

Dish Tasting Panel Sauvignon Blancs



THE JUDGES

(clockwise from top left)

Yvonne Lorkin – Dish drinks writer

Cameron Douglas – Senior Lecturer AUT and Master Sommelier

Jane Boyle – wine consultant

Jo Burzynska – wine writer

James Rowan – winemaker, West Brook Winery

Simon Fell – winemaker, Thornbury Wines

(NB: all wines are judged blind and the scores of winemaker judges for their own wines cannot exceed those of other judges.)

RATING SYSTEM

GOLD ★★★★★

Superb. Strongly recommended.

SILVER ★★★★★

A cut above the rest in quality.

BRONZE ★★★★★

A good-quality crowd pleaser.



Look for the Dish Tasting Panel selection sticker, which can be worn by our top wines.

TOP WINE OF THE TASTING

1. STONELEIGH

Rapaura Series Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2013 \$30.99 ★★★★★

This is an exciting wine and "...a boxwood bomb," according to James Rowan, "with upfront complex layers of tomato leaf, blackcurrant bud and a great explosion of a drowsy summer garden." Drowsy gardens aside, this wine was the clear favourite as it showed a power-packed nose and palate alongside punchy, mouth-filling crunchy nettles, basil, passion fruit and lush lemon. "It's a big wine, but all that muscle will soften slightly over the coming months and it'll only get better," added Cameron Douglas. It has exciting personality, zingy freshness and superb length of flavour.

2. STONELEIGH

Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2013 \$25.99 ★★★★★

"The first sauvignon blanc I ever tasted was the 1993 Stoneleigh Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc," said Yvonne Lorkin. "I was waitressing and it changed my life. Twenty years later their style still wows me." Pungent and herbaceous, grassy and fruity. "A real crowd-pleaser and I really like it," said Cameron Douglas. The wine is multi-

dimensional with a blackcurrant leaf and flint addition on the nose and is succulent, juicy and very appealing.

3. TRIPLEBANK

Awatere Valley Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2013 \$26.99 ★★★★★

People who adore that classic old-style spectrum of "out there and proud" sauvignon that oozes unabashedly tropical sweaty flavours – get ready! "Definitely one for those who love sav in its overt style," commented Jane Boyle, while Simon Fell added that it is "...quite lively, fresh with vibrant aromatics, nice palate and persistence of flavour." Dried herb and lime notes really shine through in this wine, which Jo Burzynska remarked is "More concentrated than most."

4. BLACKENBROOK

Nelson Sauvignon Blanc 2013 \$21 ★★★★★

New Zealand's sunshine capital has produced something sensational here, a wine bursting with sweet passion fruit and floral aromatics, crunchy-crisp acidity and complex "herb garden, curry leaf, basil and mint" notes, according to James Rowan. Cameron Douglas agreed, adding it is also "a more refined and elegant sauvignon blanc, with warm texture and generosity."



5. EDWIN FOX

Reserve Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc
2012 \$18.99 ★★★★★

"Stonefruit, tropical, lifted melon, aromatic, fresh and lively, concentrated, understated elegance," noted Jane Boyle straight off the bat. That melon character, freshness and elegance impressed Jo Burzynska too, who also noted delicate blackcurrant leaf aromas. Simon Fell was impressed with the wine's ripe passion fruit notes, balanced sweetness and good persistence and length of flavour.

6. WAIPARA SPRINGS

Waipara Sauvignon Blanc 2012 \$19
★★★★★

It's fantastic to see examples like this sourced from North Canterbury, a region proving incredibly versatile, particularly when it comes to aromatic whites. The judges all noted the precision and balance of this wine, as well as its fantastic varietal definition and intensity of flavour. "Lots of succulent passion fruit and punchy herbs," noted Jo Burzynska, "with attractive minerality, a good weighty mouthfeel and powerful length." Jane Boyle commented on its "lovely floral nose, orange blossom, citrus and ginger."

7. MUDHOUSE ESTATE

'The Woolshed Vineyard' Marlborough
Sauvignon Blanc 2012 \$28-35 ★★★★★

Fans of a softer, more approachable, lively, easy-drinking style will love this example. Jane Boyle enjoyed the tomato leaf and fresh aromatic notes, while Jo Burzynska was impressed with the dusty spice, flint and capsicum nose and mineral-focused intensity in the mouth.

8. THORNBURY

Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2013 \$20.99
★★★★★

An easy drinking sauvignon that you can find in pretty much any supermarket across the country, this wine boasts an attractive flinty nose, with hints of grapefruit, a fantastic mouth-filling herbal edge "and good length" noted Jo Burzynska. "Vibrant acidity" and "nicely balanced sweetness" were the common descriptors from all judges. Lovely stuff.

9. DASHWOOD

Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2012 \$17.99
★★★★½

"I love the classic lawn clipping, lime and tomato leaf aromas," remarked Yvonne Lorkin. "Nice texture in the mouth and a long, lingering finish." James Rowan and Cameron Douglas also noted the phenolics* were upfront here, "...but overall that presents a specific expression that I like," said Cameron, whereas James felt the limey acidity, chalkiness and freshness all added up to a very well made wine with a solid fruit core.

10. GROVE MILL

Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2012 \$18.50
★★★★½

The judges were taken with the complex herbaceous aromas and tangy burst of passion fruit and lemon in the mid-palate of this wine. "Boxwood and mango," said James Rowan, "with a nice lick of acid and grainy phenolics." It's a deliciously inviting wine with juicy tropical and apple flavours "and a hint of jalapeno" added Cameron Douglas, "very well made indeed."

11. SAINT CLAIR FAMILY ESTATE

Vicar's Choice Marlborough Sauvignon
Blanc 2013 \$19.50 ★★★★★½

"Bursting with classic green herbs, tomato leaf, passion fruit and capsicum characters, this wine is nicely structured with excellent persistence of flavour," noted Yvonne Lorkin. The structure impressed the other judges too, who also noted its floral, delicacy, balanced sweetness and lemon notes. "Crowd pleasing," added Cameron Douglas.

12. ARA WINES

Single Estate Marlborough Sauvignon
Blanc 2012 \$21.95 ★★★★★½

This brand is definitely one to watch as it produces another great example of what the 2012 vintage could achieve. "Nice crisp focus and poise, good concentration and definition," remarked James Rowan. "A really good example of 2012 with nice acidity, alcohol and phenolics." It's a big, fruity wine with quenching citrus, tropical and sweet herb flavours, while being nicely balanced and well made.

13. MILCREST ESTATE WINES

Nelson Sauvignon Blanc 2013 \$19.30
★★★★½

Nelson does it again! Jane Boyle was immediately taken with this entry: "Grassy tomato leaf notes and clear varietal character. Nice, punchy concentration and very expressive." The judges also noted flavours such as pear and white stonefruits, which appear to be an interesting regional trait.



Barrel Fermented and Other Styles

While classically styled sauvignon blancs are all about the clean, pure flavours derived from cool ferments with man-made yeasts in stainless steel tanks, we just love it when sauvignon gets a bit funky and takes a walk on the wild side. When it's executed well there is no substitute for a splash of Semillon, a lick of toasty oak, or the whiff of creamy, smoky character and frangipane finish you get when sauvignon is fermented with indigenous yeasts inside oak barrels. But it has to be done carefully, because if the extras are overdone and the fruit integrity is not maintained then the style won't satisfy. Our top seven are definitely ready and waiting...

TOP WINE OF THE TASTING

1. RIPPON

Lake Wanaka Central Otago Sauvignon Blanc 2012 \$24.50 ★★★★★½

Who would have thought we'd be able to produce decent barrel fermented sauvignon this far south, let alone one that only narrowly missed out on a Gold medal. The key, according to all the judges, was that the oak wasn't overdone; it was harmonious with just a hint of smoke and the "green bean fruit" was still dominant. "Nicely developed herbal pea pod notes, a rich creamy palate that's very textural and showing real elegance and finesse," noted Simon Fell, while Jo Burzynska added it had nice freshness and nutty notes. It's a lovely example and will be fascinating to see how it develops with another 6-12 months in bottle.

2. BIG SKY WINES

Te Muna Road Martinborough Sauvignon Blanc 2012 \$20 ★★★★★

Big flavours and creamy, green-fruited characters abound here from Big Sky. "Quite the invigorator!" noted James Rowan. "Limey focused with nice phenolics and balanced acidity." "It has crisp, varietal flavour with a gentle, spicy oak complexity.

3. CLOUDY BAY

Te Koko 2010 \$50.99 ★★★★★

"I love the frangipane, toastiness on the nose, summer flowers and richness," commented Yvonne Lorkin, while the refined, well balanced mouthfeel and texture alongside butterscotch and nutty notes impressed the other judges. Built for the long haul.

4. RICHMOND PLAINS

Blue Moon Nelson Sauvignon Blanc 2012 \$24.99 ★★★★★

"Very toasty," remarked Jane Boyle, "I liked this wine much better the second time around." Simon Fell agreed, saying the oak was "spicy and a touch resinous," but as it opened up in the glass the judges agreed it was a riper style with interesting floral aromas, a powerful line of grapefruit and smoke, well-handled oak and a long, flinty finish.

5. HUNTER'S

Marlborough 2012 Kaho Roa \$25.90 ★★★★★

This wine proves you don't have to have a powerful nose to make a big impression. "Attractive nutty notes alongside nice popcorn and creamy-fresh, malo* characters, with crisply focused, fresh sauvignon notes," said James Rowan.

Cameron Douglas noted its "balanced palate, oak bite and sound weight."

6. PEGASUS BAY

Waipara Sauvignon Semillon 2011 \$27.95 ★★★★★

One sniff and the injection of semillon delivers hay, quince and gunflint notes. "A really interesting style, which would be great with food," noted Jane Boyle, while Simon Fell reckoned it had a "savoury, herbaceous edge on the nose, a nice soft, creamy palate, good length and balance."

7. SPENCER HILL ESTATE

Nelson Reserve Fumé 2012 \$23 ★★★★★

"Really expressive aromatics here," commented Simon Fell, "with developed tomato leaf, a 'stemmy', salty note, interesting minerality and a softer palate." The nose had restrained green fruit and flint according to Jo Burzynska, and it was ripe, spicy and a touch sweet on the palate, while Jane Boyle noted a charry oak essence, which softened as the wine opened up in the glass.

With thanks to Janet Blackman and her assistants from the Professional Wine Studies Department and the AUT School of Hospitality and Tourism. For more on the programmes in hospitality, food and beverage, and hotel management visit www.aut.ac.nz

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