

THE YEAR'S AWARDS

BEST PINOT GRIS

The Hunting Lodge Seasonal Marlborough Pinot Gris 2020 (\$28)

★★★★★

While the Hunting Lodge kids are based on the old Matua vineyard and winery out in West Auckland, they're experts at extracting excellent pinot gris fruit from Marlborough. With nostril-numbing nuances of nashi and palate-queenching, poached quince characters (take that, Mrs Brown from 6th Form English, I can alliterate to save myself) this is a wine that'll absolutely wow the crowds and bring all the grins. Finely tuned aromatics, a decent dusting of spice, juicy textures and freshness for days, it's the perfect thing to pair with pumpkin gnocchi. thehuntinglodge.com

Gibbston Valley School House Central Otago Pinot Gris 2020 (\$39)

★★★★★

Christopher Keys made this glorious wine and it's pretty much pure nashi pear perfection. Add hints of quince (nice rhyme), intense citrus textures, luxurious richness and tangelo-tasticness on the finish and you've got a superstar with marathon length of flavour. Seriously. Buy a bottle, take a sip, swallow then count how long you can feel that deliciously prickly sensation on your gums. It'll be ages. Superb with Szechuan prawns. gibbstonvalley.com

Middle Earth Nelson Pinot Gris 2020 (\$22)

★★★★★

Crafted from two different clones (2/15 and 2/21, thanks for asking), this perky new pinot gris is a robust, ever-so-slightly-sweet southern style that'll wow the crowds and impress the trousers off your friends. It's fresh, frolicsome, incredible value for money and yelps out to be paired with something rich and spicy. Its next-level nashi notes and juicy, luscious mouthfeel make it perfect with the creamy, spicy sweetness of pumpkin soup. middleearthwine.com

BEST GEWURZTRAMINER

Blackenbrook Family Reserve Nelson Gewurztraminer 2019 (\$30)

★★★★★

The thing I love about this wine is its cool, calm mood. Unlike a lot of gewurztraminer styles that are all jazz hands and stage voice, brash, blousy and wearing way too much perfume. This new release rolls out subtle ginger, rosewater and musky spices on the nose and unveils layers of nashi, nutmeg and poached peach on the palate. Having spent a quiet, sleepy year in bottle before release, it's soothing, dry and softly styled. blackenbrook.co.nz

Whitehaven Marlborough Gewurztraminer 2020 (\$22) ★★★★★

My anticipation for Whitehaven to release their annual gewurz is so great I might as well be lurking, pacing outside the gates. I can't even remember if there was ever a time that I was less than wowed by any vintage they've released. They manage to cram truckloads of turkish delight, caramelised, roast peach, ginger, apple crumble spices and buckets of freshness into every sip and the 2020 is no exception. Succulent, refreshing and an absolute joy to drink. Yum! whitehaven.co.nz

Ataahua Waipara Gewurztraminer 2019 (\$26)

★★★★★

I love that this wine smells like opening the mirror of my grandmother's bathroom cabinet and catching a waft of that deliciously comforting combo of lavender talc, cold cream, citrus blossom, and peachy, musky face powder. Taste-wise, the texture is lighter, and the mouthfeel is rich yet nicely dry. Great length of flavour, too! Get out the papadams, because this rules with rogan josh. ataahuawine.com

BEST ROSÉ

Bald Hills Friends & Lovers

Bannockburn Central Otago Rosé 2020 (\$30)

★★★★★

A pretty apricot-blush in the glass, this deliciously dry style crafted from handpicked pinot noir, has classic watermelon and red apple aromatics colliding with a hint of creaming soda and soft spices on the palate. Cleansing, crunchy-crisp, yet generously proportioned, it's an impressive rosé that absolutely sings with Central Otago elegance. baldhills.co.nz

Madam Sass Central Otago Rosé 2020 (\$22)

★★★★★

Don't let the frilly, dilly, pink, cartoony corsetry on the label fool you into thinking this wine isn't a serious prospect. With its dry, spicy, zesty, clean acidity, fleshy textures and generously juicy length of flavour, it's a beautifully proportioned rosé that'll run rings around your taste buds.

Widely available in supermarkets

Misty Cove Landmark Marlborough Rosé 2021 (\$19) ★★★★★

I poured this wine and said to my husband, "When we win Lotto, I want a pink diamond rock on my finger in exactly this shade, thanks," to which he mumbled,

"Sure", and went back to scrolling for fishing lures on his phone. I know you're thinking it'd be hard to match that sort of romantic intensity, but this rosé is well up to the task. Made from pinot noir, pinot gris, and chardonnay, this dry Mediterranean style roars with raspberry and watermelon and wins with Greek salad.

mistycovewines.com

BEST PINOT NOIR

Jackson Estate Homestead Marlborough Pinot Noir 2019 (\$23)

★★★★★

Matt Patterson-Green has crafted a pinot noir with serious personality, pluck and charm, and despite being a spring chicken, it's also showing some of the depth and seductive spice of a characterful cougar. The tannins are what get me though; they have delicate grip but lovely intensity. The acidity and textures are vibrant and alive, and the cranberry and cherry complexity make it amazing value for money.

jacksonestate.co.nz

Palliser Estate Martinborough Pinot Noir 2019 (\$57)

★★★★★

I'll admit to having a less-than-sensible obsession with the black guava, cherry, blueberry, and black tea brilliance in this bottle of Martinborough magic. I also love its rosehip tea, forest floor and earthy, wild redcurrant flavours and its buckets of berries, chewy tannins and its long, impressively savoury finish. It's a true "try before you die" pinot noir because it has clarity, power, and grace and layers of moody, broody brilliance. So succulent and spicy, it's beyond delicious with wild mushroom risotto. palliser.co.nz

Doctors Flat Central Otago Pinot Noir 2017 (\$52)

★★★★★

Steve Davies crafts his organic pinot by putting a portion of whole clusters into the ferment to inject a softer, fruitier layer. Those bunches essentially ferment inside their own skins, and the result is a wild and woolly wine erupting with baked tamarillo, black tea, and cherry notes. Saucy spices and a tweak of truffle on the finish add to its complexity, and it roars with mushroom pasta. doctorsflat.co.nz



OUR TOP
WINES OF
2021

Colombo Martinborough Pinot Noir 2018 (\$39) 5

★★★★★

This powerful pinot is basically a bottled version of a classic Hilary Barry clap-back to some gormless gumby daring to dictate the correct amount of cleave suitable for TV. Are they on drugs? Were they dropped on their head as a child? Everyone knows nobody brings better blouse-game than Hills-Baz. With aromas of red cherry, raspberry, and rhubarb alongside bright, vibrant, spice-soaked sippability, this perky, tamarillo-tastic pinot is perfect with slices of salty prosciutto and a saucy off-the-shoulder number. colombo.co.nz

BEST MERLOT, CABERNET AND BLENDS

Man O'War Waiheke Island Blend 2019 (\$31.50)

★★★★★

Cabernet franc-dominant wines are rare over here, especially at this price and quality level. Winemaker Duncan McTavish's 2019 unleashes powerful aromas of blackcurrant, liquorice and spice that osmore into a palate packed with dark berries, bay leaf, chocolate and coffee and finishes with lingering, leathery tannins. It's a muscular rich, red wine you'd want to cuddle up on the couch with. manowar.co.nz

Mills Reef Reserve Gimblett Gravels Cabernet Merlot 2019 (\$25)

★★★★★

Brilliant value here from Paul Dawick, master of the dark arts of crafting impenetrably inky cabernet dominant deliciousness. Erupting with boysenberry, plum and a whiff of dark mint chocolate, it's a lush, leather-clad, sinewy wine that oozes personality and charm. wineportfolio.co.nz

Monowai Upper Reaches Hawke's Bay Merlot 2020 (\$26)

★★★★★

Straight out of the gate, I'm calling this the best merlot I've ever tasted from Hawke's Bay's Matapiro subregion. The grape gods shone down on husband and wife winegrowing team Emma Lowe and Marcelo Nunez in 2020, because they've produced a silky, stylish, vibrantly spiced, fruit soaked sensation. Elegantly proportioned, boosted with blueberry and peppered cocoa, the tannins have gentle grip and cling and I absolutely love it. monowai.co.nz

Stone Paddock by Paritua Hawke's Bay Merlot 2018 (\$25)

★★★★★

Bursting with boysenberries and dark cocoa on the nose, this wine also boasts a flummery of florals, and a fang of furry tannins on the finish. Flummery, fang, and furry are three of my favourite F-words, and this vintage of Stone Paddock merlot is love and marriage, horse and carriage stuff for my palate. Balanced, bold, and beautifully structured, this wine is solid on spice, crammed full of creamy cocoa notes, and tickled with tobacco. I can only love it more if I'm sipping it with lasagne. paritua.com