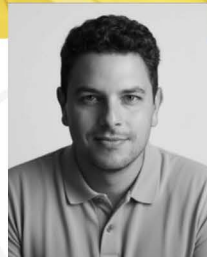
The heart of Brazilian wine lies in the south, particularly in the state of Rio Grande do Sul (where I am also from), which accounts for close to 90% of the country's total wine production. Within it, Serra Gaúcha remains the backbone of the industry, home to the majority of vineyards and hundreds of wineries, from large cooperatives to increasingly ambitious boutique producers.

Historically, the first records of grape growing in Brazil date back to the 16th century, following Portuguese colonisation. However, it was European immigration in the 19th century — particularly by Italian families — that truly accelerated the development of viticulture and wine production in the country. For much of its history, Brazilian wine relied on American grape varieties such as Isabella and Niagara, valued for their disease resistance and high yields in a humid climate. While these grapes still play an important role in domestic consumption, over the past three to four decades — particularly since the 1990s — there has been a decisive shift toward *Vitis vinifera* varieties, with grapes like Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Chardonnay now leading the premium segment.

But the real story of Brazil is innovation.

Regions like Vale dos Vinhedos, Brazil's first Denomination of Origin, have helped define quality standards, while Altos de Pinto Bandeira — a Denomination of Origin dedicated to sparkling wine — highlights the country's strength in this category. Today, Brazil has two Denominations of Origin and ten Geographical Indications, reflecting a growing focus on origin, typicity, and regional identity.

Further north, producers continue to challenge expectations. In Minas Gerais, the use of double pruning (an inverted growing cycle) allows grapes to ripen during the dry winter months, avoiding summer rains and producing more concentrated wines. In the São Francisco Valley, near the equator, between 6° and 9° south latitude, irrigation and consistent sunshine enable up to two harvests per year



By Alcides P. Neto

 @alcidespont

*DipWSET Candidate
PGDip Wine Business & Marketing
Bachelor of Business Administration
& Innovation*

— a completely different rhythm of viticulture.

If there is one category where Brazil truly overdelivers, it is sparkling wine. With naturally high acidity and favourable conditions, Brazilian sparkling wines — from fresh, fruit-driven Charmat styles to more complex traditional method examples — are gaining international recognition for both quality and value.

So, does Brazil make wine?

Yes — but more importantly, it makes wines with identity, energy, and a sense of discovery.

Brazil may still surprise many — but not for much longer.

Saúde,
Al

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WINE Regions



- 📍 Traditional Wine Regions
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COLLABORATION CABERNET FRANC CERESIA 2024

Silky yet concentrated, the wine layers black cherry and freeze-dried raspberry over tea leaf, tobacco, violet, and smoky undertones. Powerful yet refined, it walks the line between New World generosity and classical elegance, with further ageing set to reveal deeper savoury detail and a darker, moodier complexity.

\$47.90 RRP

Great Little Vineyards





A Day in The Life of a Cellar Hand

By Hannah Beaumont  @nz_craftygirl

I think a lot of people think that once harvest is over, the winery quiets down. It's a common misconception that I hear a lot actually. From visitors or contractors on site, "oh you must be so pleased harvest is over and it's quiet again". That's simply not the case. Once harvest is over, the real fun begins. We are tasked with taking these grapes that grow like weeds and have been squished within an inch of their lives and transforming them into what you see in your glass at the end of a long day.

What are we doing at the moment? Well, today we started the day with quite a ruckus. After the harvest season is over, we get sheep into the vineyards. Helps us out with pruning, helps the farmer out with a field for his sheep. It's a win-win really. Well, it wasn't for us this morning. They get out on occasion. It's not usually an issue, they're pretty easy to herd back in through the gate, they're pack animals and they're pretty dumb and lazy so they never stray too far from their mates and the abundance of food. Except this one guy. He ended up in front of the office windows, after being chased for a good 20 mins by the working dogs. He outsmarted everyone. As my colleague and I stood watching him for a minute, wondering what he was staring at, he started to gently headbutt the window. We laughed, thinking "oh must be able to see his reflection".

He did another gentle head butt. Then he rounded the side door and stared at it then walked back to the window. Then he went back to the side door and without hesitation, rammed straight through the glass and into the reception area. Never a dull day around here I swear. The farmer managed to retrieve him and threw him back into the vineyard with a few choice words. Honestly, I don't know how you explain that to an insurance company, someone who sits behind a computer all day in the city answering phone calls; "ah yes, we had a sheep ram our front door, what is our excess please?" Sorry, what?

Anyways, aside from that dramatic start to the morning, what we are doing currently is blending.

After the fermentation process has finished. The tanks are settled. Then the tanks are racked, which is the process of separating the wine from the solids. Then we blend. Because what's in your glass, unless it says "Single Vineyard" specifically, it's likely a very talented taste tested blend that the winemakers have concocted. With very precise proportions from different tanks, blended into one (or more).

So that's where we're up to currently. You'll start to see new vintage releases from wineries soon and they generally start with Rose, followed closely by Pinot gris. Keep an eye out for these! Because you can in fact drink Rose all year round. Trust me.





Whanganui Evolving into a Sophisticated Wine City

By Joamari van der Walt  @joaswines

Joa's Wines, or "the wine lady" as I am locally known, ex-solicitor turned wine merchant, is shaking up the wine-drinking habits in vibrant Whanganui, a small city on the west coast of New Zealand. Traditional Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris lovers are now asking for Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Barolo, Meursault, Santorini Assyrtiko, or Etna Rosso, and South African Chenin Blanc or Swartland Syrah has become a household name. Don't be surprised if they ramble on about grower Champagnes or Palo Cortado sherries!

To me Whanganui is a mysterious city. At first glance, passing through via SH2, it seems quite ordinary, like the quintessential bacon and egg pie on a Monday morning from the suburban Four Square. But if you take the time to walk, listen, observe and feel, the city opens up into an Alice in Wonderland paradise filled with wonderfully unexpected art, architecture, people, and nature, along with authentic bars, boutique food and drinks producers, and cafés, all wrapped in a community that cares deeply for each other and fiercely supports and promotes its own.

The Joa's Wines wine tasting events started six years ago as a fundraising initiative for the Women's Network and became so popular that these tasting events have been running on a monthly basis for the past four years.

The event is relaxed and educational in style, exploring various wine themes based on country, variety or style. I recently collaborated with Sarah Narine, owner of Space Studio & Gallery with the intention to create a sensory experience where art and wine meet. Space Studio is a contemporary art gallery in Whanganui focused on supporting both emerging and established New Zealand artists. Unlike a traditional gallery, it combines a public exhibition space, upstairs working artist studios, and a stockroom featuring the local artists the gallery represents.

Art is further weaved into the Joa's Wines brand with sketch artworks by New Zealand artist William Carden-Horton, created as part of his ongoing series *Holding My Pen Loosely*. He is known for his work with *L'affare* (PRIMO PACK), *Garage Project*, *Cuba Press* poetry, and the NZ Jazz Festival, and now Joa's Wines.

Upon arrival you are greeted with a glass of Champagne or immediately challenged with a glass of pétillant naturel Grenache from Ventoux (as was the offering at our previous tasting). You slowly sip while your neurons get lost in the unexpected thrill of a dry red sparkling wine, evoking sunshine and long lunches in the Southern Rhône.



Joamari van der Walt – Joa's Wines Wine Merchant & Advisor

*BComm-LLB Solicitor (SA & NZ), WSET Level 3, DipWSET Candidate
Sommelier – Court of Master
Sommeliers & Association de la
Sommellerie Internationale*

The events are timed to follow the opening of a new art exhibition, so with your senses already awakened, you explore the latest visual feast and perhaps catch up on some village gossip with a fellow wine geek.

The tasting itself is set up in a separate, elegantly curated space. This is where the magic happens. My wine enthusiasts are treated with locally sourced cheese platters prepared by The Burrow Deli and other snacks by our local chefs in town. I don't hold back on wine geek information, and a double espresso beforehand is recommended to keep up with discussions on soil types, fermentation techniques, lees ageing, and appellation nuances. Wide-eyed, you absorb, swirl, and taste, and by the end of the night, new friendships are formed through a shared love of wine.

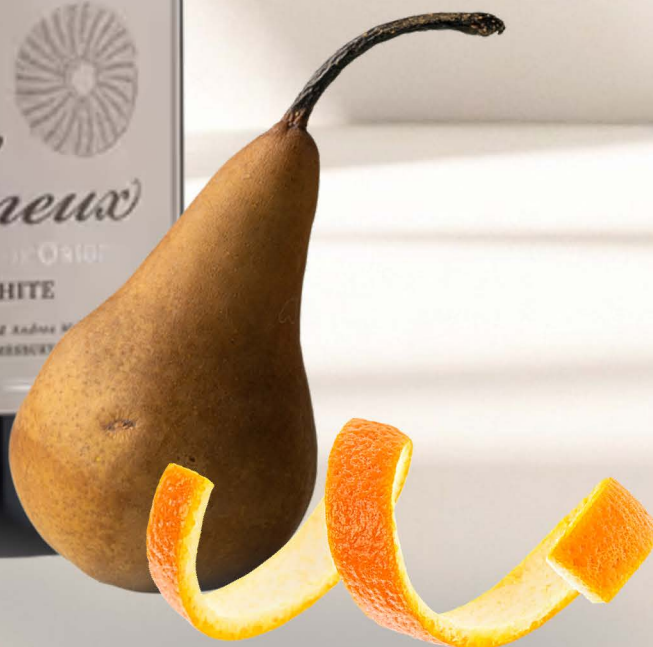
These tasting events are just one of several projects I am involved in to advocate for both the New Zealand and international wine industry. I am an active collaborator in pop-up events such as The Dockside Social, advise on wine menus where needed, and sell my wines online via www.joaswines.co.nz, and at the Saturday morning Whanganui River Market, and the legendary Joa's Whanganui Wine Walk will definitely give you Labrador-like excitement. If your wine geek bucket of love still isn't full, you can always pop-quiz me at High Kut Bistro, where I work part-time as a sommelier.

A wine rabbit hole of authenticity where time dissolves into aromas and flavours of terroir. Whanganui is buzzing with wine energy, and it is well worth planning your next wine adventure with a Whanganui pit stop.

Mullineux Old Vines White 2024

A blend led by Chenin Blanc (68%), supported by Clairette Blanche, Sémillon Gris, Grenache Blanc and Viognier from dry-farmed old vines on the ancient granite soils of the Paardeberg. Sustainable viticulture and restrained winemaking allow the terroir to take centre stage.

\$78.00 RRP
Joa's Wines





Memories and Observations

By Dr Helen Evans

DipWSET Candidate

Briny, creamy, sweet, bold yet delicate, juicy, flinty, luxurious. Rarely can a food be described with such wide-ranging and contrasting adjectives, but when it comes to oysters, it is impossible to sum them up in a few words. They also have an unquestionable ability to divide people. They are indeed the Marmite of the seafood world – you either love them, or you hate them.

In a dusty old album in my mother's attic is a faded old photograph of my father enjoying oysters for the first time on a holiday to France. It appears that dad is poised at the point where the oyster slips out of its shell and is just about to marvel at the salty goodness of this magnificent fare. Yet my sister looks on in a combination of horror and wonderment; my brother appearing more curious and bemused. These early holidays to France were our first overseas experiences,

also adventurous, not least because the discovery of new-found delicacies was so exciting. As children, my siblings usually aligned themselves with our mother as quite conservative eaters. By contrast, for dad and me, mostly anything edible was there to be tried. Visiting markets was a ritual of questioning stallholders about their offerings, trying morsels of just about everything, and guessing how much we wanted to buy using grams instead of ounces. I recall the day dad bought his first batch of oysters, his childlike excitement at opening the paper-wrapped parcel back at our holiday cottage temporarily interrupted by the realisation that a shucking knife was needed. Ever industrious, he produced his trusty Swiss army knife. On prising open the shells of these gnarly, prehistoric creatures, what appeared on the inside was unexpected to the young me – pillowy, salty and like nothing I had experienced before.



My late father Dilwyn enjoys his first ever oyster while my brother Rob and sister Sharon look on – Jard-sur-Mer, France, 1983

Fast forward many years and I arrived in New Zealand naïve about the culinary scene. It happened to be peak season for Bluff oysters, and I was instantly transported back to fun childhood times in France. Over the years, when my parents came to visit, we would always take a drive to Matakana to buy Mahurangi oysters from a stall beside the road. I would come home from work to find they had (yet again) been to Auckland Fish Market to stock up on supplies. Dad even had his own shucking knife at my house ready for his visits. He never failed to extol the virtues of our oyster offerings, and how lucky we are in Auckland to find them everywhere.

When dad was very ill, he proudly told his neighbour how pleased he was that I had turned out to be a foodie – just like him. This sentiment has stayed with me as a challenge to uphold, but mainly it has served as a way of continuing to connect me to him. Very shortly after he died, I ordered oysters from a menu simply because they reminded me of him. Several years on, and I still order an oyster or three every time I see them on a menu. I have enjoyed them in all sorts of shapes and sizes, from every manner of place. I have persuaded friends to join me, most of them willingly although a few have declined – politely for the most part, but more vociferously on occasion, usually with an accompanying wince and liberal muttering of the word “disgusting”. My favourite oyster game is to persuade friends to share a toast to dad by clinking oyster shells, which I have also been known to do by donning an oyster in each hand if I’ve been dining alone.



Enormous oysters for sale
Tsukiji Market, Tokyo



Selection of oysters at Auckland Fish Market,
including oysters with kina (sea urchin)



Oyster with warm walnut dressing
Rhu, Parnell

My penchant for oysters means I have literally eaten my way around New Zealand trying them. We are really blessed to have some of the plumpest and most delicious oysters in the world. Added to that, they are plentiful, and always available. In several places such as Oyster and Chop, you can find an oyster happy hour and enjoy them for a fraction of the price, but even at full price they are invariably better value than offerings overseas.



Bluff oysters
Headquarters, Viaduct Harbour, Auckland



Oyster with vermouth aderezo
Alma, Auckland



Oysters with wakame and horseradish
The Wine Room, Auckland

For me, nothing beats a freshly shucked oyster which still contains a taste of the sea. It would be madness to suggest anything other than the Bluff oyster as my favourite, but honourable mentions go to those sourced from Clevedon, Mahurangi, Te Matuku on Waiheke Island and the Coromandel. My favoured accompaniments are a simple squeeze of lemon, or a shallot vinaigrette – who knew that the term mignonette was a thing? Other local standouts, to name just a few, have been the tempura oysters from Shucker Brothers; oysters with a warm walnut dressing from Rhu; oysters with sea urchin from Auckland Fish Market; oysters with wakame and horseradish from The Wine Room, Te Matuku oysters with vermouth aderezo from Alma and anything on offer from the eponymous Oyster Inn. For wine matching, you cannot get better than the luxury of Champagne or New Zealand *méthode traditionnelle*, but other legendary pairings include Chablis, Muscadet or Sancerre.

A search of my phone reveals I have 176 photos of oysters and the oyster emoji is the ninth most used. One of my favourite WhatsApp groups is amusingly named NZ Oyster Alerts, shared with my friends Andrew and Terry, founding members of my oyster-eating circle. I have never had an oyster I haven't enjoyed, but more importantly, every single one has transported me back to that exciting day in France and the joy I shared with my father. Every oyster brings an unashamed smile to my face knowing he would think my oyster-seeking escapades are quirky and endearing. Food has this amazing capacity to connect us to people, new friends and old, creating memories that live long beyond the initial taste sensation. Long may that continue!

The Boobs Mug by Payge Ceramics

By Samira Kakh

New Zealand's hospitality culture has developed one of the most vibrant and distinctive ceramic movements in the contemporary dining world. Across cafés, wineries, restaurants, and studio spaces, hand-crafted ceramics have become deeply embedded within the way Kiwis experience coffee, wine, and food. They are no longer merely vessels, but tactile extensions of hospitality itself.

Hand-crafted ceramics shape the drinking experience far beyond simple function. They influence perception, ritual, temperature, texture, and emotional connection. A handmade cup carries subtle irregularities; the weight in the hand, the thickness of the rim, the texture of the glaze, the warmth of the clay. These details create a more intimate sensory interaction than mass-produced ware. In specialty coffee culture, where attention is placed on origin, roasting, and extraction, the vessel becomes part of the sensory narrative.

Ceramics also alter flavour perception indirectly. Rim thickness changes how coffee flows onto the palate, while the width and shape of a cup influence aroma concentration and heat retention. A heavier stoneware mug preserves warmth differently from fine porcelain, subtly shifting the way sweetness, bitterness, acidity, and texture are experienced over time.

Yet perhaps the true significance of hand-crafted ceramics lies in what they communicate emotionally. They suggest care, slowness, craftsmanship, and intention. In a world increasingly dominated by industrial uniformity,

handmade objects restore a sense of humanity to daily rituals. The cup frames the experience in much the same way glassware frames wine.

This column is dedicated to exploring the makers behind those experiences — the ceramic artists whose work quietly shapes the atmosphere of cafés, dining rooms, and tables across New Zealand. Through *Material Culture*, Table 8 hopes to introduce some of the country's most thoughtful and influential ceramic practitioners, and to celebrate the role of artistry within hospitality. For the first issue, let's begin with **Payge Ceramics**.

Among their most iconic works is the now instantly recognisable "Boobs Mug", a playful yet deeply expressive piece that has become something of a cult object within New Zealand's coffee culture. Far beyond novelty, the mug carries a softness and intimacy that transforms the act of drinking coffee into something comforting and human. Curved forms emerge naturally from the clay, weaving feminine energy into the daily ritual of morning coffee. There is warmth in it, not only physical warmth from the cup itself, but emotional warmth; a reminder that hospitality, at its core, is about nourishment, sensuality, and connection.

What makes pieces like these so compelling is their ability to bring art into ordinary life. They collapse the boundary between gallery object and domestic ritual. A coffee mug becomes sculpture. A morning routine becomes a moment of tactile reflection.

Payge Ceramics is expected to restock around late June to early July, and if the speed at which previous collections disappeared is any indication, they are unlikely to remain available for long.

 [@paygeceramics](https://www.instagram.com/paygeceramics)





The Quiet Cost of the Climb

By Suraj GC, *'The Mountain Sommelier'*

What my climb looks like from the inside is a quiet hour most nights, after a busy shift at work, when my family is asleep and before my own sleep takes over. A small glass beside me. Usually a taste, not a drink. Sometimes coconut water. Sometimes tea. The cards turn.

Not the medals, not the trophies, not the stage at a competition. A kitchen table, a cup gone cold, and the next category waiting.

I want to write honestly about something our trade does not talk about enough. Managing alcohol as a full time sommelier.

We are paid to taste. The product we sell is alcohol. The events we attend are built around it. And then we go home and study more wine. Nobody hands you a manual for how to hold all of that and still be well at forty, fifty, sixty. We learn by getting it wrong first.

These days I keep three or four alcohol free days a week. Liver reset, steady blood sugar, a palate that shows up sharp. Trade tastings and events get cramped into the working days. The recovery days are non negotiable. It is not abstinence. It is craft maintenance. A musician rests their hands. I am learning to manage the one tool I cannot replace.

Palate exhaustion is real. When I have not given mine the break it was asking for, everything starts to taste similar. Acid stops reading consistently. Tannin softens or sharpens for reasons that have nothing to do with the wine. Rest the body too. Do whatever gives you a break. Run, swim, meditate. I try for fifteen minutes of meditation most days.

When the mind is calm, you can focus on the things that matter. You cannot always control your thoughts, but you can be conscious of what you are thinking.

Becoming a father changed the equation. Study time stopped being infinite. Discipline stopped being about ambition and started being about respect for the hours my loved ones are giving me, so I can still chase this never ending dream. Being a dad is my best achievement so far, and always will be. What a blessing.

I try to bridge my culture and carry the flag wherever I go. Pokhara to Park Hyatt, and now competing at an international level, is a longer walk than the CV suggests. Dream big.

To the young somm reading this. Postponing children, postponing sleep, postponing a life outside service because the climb feels too steep to share. Find at least one person who believes in you before you need them to. Find a mentor. Block the noise. Discipline compounds. The harder you work at something you love, the luckier you somehow get.

But hear me on this. Life moves faster than you can plan. Your plans will change. Life puts you in situations and tests you. So do not postpone the small journeys. Do not postpone family. Do not postpone children. Keep the life going. It all moves side by side.

Find the passion. Be kind. Smile a little more. And drink fine wines with the people you love.

The flashcards can wait an hour.



KILKERRAN 12 YEARS OLD
SINGLE MALT
Distinctive note: Industrial Funk

\$104.00 RRP
NORMANBY Fine Wines

NOTES FROM THE AUCTION FLOOR



Auction Observations | When Two Eras Meet

By Chong Pan
DipWSET Candidate

At the auction house, I came across two whiskies that felt strangely poetic.

Same label, same spirit—
but one reads “TO H.M. THE KING” (pre-1952),
the other “TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN” (post-1952).

Less than a decade apart,
yet separated by an entire era.
Seeing them side by side felt... quietly surreal.
The Queen meets the King—
does she have to say “father” first?

History, in the end,
always finds a way to stay—
in the smallest details.

拍卖行观察 | 两个时代的遇见

在拍卖行看到两支很有意思的威士忌。
同一款酒，
左边写着 TO H.M. THE KING（1952年前），
右边变成 TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN（1952年后），

虽然它们相差不到十年，但却隔了一个时代。
两支酒在同一个时间空间里，好妙的遇见。
The Queen 见到了 The King，
是不是要先...喊一声爸爸？

历史就是这样，
被安静地留在了这些细节里。





Pierre Gaillard Domaine Madeloc Banyuls Cirera

Fortified Grenache Noir from Languedoc Roussillon

For a maximalist pairing, serve it alongside a dark chocolate brownie

\$54.00 RRP

Maison Vauron





The South Island – BEAUTIFUL

By Hannah Bland

DipWSET Candidate

Picture snow capped mountains, alpine lakes so blue you think they have food colouring in them, Lord of the Rings, and for those in the know, a wine destination which stretches beyond Marlborough. This is the start of a regular feature exploring the South Island through the lens of wine and food! Having had exposure to good wine and food, I delight in finding new spots to try, and am currently embarking on continuing study of wine with WSET. I have been eating and drinking my way around some truly beautiful parts of the globe, and I still firmly believe that New Zealand, and the South Island have some excellent wine and food. Crucially, I think wine and food should be accessible, and bring people together.

With that in mind, I am going to give you the spend or splurge version of wine travel via your glass, which may also give you some new places to want to see. Pegasus Bay. Both the name of the sweeping beaches that run from Sumner out to the Waipara river, and also quietly, a pretty well known winery, even GASP internationally. What people may not know is that there is a super accessible tier available at the supermarket – Main Divide. To keep this super simple, here is one variety that is grown in the South Island that can be overlooked in the noise of Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir, Riesling.

I'm not going to give you a tasting note, merely a suggestion that at this level both are affordable and delicious, punching well over the weight class.

If you see me drinking this, shsssoooooosh!

Spend
\$21.99 RRP
Main Divide
Riesling 2024



Splurge
\$43.00 RRP
Pegasus Bay
ARIA Late Picked Riesling 2025



Introducing the best knife for Parmigiano Reggiano!

A fist-sized shard hacked straight from a whole wheel with a Costa Nova parmesan knife, eaten standing up with absolutely no accompaniment except maybe a brutal glass of something acidic and uncompromising. No crackers. No grapes. No balsamic drizzle. Just crystalline umami violence.

Real Parmigiano Reggiano is one of the few foods that genuinely does not need help. Especially around 30–36 months, when the tyrosine crystals crunch and the texture starts turning sandy and fractured. That's the moment where eating it in irregular chunks feels almost primitive in the best possible way.

\$67.50 RRP from **SABATO**

Conversations at Table 8

With Yukihiro Nagahara
WSET Level 3 in Wines



You arrived in New Zealand for “a few months” and ended up doing WSET Level 3, hospitality work, barista training, and vintage in Marlborough. At what point did you realise this was no longer just a short trip?

Honestly, I knew before coming to New Zealand that this would be more than just a short trip. I had a clear purpose and a roadmap for my future dream of opening a New Zealand wine bar in Japan. What I didn't expect was how difficult it would be to find a job here. Since New Zealand is a relatively small country, there are many people competing for opportunities. To be honest, at one point I had almost given up on finding work related to wine. That's why I'm truly grateful that I was able to work in vintage, even if it was only for the final month of my stay. Being involved in the harvest and seeing the industry from the production side became one of the most meaningful experiences of my journey. At the same time, I met so many amazing people during this journey. Everyone had different dreams and different lifestyles, regardless of age.

That was really inspiring to me because, in Japan, many people around my age tend to prioritize stability, which is also one valid way of finding happiness. But in New Zealand, I met people who were choosing very different ways of living, and it really broadened my perspective.

What surprised you most about New Zealand's wine culture compared to Japan?

I was surprised by how naturally wine is integrated into everyday Kiwi life. In Japan, wine is still often seen as something special or luxurious, but in New Zealand, it feels much more casual and approachable. I saw a wide variety of local wines not only in wine shops, but also in supermarkets, cafés, and restaurants. It felt like wine was simply part of people's daily lifestyle. What impressed me the most was the winery culture. Since many wineries are surrounded by beautiful nature and open landscapes, people casually visit them for lunch, gatherings with friends, or relaxing weekends. I loved how wine, food, and nature were all connected together. I also felt that New Zealanders have a strong connection to local products and local producers. Many people seemed genuinely proud of wines made in their own region, and I thought that was beautiful. One thing that made me a little sad, though, was that drinking alcohol in public places such as beaches or parks is generally prohibited. Sometimes I imagined how wonderful it would be to share a bottle of wine with friends or a partner while watching the sunset by the ocean.

If you had to explain New Zealand wine in three words to someone in Japan, what would they be?

Approachable, evolving, vibrant.

You tasted a wide range of New Zealand wines, was there one bottle or moment that completely changed your perspective on wine?

One wine that completely changed my perspective was the 2022 Schubert Marion's Vineyard Pinot Noir. It was actually the very first wine I drank after arriving in New Zealand, at a wine bar called Ground Wine Bar in Auckland. At that time, I didn't yet have the knowledge or vocabulary to properly describe wine, but I clearly remember thinking, “This is incredible.” It was simply delicious, and at the same time, it made me feel excited about the new life that was about to begin in New Zealand. Looking back now, that wine became the symbolic starting point of my wine journey in New Zealand.

Marlborough during vintage can be intense. What was the most challenging and the most rewarding, part of working as a lab assistant?

One of the toughest experiences during vintage was working in the Cloudy Bay vineyard when we knew the weather would get worse over the following days, so we had to finish harvesting as much fruit as possible. We ended up picking grapes for 14 hours until 11 p.m.

It was completely dark, and honestly, we could barely see anything. But strangely, it also felt very fresh and exciting. I still remember everyone working together, chatting and laughing as a team despite being exhausted. It was hard work, but at the same time, it became one of my favorite memories from vintage.

What is one technical skill from vintage 2026 that you feel will stay with you long-term?

I think the biggest skill I gained was learning how to observe grape conditions more carefully in the vineyard. Before coming to New Zealand, I mainly experienced wine from the consumer side. But during vintage, I started paying attention to details such as berry condition, ripeness, weather impact, and harvest timing. It made me realize how much work and decision-making happen before wine is even made. I think this perspective will stay with me for a long time, especially because I want to work in wine education and hospitality in the future.

Let's switch tone, what was the funniest or most chaotic moment you experienced during vintage?

One of the funniest moments during vintage happened on my final day of work. After finishing a long day of harvesting, my wife and I were rewarded with a stay at a five-star hotel. We didn't really have enough time to properly change before heading there, so we arrived still wearing our slightly muddy vineyard clothes. Compared to all the well-dressed guests in the beautiful hotel, we probably looked completely out of place, and honestly, I felt a little sorry about that as well. But at the same time, the contrast was so funny that we couldn't stop laughing. Looking back, it perfectly captured the reality of vintage life and those small rewarding moments afterward.

You worked in hospitality venues as well. What differences did you notice between service culture in Japan and New Zealand?

One big difference I noticed was the balance between professionalism and friendliness.

In Japan, hospitality is often very detailed and precise. Staff members try to anticipate customers' needs before they even ask, and there is a strong focus on politeness and efficiency. In New Zealand, service feels more relaxed and personal. Staff members often have casual conversations with customers, and the atmosphere feels less formal but more human and approachable. At first, I was surprised by that difference, but over time I started to appreciate both styles. I think Japanese hospitality creates comfort through precision, while New Zealand hospitality creates comfort through connection and personality.

Be honest, was it harder to learn barista skills or wine theory?

Honestly, wine theory was harder for me. Barista skills are more practical and hands-on, so I felt that I could gradually improve through repetition and experience. On the other hand, studying wine theory was much more challenging because I had to learn everything in English, which is not my first language. Understanding complex wine terminology, regions, and production methods in a second language was definitely difficult at times, but it also became one of the most rewarding parts of my journey.

What was your go-to coffee order after a long shift or a long day in the lab?

Definitely a Flat White, with no sugar. Before coming to New Zealand, I was actually more of a tea person than a coffee person. But after living here, I discovered how good coffee could be, and now I honestly can't imagine life without it. In fact, one of the first things I bought after returning to Japan was an espresso machine.

You visited some of the best wine bars in New Zealand, do you have a favourite, and what made it memorable?

My favorite place was definitely Normanby Fine Wines. I'll never forget studying for WSET at the table near the entrance for hours. The staff often came over to talk with me, and they gave me a lot of valuable advice about wine and the industry.

I probably stayed there longer than I should have many times, so I still feel a little sorry about that. Most of the time, I was just there drinking coffee while studying, but every now and then, when I really needed a break, I'd treat myself to a glass of wine before going home. It was also the place where I met a wonderful friend during my time in New Zealand, which made it even more special to me. What made the place so memorable was the atmosphere. It perfectly combined the feeling of a café and a wine bar in a very natural and welcoming way. The interior design was also incredible — warm, stylish, and comfortable without feeling too formal. Honestly, it became one of my biggest inspirations for the kind of wine space I want to create myself in the future.

What's one thing New Zealand does exceptionally well in hospitality that Japan could adopt?

One thing I really admired in New Zealand hospitality was how approachable and relaxed it felt. Even in high-quality restaurants or wine bars, staff members often communicated with customers in a very natural and friendly way. In Japan, hospitality is incredibly professional and detail-oriented, which I deeply respect. But sometimes that level of formality can make customers feel a little nervous, especially in places like wine bars or fine dining restaurants. In New Zealand, I felt that people were encouraged to simply enjoy the experience without worrying too much about rules or knowledge. I think that atmosphere makes wine and hospitality more accessible, especially for beginners. That's something I would love to bring into my own future wine bar in Japan.

And the reverse, what does Japan do better that New Zealand could learn from?

I think cleanliness is one area where Japanese hospitality is especially strong. In Japan, people tend to pay a lot of attention to hygiene and presentation, even in very casual restaurants or cafés. While living in New Zealand, there were times when I wondered whether things like water bottles or glasses had been properly cleaned because they sometimes looked a little unclear or marked.

Of course, I understand that the hospitality culture and standards are different, and I still really appreciated the warm and relaxed atmosphere in New Zealand. But I do think Japan's strong attention to cleanliness is something very valuable that could improve the overall customer experience even further.

Did you develop any unexpected food and wine pairings while you were here?

It was more of a dessert pairing than a food pairing, but one experience I'll never forget was at a winery called Gravity in Nelson. They offered a chocolate pairing tasting, which I thought was really unique. The most surprising combination was Gewürztraminer with ginger chocolate. I was honestly shocked by how well they matched together. The spicy character of the ginger and the aromatic, slightly rich style of the wine complemented each other perfectly. It was such a strong and memorable pairing that I still think about it sometimes.

If you had to describe New Zealand cuisine in one sentence, what would it be?

I would describe New Zealand cuisine as simple, fresh, and deeply connected to nature.

Looking back, what moment made you laugh the most during your time here?

Looking back, one thing that made me laugh the most was how many people walked around barefoot in New Zealand, even in supermarkets. As a Japanese person, I was honestly shocked at first because it's something you would almost never see in Japan. But after a while, I slowly got used to it, and eventually it just started to feel like a very "Kiwi" thing. Even now, thinking about someone casually shopping barefoot still makes me smile.

After returning to Japan, how has your experience in New Zealand influenced your approach to wine and hospitality?

My experience in New Zealand completely changed the way I think about wine and hospitality. Before coming here, I used to see wine more as

something that required a lot of knowledge and experience to truly enjoy. But in New Zealand, I realized that wine can simply be part of everyday life — something relaxed, social, and connected to people and nature. One thing I really want to change in Japan is the image that wine is intimidating, expensive, or only for experts. Even in advertising, beer or other alcoholic drinks are often promoted casually using celebrities and popular culture, while wine is usually presented as something more luxurious or high-end from a commercial perspective. I think that kind of image can make wine feel psychologically distant for many people. In New Zealand, I met many people who casually enjoyed wine without worrying too much about rules or technical knowledge, and I loved that culture. Through working in hospitality, studying wine, and experiencing vintage, I learned that the atmosphere and human connection around wine are just as important as the wine itself. In the future, I want to create a space where beginners can feel comfortable and enjoy wine naturally without pressure or pretension.

What is your vision for the next 3–5 years? Where do you see yourself in the wine or hospitality world?

Over the next three to five years, I want to gain as much experience as possible in the Japanese wine industry while continuing my wine studies, especially WSET Diploma. I'd like to work in environments where I can deepen both my wine knowledge and my hospitality skills, while also learning more about business and customer communication. In the long term, my dream is to open a New Zealand-focused wine bar in Japan that combines wine, education, and a relaxed café-style atmosphere. I want it to be a place where beginners feel comfortable asking questions and discovering wine naturally. Since I also have a background as an English teacher, I hope to connect education and wine together in some way in the future.

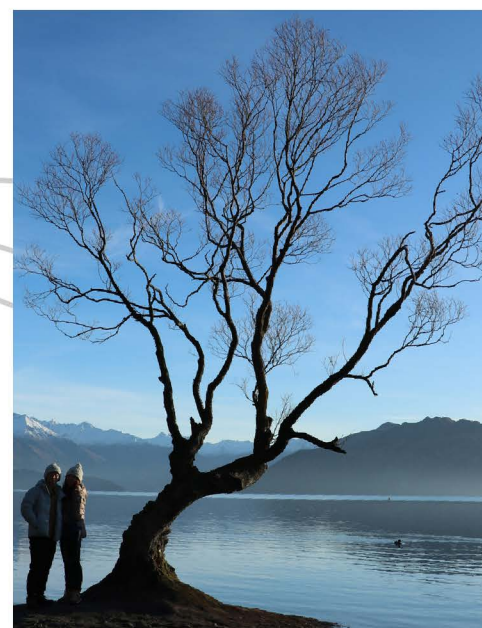
How has your time in New Zealand shaped your long-term gastronomic identity?

I think New Zealand changed my idea of what wine should be.

Before coming here, I sometimes saw wine as something formal, expensive, and knowledge-based. But living in New Zealand taught me that wine can simply bring people together and become part of everyday life. I became more interested in the atmosphere around wine — the conversations, the food, the scenery, and the people sharing the experience together. Because of that, I now want to create a more relaxed and beginner-friendly wine culture in Japan in the future.

If you return to New Zealand, where is the very first place you would go, and who is the first person you would want to see?

If I could return to New Zealand again, I'd probably go straight back to Marlborough first. Honestly, one of the things I'd want to do most is buy a bunch of good-value local wines from Pak'nSave or Woolworths and drink them almost every day. Marlborough supermarkets have such an amazing wine selection, and I really miss that casual accessibility to good local wine. The person I'd most want to see again would probably be Yuichi, my boss and a viticulture specialist at Bragato Research Institute (BRI). He gave me the opportunity to work in vineyards and experience vintage in New Zealand, and I honestly feel nothing but gratitude toward him. If I visited again, I'd love to bring him some Japanese souvenirs, probably his favorite senbei rice crackers, as a small way of saying thank you.





"I became more interested in the atmosphere around wine — the conversations, the food, the scenery, and the people sharing the experience together." -Yukihiro Nagahara

There is something almost old-world about *Rose Rabbit Quince Liqueur* from **Cardrona**. It feels less like a modern liqueur and more like a spirit rescued from a forgotten alpine apothecary; golden, perfumed, and decadent.

Poached South Island quince is folded into Cardrona's rich single malt spirit, creating a liqueur that moves between orchard fruit, honey, warm spice, and the delicate floral perfume only quince seems capable of carrying.

The texture is lush yet poised. It recalls baked quince cooling on a kitchen windowsill, copper pots simmering in late autumn, and the glow of candlelight across a dining table. Beneath the fruit lies the structure of malt spirit, bringing depth, warmth, and a faint whisper of oak and grain.

Rose Rabbit feels designed for moments of lingering: poured slowly beside a cheeseboard, served over ice at the end of dinner, or lengthened into a winter cocktail. It is indulgent, nostalgic, and very romantic.

 Resident Spirit Experts



\$133.00 RRP
CAHN'S

Flip the page for Table 8's cocktail creation with
Rose Rabbit Quince Liqueur



Quince Alexander

Table 8's Alexander variation with Cardrona Quince Liqueur

- 35 ml Cardrona Quince Liqueur
- 20 ml dark crème de cacao
- 25 ml fresh dairy cream
- Tiny pinch of sea salt

Shake hard with ice until properly chilled and lightly aerated. Fine strain into a chilled coupe or small Nick & Nora glass.

THE ART OF EVERYDAY RITUALS

Kiwi Coffee Tour

Léa & Indy  @kiwicoffeetour

As a country fueled by coffee and milk, New Zealand has shaped a coffee culture that feels both vibrant and deeply personal. From the creative pulse of Wellington to the openness of Auckland, and all the way to small-town roasteries tucked into the Southern Alps, Aotearoa offers a landscape where coffee is more than a habit, it's a craft, a conversation, and a way to connect. Every cup has an identity, reflecting a place, a process, and often the hands of someone dedicated to doing things well.

It's from this perspective that the Kiwi Coffee Tour passport was created. Not as a checklist, but as an invitation to slow down, to explore, and to engage with the people behind the cup. It's a project that grew on the road, imagined between long drives, early morning brews, and countless conversations across the country.

The selection itself became a journey. Traveling by van through Aotearoa, we took the time to seek out places that felt genuine. Sometimes well-known, often quietly exceptional. Cafés where the barista remembers your name, where the roasting happens just behind the counter, where attention to detail is never rushed. The result is a curated collection of around 30 independent coffee spots, each chosen not just for the quality in the cup, but for the story, the people, and the intention behind it.

These are places where coffee is treated with care and respect. No standardization, no shortcuts. Just skilled artisans working closely with their beans, often with a direct connection to growers and origin. The focus is on doing things right, even if it takes more time.

The passport becomes a companion along the way. With each visit, you step into a new atmosphere, discover a different expression of coffee, and collect a stamp that marks the experience. Small perks are included, but they're not the reason to go, they simply add to the journey.

Over time, it turns into something more than a guide. It becomes a personal record of moments, encounters, and discoveries across New Zealand's coffee scene. A quiet way to support independence, celebrate craftsmanship, and engage with a culture that continues to evolve.

For those curious to explore beyond the surface, it's simply a starting point.

Don't hesitate to follow us on Instagram. Passport launching early June.



KIWI COFFEE TOUR



Holy Land: The Myths of Burgundy

By Patrick Payumo

Wine Nerd & Pinot Noir Superfan

Burgundy! If there's one wine region that wine lovers would equate to a holy site it would be this region in east-central France. The name alone sends a feeling of near-religious admiration amongst wine enthusiasts, and it doesn't help that most bottles carry an eye watering price tag which furthers its 'legendary' status.

With famous climats bearing the names akin to religious symbolism like Clos Saint-Jacques, the highly appreciated Gevrey-Chambertin Premier Cru vineyard named after the apostle James. Not to mention, Bouchard's bottling from the Greves Premier Cru vineyard in Beaune literally named 'Vigne de L'Enfant Jesus' which most endearingly call 'Baby Jesus', and to its deep historical ties to Cisterian Monks, Burgundy can, especially in the right eyes, appear to carry an air of divine provenance. And just like any religious sites, there are pilgrims, travelling from across the world to visit Burgundy, and judging from countless Instagram posts, come to take photos of the famous Romanee Conti cross in the famous vineyard in Vosne-Romanee. In fact, Beaune, a town of only 22,000 inhabitants, hosts 1.6 million visitors yearly.

With any other holy site, Burgundy has upon itself countless myths and legends, and for the magazine's first release, I thought it would be fun to unpack and

explore myths about this famous region. Starting with:

Myth # 1: Burgundy only produces Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

We've heard time and time again that the best Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in the world can be found in this escarpment called the Cote d'Or or the Golden Slope. While Burgundy is indeed known for their top Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from iconic vineyards like Romanee-Conti and Le Montrachet, Burgundy is home to an array of wine styles and grape varieties, and is more versatile than most people realise. Let's start with the other famous Burgundy grape, Aligote, a high-acid crisp white wine often bottled under the generic Bourgogne Aligote AOC or Bouzeron AOC, with the latter, the sole commune that allows and must I say, cherishes Aligote. Total plantings for this variety is quite small with only 6% of Burgundy vineyards planted in the variety. Traditionally, the wine is mixed with Creme d'Cassis to make Kir, and I was told it pairs incredibly well with Escargot. Aligote offers tremendous value, however, as this is Burgundy there are still some pricey examples such as Leroy's Bourgogne Aligote.

We move on from Aligote to a grape we know dearly, our very own (and Loire's) Sauvignon Blanc. Most equate

Sauvignon Blanc with Loire Valley, however, a commune in the north of Burgundy, just south of Auxerre, is home to Burgundy's only Sauvignon Blanc/Gris's AOC, Saint-Bris. If one intends to try a Sauvignon Blanc from this northerly appellation, I suggest starting with La Chablisienne, the large but impeccable Chablis cooperative that has a sizable holding in this commune. Then there is also Pinot Gouges, a mutation of Pinot Noir, technically a Pinot Blanc with a cool backstory having been discovered by beloved Nuits-Saint-Georges producer Henri Gouges in their Monopole Clos des Porrets vineyard in 1936. Currently, Henri Gouges produces four bottlings of Pinot Gouges including their iconic Clos des Porrets Saint Georges. Pierre Guillemot in Savigny-Les-Beaune also produces a Pinot Gouges/Chardonnay blend called 'Dessus les Gollardes' if one intends to try it.

As for red wines, Beaujolais own prized Granite-loving grape, Gamay is found in Burgundy and interestingly, is named after a hamlet called Gamay near Saint-Aubin, the latter a Cote de Beaune village once known for value, and now becoming another wine we can't afford. I suggest seeking out the AOC's, Coteaux Bourguignon and Passe-Tout-Grain, both a blend of Gamay and Pinot Noir. Finally, we come to Irancy, a close neighbour of Chablis producing mostly

red wines from Pinot Noir that allow up to 10% of Cesar. In Burgundy, there are only 5 hectares of Cesar grapes planted, and are incredibly rare. Therefore, I suggest immediately scooping up any Irancy AOC containing Cesar as it's a rare chance to try one of Burgundy's unique varieties.

We've seen that there is more to Burgundy than Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. In fact, there are countless more styles of Burgundy from Marsannay rose, the only village level rose that is allowed in Burgundy, to the Champagne chameleon, Cremant de Bourgogne. With that in mind, this myth is undeniably busted!

Myth # 2: Negociants are the Buyers, Domaines are the Grower/Winemakers.

Burgundy is home to countless negociants, both big and small, from large players like Jadot which if you're a big zombie fan, recently came into the spotlight with their cameo in the Last of Us, to petit-negociants like Maison Skyaasen and Aussie-owned, Le Grappin. The role of negociants are well-established in multiple different regions in France, born out of necessity especially in smaller regions like Burgundy where highly fragmented holdings often require large merchants who benefit from economies of scale to handle the final sale of the wines. For growers, working with negociants allow them to recoup cashflow sooner than later, while negociants benefit from the availability of crop minus the large land ownership required for scale.

It is often assumed that negociants are strictly buyers of grapes or finished wines, while domaines grow and make their own wines. However, these days the line between the two has increasingly blurred, with domaines starting their own merchant label, and negociants having increased their land ownership, with the latter benefiting from greater control and product uniformity.

On the other side of the fence, Domaines, especially blue chip estates such as Domaine Dujac, have faced increasing demand for their wines, and with the limited quantity and astronomic cost of vineyard land, the prospect of

starting a merchant label proves to be a very attractive opportunity. The rise of micro-negociants has further blurred this boundary, with many of them starting off by purchasing grapes and acquiring land as they grow, transitioning ultimately to a negociant-eleveur.

As we've seen, the Burgundian business landscape is far more nuanced with the distinction between Negociant and Grower not as clear cut as it seems, with the vast majority of producers moving to a hybrid model that allows them to get the best of both worlds. This myth is undeniably 'Busted!'.

Myth # 3: Burgundy is expensive.

Visit any social media site and you'll find countless posts of wine lovers showing off their bottles of Domaine de la Romanee Conti or Comte George de Vogue Musigny. Burgundy has now become a luxury product akin to a nice watch or an exotic car with a fancy Italian name. Especially, with lowered yields stemming from climatic issues, coupled with ever growing demand, Burgundian wines continue to gain in price. For example, Michel Lafarge's village Volnay, averages globally at NZD\$137 while Chateau Giscours' Grand Vin, a Margaux 3rd growth, averages at NZD\$144. The price for entry in Burgundy is definitely much higher than other wine regions in the world.

It is no surprise that finding value in Burgundy remains a popular topic for many wine lovers. However, before we delve deeper, it's important to note that value is relative. For wine enthusiasts who regularly indulge in iconic bottles of Burgundy, a NZD\$ 250 bottle of Corton Grand Cru from a mid-tier producer might qualify as a weekday wine.

In order to investigate if this myth rings true, let's look into the main strategy of finding value in this region, which is exploring undervalued villages or producers. There are still places in Burgundy that offer attractive pricing such as, as controversial as it may seem, Chablis. Chablis' top terroirs such as Grand Cru Les Clos, and Premier Cru Montee de Tonnerre, relatively speaking, offer tremendous discount compared to top vineyards in the Cote de Beaune.

In the Cote d'Or, villages like Marsannay and Santenay remain underpriced. For example, Bruno Clair's village Gevrey-Chambertin and his village Marsannay have an average price difference of NZD\$ 77. Somewhat related to this strategy is finding producers that are currently under the radar.

As mentioned earlier, Burgundy extends far beyond the Cote d'Or, and most wine enthusiasts view the region in Cote d'Or tinted glasses, where much of their exploration remains in this narrow escarpment. There are plenty of appellations and styles out there that still offer incredible value, from the far north in the Yonne department to communes in the Maconnais and Cote Chalonnais.

It is true that Burgundy often comes with a higher price for entry yet there are plenty of communes/sub-regions out there that are still relatively underpriced. Because of this, I'm more inclined to call this myth 'Partially Confirmed'!

As we've seen, Burgundy's reputation is shaped by myth as much as reality. In truth, like any wine region it is far more rewarding to delve deeper than take them at face value. I hope you enjoyed this journey of uncovering truths and half-truths in the region as much as I did. Until next time, cheers!



Patrick's Pick
Cheep & Cheerful Burgundy
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Bourguignons

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The Enigma of Arrival: Toast and Oak

By Associate Professor Roo Kalatehjari

School of Future Environments, AUT

Toast and Oak entrance designed by Studio Muse immediately creates a strong sense of arrival, drama, and hidden discovery. The most striking architectural element is the long upward staircase. It makes the restaurant feel slightly concealed and destination-like rather than instantly exposed from the street. This can create anticipation: guests are physically moving upward into the dining space, which gives the venue a more exclusive and curated feeling.

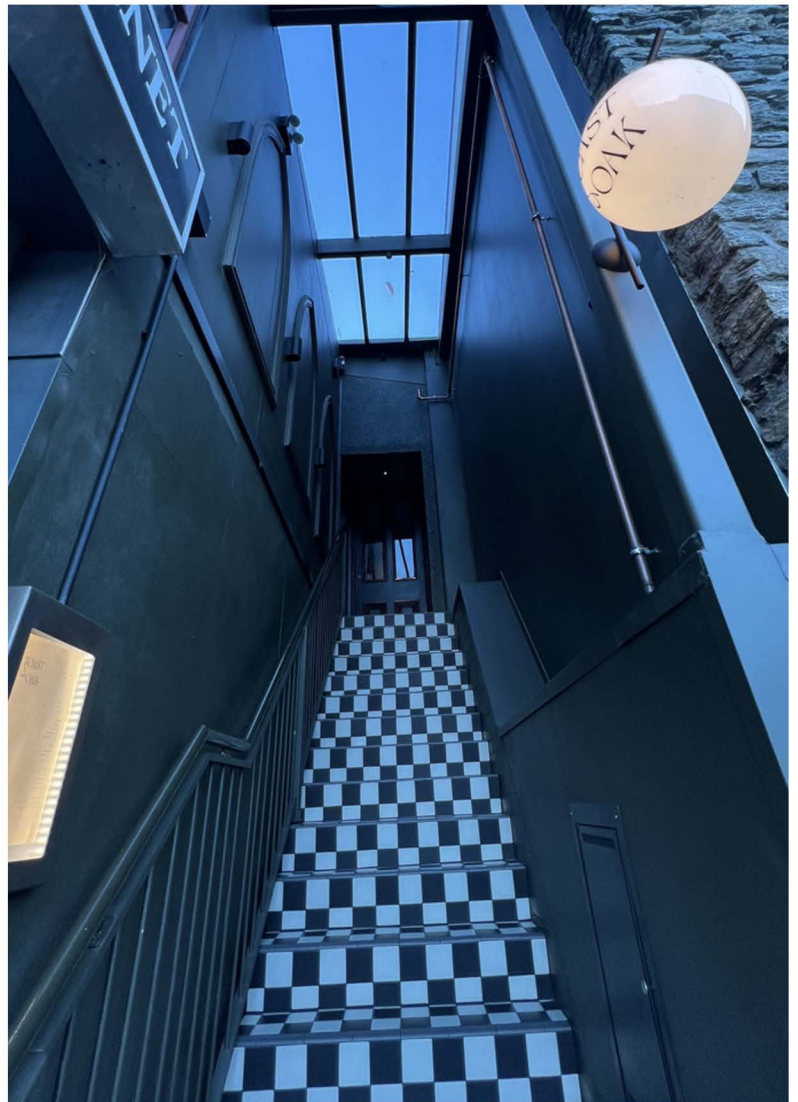
The black-and-white chequered tiles add personality and visual rhythm. They feel slightly classic, theatrical, and hospitality-led. They also guide the eye upward, almost like a runway into the restaurant. This helps turn a functional stairwell into part of the brand experience.

The dark walls and narrow vertical space create intimacy and contrast. Instead of feeling like a generic entrance, it feels moody and deliberate. The darker palette suggests a wine bar, bistro, or refined evening venue rather than a casual daytime café.

The stone wall on the right is especially important in a Queenstown context. It gives a sense of local materiality, ruggedness, and connection to the

alpine environment. It softens the more modern metal and glass elements and creates a link between the building and the region.

The globe light with the restaurant name acts almost like a marker or beacon. Because the entrance is not immediately open and wide, the light becomes a sign of hospitality. It says: this is the place, come in.



Happy Birthday

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