

# Bay of delights

Hawke's Bay wines are among the best, writes Joelle Thomson.

When even the student wines taste good enough to award medals to, someone is doing something right.

That something was quality, and lots of it, at this year's annual Hawke's Bay A & P Mercedes-Benz Wine Show, held in September at the Eastern Institute of Technology, where judges evaluated entries and winemaking students trained.

I found myself on a judging panel and it was a privilege to find uniformly top merlots, syrahs, chardonnays, cabernets and student wines at the Hawke's Bay wine competition.

All the New Zealand judges and our invited Australian guest judge were unanimous in saying that these wines



exceeded our expectations, by a long stretch.

The bay's biggest strength is its diversity. It has cooler areas, where pinot noir and sauvignon blancs thrive, and warmer areas where chardonnay positively glows.

For the third year running, the champion wine of the show was the Villa Maria Single Vineyard Keltern Chardonnay, this year the 2010 vintage.

The choice of chardonnay as champion wine proves that Hawke's Bay is New Zealand's greatest chardonnay region.

This doesn't mean Nelson, Marlborough, Martinborough, Gisborne and Central Otago can't or don't produce top chardonnays. There are simply more outstanding chardonnays from Hawke's Bay every year, and the consistency in style is enough to bring even those who think they are over chardonnay back into the fold.

Then there were the reds. They were impressively teeth-

staining, but not as palate-numbing as expected, thanks to the region's winemakers moving away from the hefty oak which characterised their reds in the past.

Hawke's Bay's latest merlots are outstanding, and the most convincing New Zealand attempt yet, for me, at the Italian sangiovese grape emerged from Osawa Wines.

Other wines which deserve a mention include the 2010 Alpha Domus The Barnstormer Syrah, the 2010 Osawa Wines Prestige Collection Pinot Noir, the 2009 Villa Maria Reserve Malbec, the 2011 Trinity Hill Hawke's Bay Sauvignon Blanc, the 2011 Esk Valley Hawke's Bay Verdelho, and the 2011 Alpha Domus Noble Selection.

Awards at:  
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## WINES OF THE WEEK

### RECESSION BUSTER

2011 Invivo Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, \$20

Here's an intense new Marlborough sauvignon blanc with a zingy youthful style, lively lime flavours and gorgeous lingering flavours at the finish.

[invivowines.com](http://invivowines.com)



### THIS WEEK'S TREAT

2009 Church Road Cuve Merlot, \$30

Decades of research, thought and time have gone into helping this merlot make its mark as one of the bay's best. It all began when the late Tom McDonald, founder of what is now Church Road Winery, championed Bordeaux-styled reds in the mid-20th century, and it continues today with this rich, rounded red from winemaker Chris Scott.

[churchroad.co.nz](http://churchroad.co.nz)



### REACHING FOR THE STARS

2009 Osawa Wines Prestige Collection Chardonnay, \$45

If this wine isn't worth a splurge, then tell me what is. It's the innate freshness of the citrusy flavours in this wine that balance its full-bodied, mouth-filling style – talk about a top New Zealand chardonnay, thanks to winemaker Rod McDonald and winery owner Taizo Osawa. [osawawines.co.nz](http://osawawines.co.nz)