



MEDIA RELEASE

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First Pinot Blanc released by award-winning Blackenbrook Vineyard

Elegant, new option for white wine lovers

Blackenbrook Vineyard is releasing its first vintage of Pinot Blanc, which Michael Cooper MA ONZM, New Zealand's most acclaimed wine writer and author of the annual *New Zealand Wines: Michael Cooper's Buyer's Guide*, has called "attractively-scented, vibrantly fruity and mouth-filling." Mr Cooper awarded it 4.5 stars.

Winemaker Daniel Schwarzenbach says the new Pinot Blanc is virtually a one-of-a-kind wine in New Zealand.

"There are only 11 hectares of Pinot Blanc planted in the country. Nearly all of these grapes are blended into other white varieties or matured in oak, which brings the texture and flavour closer to a Chardonnay.

"But Pinot Blanc is aromatic and fruit-driven all on its own. We have made the wine in a way that allows the varietal flavours to shine by maturing it in stainless steel rather than oak. This way the grape expresses its pure style from our Nelson vineyard."

When fermented in stainless steel, Pinot Blanc tastes more in line with its close relative Pinot Gris.

"If you love Pinot Gris, you'll really enjoy our Pinot Blanc," Daniel says. "We have three wines made in a similar way – Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, and Gewürztraminer. In terms of flavour, our Pinot Blanc sits right in the middle between our floral Gewürztraminer and our nutty Pinot Gris. It's crisp and floral and aromatic.

"I think people will find the Pinot Blanc is beautifully balanced, has amazing fruit components, and will be really pleasing to drink. The fruit-driven style will suit the palates of New Zealand wine drinkers who look for young, vibrant yet elegant wines.

"However, if you want to experiment and let it age a bit, it will become richer and have a more complex texture over time."

Daniel was inspired to plant Pinot Blanc grapes when he judged a European wine competition in the mid-2000s and tasted some of their tank fermented Pinot Blanc wines.

"I was absolutely blown away by the flavour. It was totally unexpected. I knew then that I wanted to grow it back home in New Zealand and that it would be a perfect fit with the other wines we produce in the style of the Alsace region of France."

Most Pinot Blanc wine is produced in Alsace, Germany, and Italy. Daniel spent time working in Alsace early in his career, and it has had a significant influence on his style of winemaking.

“In Alsace, Pinot Blanc grapes grow in older soils and can be quite minerally with floral stonefruit flavours. You get more depth of flavour with the older soils, but I really think our first vintage has intense flavour characteristics already. The vines are still young and, as the roots grow deeper, we hope to get close to the concentration of flavour that you find in Alsace.”

Daniel says Blackenbrook’s Pinot Blanc is an original, fresh option for white wine drinkers.

“The focus with all our wines is balance. We want you to enjoy them with or without food. You shouldn’t have to guess whether our style is dry or sweet – our style is always balanced, always drinkable. The Pinot Blanc is no different. In fact, it’s eminently drinkable!”

Award-winning Cod & Lobster Brasserie on Trafalgar Street has added the 2019 Blackenbrook Pinot Blanc to their spring wine list. General Manager Rebecca Kirk says it will be an ideal match for their seafood dishes: “It’s juicy but still has a bit of dryness, its up-front sweetness is noticeable, but it’s not sugary because the acidity gives it structure. I’m certain our customers are going to love it.”

Blackenbrook’s 2019 Pinot Blanc can be purchased directly at www.blackenbrook.co.nz. It is served in selected cafés and restaurants throughout Nelson Tasman: ‘where to purchase’ information can be found on www.blackenbrook.co.nz.

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About Blackenbrook Vineyard, Nelson, New Zealand

On a gentle north-facing slope near Tasman Village, you’ll find Blackenbrook Vineyard, a 20ha block owned by Daniel and Ursula Schwarzenbach. Blackenbrook Vineyard produces seven grape varieties: Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and the Italian red variety Montepulciano. Blackenbrook Vineyard is accredited by Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand.

It is a winery designed by a working winemaker. In this region, vines grow into Moutere clay soils and the mild maritime climate sweeps over the hillsides. The vineyard was first planted in the spring of 2001 and the first vintage was launched in 2004. Healthy soil, strong vines and sustainability are the focus of the vineyard management. Daniel, also the winemaker, strives for minimal interference with natural processes, which has resulted in pure and genuine wines. Most of Blackenbrook's white varieties – including the 2019 Pinot Blanc – are completely unfinned and vegan. Read more on www.blackenbrook.co.nz.

About the Pinot Blanc variety – from www.caros.co.nz

Pinot Blanc, a white mutant of Pinot Noir, has sometimes been confused with Chardonnay as they share regions of origin, physical characteristics, and taste profiles. Pinot Blanc resembles the more famous grape's medium body and rounded apple/stonefruit, while its less distinctive (or just less obvious) individual character makes it less planted and more often used for sparkling wine.

However, in cooler climates where it retains acidity, like Italy's Alto Adige, 'Pinot Bianco's' neutrality allows elegant still whites with textural richness and focus on its particular subtle nutty/mineral characters. Now hardly planted in its native Burgundy it is more so in Alsace, with a little in Germany and Austria and promising New World examples from cooler climates in South America, New Zealand and Canada's Okanagan valley.