

The tasting

When it comes to fine wines, Hawke's Bay boasts some of New Zealand's best producers. With a growing international reputation many of these wines are now being served in top restaurants around the world. Napier Life brings you our favourite regional selection as just a tempting taster of what's on offer from our leading wineries.

editorial judi hopkinson / **pictures** lee warren







Vidal Wines

Reserve Chardonnay 2008

Vidal, one of Hawke's Bay's oldest boutique wineries, was founded in 1905 by pioneering winemaker Anthony Joseph Vidal. From what was once a fledgling wine company, Vidal winery has grown to become a well-known producer of premium quality New Zealand wines - wines that bring out the best of some of the country's most important growing regions.

The Reserve Chardonnay is one of Hawke's Bay's classics. It's a beautiful, well balanced elegant wine with a bouquet of citrus and roasted nuts. The wine has a wonderfully long finish with fruity notes and a hint of lemon zest on the palate. Full in the mouth the Chardonnay has good weight and texture and would go well with creamy chicken.

This is a quality wine perfect for a special occasion. It is drinking well now but with careful cellaring will continue to develop for up to five years.

www.vidal.co.nz



Craggy Range

Te Kahu 2008

Craggy Range is a family owned winery famous for structured, muscular, powerful reds built for cellaring. The wines are 'terroir' and varietal specific, representative of Gimblett Gravels. In 1996, Vigneron Steve Smith became a Master of Wine and is the only specialist viticulturist in the world to have this distinction. He was described by Decanter Magazine as one of the 50 most influential people in the world of wine going into the next millennium.

The Craggy Range Te Kahu, meaning 'the cloak', is named from the cloak of mist that covers the hills around the Giants winery. This is a beautifully crafted rich bodied wine - a proprietary blend of different red grapes from the Gimblett Gravels vineyard. Another special wine from Craggy Range with notes of blackberry flavours and subtle hints of nutmeg. This is a very graceful wine with a long finish and strong tannins that linger on the palate.

www.craggyrange.com



Wild Rock

Pania 2008

Wild Rock Wine is created by a team of New Zealand's best wine makers who select grapes from our premium regionally designated sites. Wild Rock Wine is all about the experience - bringing together New Zealand's pure, green outdoor environment with truly vibrant fruit and complex with an innovative 'can do' attitude.

Pania - named after the Maori legend of a beautiful maiden who was taken by the sea and created the reef protecting the city of Napier. Carefully crafted by winemaker Rod Easthope from grapes grown on the lush Heretaunga Plains of Hawke's Bay, this is an award winning beautiful Chardonnay with notes of citrus, cashew, stone fruit and buttered toast. The wine is full, rich and well balanced with initial flavours on the palate of ripe pear and zesty mandarin blending with oak vanilla and spice, a refreshingly long finish

Fine wine for everyday.

www.wildrockwine.co.nz



Matariki Wines

Matariki 2005 Quintology

Matariki Wines is one of the pioneer developers of the Gimblett Gravels region of Hawke's Bay.

This is a family owned winery, managed hands on by resident proprietor John O'Connor. His original Vision, to realise the full potential of what the Gimblett Road region of Hawke's Bay can produce has seen them embark on a quest of over 20 years towards bringing this dream to reality. The wines are handcrafted from a tapestry of soils grown in harmony with nature and founded upon three key principles: their soils, their wines, their passion.

The Matariki Quintology is matured predominantly in fine grain French oak. It is fine structured with a deep red and slightly purple hue. An intense aroma of blackberries and plums with hints of spice and oak. Each mouthful gives a rich full palate, velvety tannin and lengthy finish. It will be a good match for red meat or game and will cellar well for up to 10 years.

www.matarikiwines.co.nz



Esk Valley Estate

Winemakers Reserve Syrah 2007

The historic 75 year old Esk Valley Winery is situated at Bay View just north of Napier. With its sweeping views over the Pacific Ocean and 'The Terraces' vineyard clinging precariously to the north facing valley wall, this is a must visit on your way in or out of the Bay. Winemaker Gordon Russell has established himself as one of New Zealand's winemaking identities with his passionate and enthusiastic approach to winemaking. He has achieved enormous success with his wines in both tastings and competitions.

The Esk Valley Syrah is a crafted wine from hand-picked grapes fermented in 75 year old fermenters and aged for 20 months in French oak barriques. A full bodied wine this is very drinkable now or cellared up to 10 years. It is rich in colour with notes of black fruits, plums, spice and subtleties of oak from the French barriques.

www.eskvalley.co.nz



Mission Estate Winery

Reserve Merlot 2008

Mission Estate Winery is New Zealand's oldest winery established in 1851 by a group of French Missionaries and produces exquisite Bordeaux style blend red wine. Today the winery is the largest privately owned in the Hawke's Bay. The wines are noted for their remarkable structure, intensity and fine balance.

Grapes were sourced from the Bridge Pa triangle red metal soils for the Reserve Merlot 2008. The wine has balanced structure and complexity with the Cabernet Franc blend of grapes. It has aromatic notes of black berries and plum with a smooth lengthy finish. This is a beautiful dry red wine with lovely soft tannins, sweet fruit and subtle oak having matured in French barriques. It will go very well with red meat and game.

www.missionestate.co.nz



Farmgate

Noble Harvest Riesling 2007

"Farmgate wines celebrate what's made locally and the people who make it. Farmgate is a place we all know. It's at the end of the dirt road, at the beginning of a long driveway. It's the meeting point between locals who care so much about what they produce, and the opportunist who stops and tastes the best the land can deliver".

Each Farmgate wine profiles a unique Hawke's Bay food producer with the Farmgate Noble Harvest Riesling 2007 perfectly matched to Damien Ward - The Bee Keeper. Made from noble harvest grapes this wine is unctuously smooth with an intense honeyed complexity.

It has a lovely lingering palate with strong notes of apricot and citrus fruits.

This is easily an award winning wine having won a Gold Medal & Trophy at Air NZ Wine Awards 2009, Gold at NZ International Wine Show 2009, 5 Stars Top 5 Michael Cooper, Winestate Magazine and Silver at Bragato Wine Awards 2009.

www.farmgatewines.co.nz



Sacred Hill

HALO Syrah 2008

Sacred Hill Wines has taken its name from this area Puketapu which means 'sacred hill' in Maori. Established in 1986 Sacred Hill is owned by the Mason family producing exceptional handmade wines under the chief winemaker, Tony Bish.

The HALO range of wines are hand-crafted by Tony Bish to bring premium quality wines from small parcel vineyards back into everyday enjoyment. This stunning HALO Syrah 2008 was produced from Hawke's Bay's red metal soils. It has a rich, deep purple colour with notes of black cherry, licorice and spice. This wine has a lovely fine grained tannin structure with a beautiful earthy, complex finish.

Matched with red meat, a saddle of venison or game, this is an aromatic, savoury and elegant wine that you will definitely enjoy.

www.sacredhill.com