

# MENTELLE NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER OF CAPE MENTELLE AND CLOUDY BAY

## Odyssey & Ecstasy

*Hooray! The '91 vintage has been delivered and the newborn wines lie in their rows of tanks and barrels, burping and farting, emitting occasional cries for attention or a nappy change.*

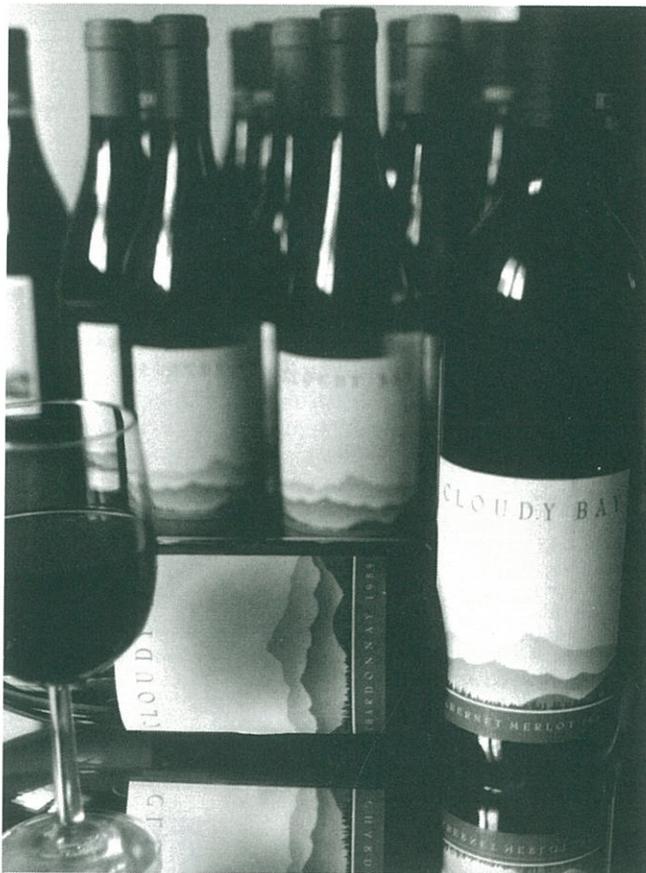
*Winemakers, like worried doctors, call for samples, monitor temperature and pulses, and prescribe post-natal care. The infants are mollycoddled through their first few months of life.*

It all starts in early spring in the flowers borne on new green shoots. Stamens form filaments and anthers, carpels unite to form pistils, ovules, stigmata. Then, six to eight weeks after first shoot growth, with everything in place, pollen grains and egg cells mature, the cap is shed and pow! The flower is in bloom.

No cries of ecstasy or muffled screams accompany this great moment. It is very straight laced and circumspect. The grape flower is equipped with both male and female sex organs and quietly engages in an orgy of self-pollination. Next thing you know, you have a zygote, the precursor of a seed, and gestation is underway.

The berry goes through three stages of growth en route to the fermenter. During the first 'green stage' there is a rapid increase in size. It's during this phase that we are constantly tending the mother vine to keep up her liquid and nutrient needs, spraying to ward off unwanted fungi and positioning shoots for sun exposure.

Next is the 'ripening stage' which commences with the development of colour in the green berry. The texture softens, sugars accumulate and acid decreases. At this point we ease off water and ensure that growth goes into the berries, rather than vegetative leaves and shoots. It is this period during mid and late summer that really determines eventual wine quality.



The final stage is - no prize for guessing - the 'ripe stage.' At this point with the vine left entirely to its own resources, ripening proceeds, fuelled from stored reserves in vine tissue, with small changes taking place in juice composition.

At the exact point of ripeness, a subjective assessment, we are back in the vineyard with a vengeance, determined to reap the reward of all our care and concern. The vines are shaken vigorously and berries fall from pedicels to be speedily conveyed to the waiting winery. Juice will be separated from skin, pulp and seed, and natural processes initiated that will ultimately deliver the newborn wine. Hallelujah!

So with the '91 vintage quietly bubbling, it's time to turn attention to the progeny of a truly great year - 1989.

## Cloudy Bay Chardonnay 1989

Disillusioned, deluded, distraught. That's how we all felt at Cloudy Bay prior to the '89 vintage. Three harvests in a row had been nailbiting, nerve wracking feverish affairs where we laboured mightily to achieve ripeness under conditions which at times could only be described as the pits. We got there, but the stress exacted its toll. Kevin Judd had the haunted look of a fugitive, Ivan Sutherland went rowing a lot and the Cellar Rat spent long hours in the loo. But the '89 vintage opened with a burst and the sun shone for its duration, delivering fully ripe grapes three weeks early. Kevin Judd waxed almost lyrical, though he offers no guarantees that this recipe will work in the kitchen: *"Take a ripe melon and a pineapple, blend with a little butterscotch and some freshly baked wholemeal bread, toss in a bowl of peaches and cream, then stir in the juice of a Granny Smith. Serve lightly chilled."*

## Cloudy Bay Cabernet Merlot 1989

Bordeaux varieties love warm weather and in 1989 the cabernet, merlot and cabernet franc must have thought they were on the beach in Biarritz. They cruised into ripeness and produced our finest red yet. Here's the lyrical Judd again:

*"Start with a superb harvest.... Take fine grained fruit and oak tannins as a base, proceed with blackberries, currants and plums, then top with spicy cinnamon accents. Wrap around a full body and enjoy over many a year. The Cloudy Bay Cabernet Merlot 1989 is a fine red for all seasons."*

# A Rose Garden

*Mentelle Notes' Kiwi correspondent profiles grapegrower, David Rose.*

David Rose is a man of the land, indeed a man of the Wairau. His forbears arrived in Nelson in 1843, were farming near Blenheim by 1860 and bought the property that David and his family now farm in 1901. In the early days it was sheep, oats and spuds. These days David runs a sophisticated mixed farm growing an eclectic range of crops including peas, garlic, sweetcorn, pumpkins, wheat, evening primrose and... grapes.

For all his diversity and effort nearly half the income from the 200 acre farm comes from his 11 acre patch of chardonnay grapes.

Rose describes himself as a 'down-to-earth bloke' and is known for the best 'Gidday!' in New Zealand. With his CASE cap, faded checked shirt, stubbies and Hush Puppie replicas of R.M Williams boots he cuts a profile recognised from one end of the valley to the other.

Grape growing started in 1981 when Rose was encouraged to plant by Allan Scott of Corbans. "The money looked attractive," admits Rose. He tackled the job of growing grapes with the same skill and efficiency he used for any other crop, the intention being to produce as much fruit as possible within the quality parameters of the purchaser.

But since 1986 when David became a Cloudy Bay grower, this approach has changed.

The impetus - a supply contract that links the grape price to the price received for the wine, locking grower and winery into a situation of mutual benefit. Quality is rewarded.

To achieve the finest quality Rose, along with all Cloudy Bay growers, works closely with viticultural consultant Dr Richard Smart, and Cloudy Bay production staff. With encouragement, cajoling and downright bribery, David has modified his management practices. The result - dramatically improved grape composition flavour and aroma. These practices have included close monitoring of the vines' water needs to avoid excessive vigour, thereby directing growth into the fruit; vertical trellising for maximum sun exposure and controlled pruning, calculated to set a crop that will achieve full ripeness.

Being a cynical sort of a bloke, Rose has been slow to warm to some of Smart's suggestions. A pruning demonstration prompted the comment, "No different to having a big haircut in the middle of winter!"

But the proof is in the pudding, or in this case, the bottle. David Rose is one of Cloudy Bay's most committed growers. The man whose indulgence in mood modifying beverages once went no further than a pint or two of Lion Brown, now occasionally can be found in the winery lab evaluating the finer points of designated vineyard chardonnay or sauvignon tank samples. Strewth!

## MARLBOROUGH

There is never any shortage of drama around vintage at Cloudy Bay. A test of nerves in most years, these near polar latitudes present their share of tense moments. This year we ran the gauntlet of rain and hail in the valley and heavy snow on the Richmond Ranges. In between, the sun shone and the grapes came in at perfect ripeness. Beats the hell out of any logic. Harvest commenced on March 13 with chardonnay and at the time of writing was still underway, with cabernet yet to be harvested. Looks like a great vintage in the tank.

## MARGARET RIVER

Cool conditions continued through harvest with some rain, allowing that all important slow ripening critical for flavour development, winery logistics and winemakers' sleep cycles. All white grapes were harvested in the cool of the night, each vineyard picked at optimum ripeness. Commencing on March 6 with chardonnay, the vintage concluded on April 19 with a last tank of cabernet.

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*"Good wine is never too expensive, bad wine always is."*

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*Baron de Ladoucette*



We hope you enjoy the new look newsletter. Bright and breezy as ever, with its new grey-green livery and masthead featuring a dolphin, the new corporate logo of Cape Mentelle and Cloudy Bay. A symbol of quality.

Dolphins have been linked to wine since antiquity. Legend has it that Bacchus, the god of wine created dolphins from a crew of recalcitrant pirates. It is said he changed his oars into snakes, filled his ship with vines and the music of flutes and drove the sailors overboard, to become dolphins.

The waters of Cloudy Bay and Cape Mentelle abound with these gentle intelligent creatures, synonymous with diligence, protection and fun. Bacchus we owe you one.

Vintage Report

New Notes

# To market... to market...

By Jim Ainsworth

*Jim Ainsworth, Wine Correspondent for London's Punch devises new laws of wine marketing.*

When I was a student, an old rather worn cartoon graced the notice board in the Psychology Department. A rat in a cage was telling its mate "I've got this chap in the white coat really well trained. Every time I press the buzzer he sends down a pellet of food."

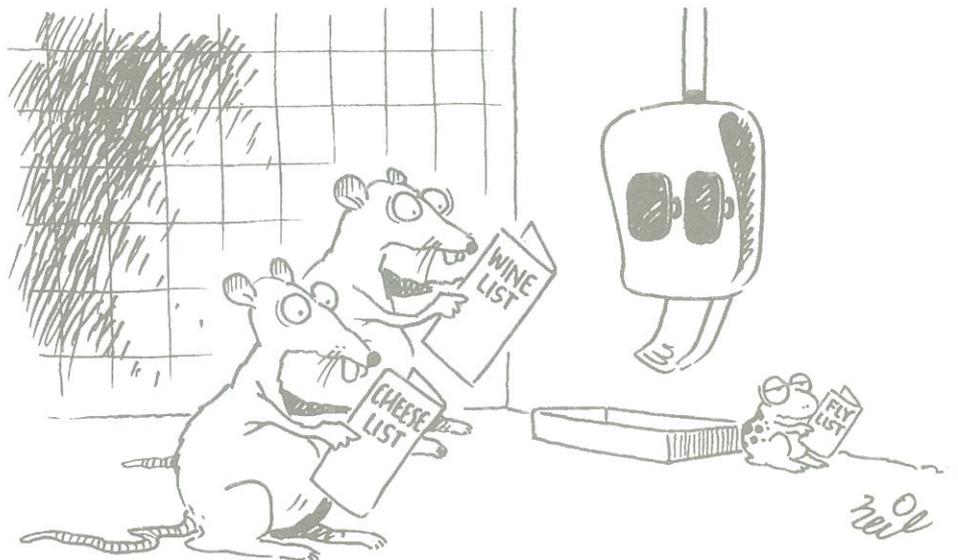
While psychologists thought they were teaching rats a conditioned response, drawing learning curves and a regular salary, the rats knew better; they were training psychologists to feed them whenever they rang for service, like four-legged, pink-nosed, whiskery Bertie Woosters. Buzz-buzz, and Jeeves appeared. It taught me that there is always another perspective on any situation.

Regardless, for the moment, of who is the rat and who the psychologist, there seem to be two perspectives on the question of market forces operating on wine. My own, which I had assumed to be the only possible one because it came to me first, is that of a customer.

As a customer I control the world with my buying power; that is to say I walk into a shop and buy a bottle, all right make it two then, of a wine that bowled me over last night. Perhaps, taking one at random, it was Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc. It is the sum total of lots of little individual decisions like mine, in lots of wine bars, restaurants and shops around the world, that together constitute the market forces which eventually catapult some producers to international stardom, and consign others to oblivion.

Or is it? Imagine my surprise when the other perspective struck: the wine trade might be manipulating us. Take a wine that few people have heard of, pass it under Robert Parker's nose, and if it scores ninety-something on his ridiculous scale that runs from 50-100, then every drinker worth his salt will kill to get some. If you don't believe me, just try buying some La Moline, La Landonne or La Turque, all single vineyard Côte Rôtie from Guigal, all with 100 marks. One man and his nose are creating that demand, not you and I.

It is all very well saying that consumers demand certain wines or styles, but unless somebody makes the wine first, we don't know what to demand. Are you telling me that the



world's drinkers, without so much as a single committee meeting, somehow devised a wine called Liebfraumilch and then persuaded the Germans to set up factories to produce it? Is that how market forces operate? Or are you telling me that there is so little Gevrey Chambertin around because there is no demand for it? No, I am beginning to think that market forces are a myth invented by economists to keep us all quiet, while the real power lies in the hands of those who make and sell wine.

*'...market forces  
are a myth  
invented by  
economists...'*

Well enough of this. I might not be able to put a stop to it, but at least I can formulate The Inverse Law of Market Forces Operating on Wine. This says that the least popular wines are in greatest supply. Oh yes it does, it's my law, it can say whatever I want it to. Have you ever asked yourself why supermarket shelves are crammed with

Liebfraumilch? Because nobody wants it, that's why. If they did, there wouldn't be a single bottle left.

The second part of the law, well you've probably guessed, states that the most popular wines are virtually unobtainable. "Can I have a bottle of Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc please? What do you mean you've run out? Look, when I press the buzzer I expect a bottle to be sent down immediately. Call yourself a psychologist? No, I certainly won't accept Liebfraumilch as a substitute. Oh dear, I think I'm going to have a Mentelle breakdown."

## CABS LINE UP

Antipodean cabernet took to the stage at Auckland's Wine Gallery last month - a veritable chorus line of high kickers. Organised in conjunction with Cloudy Bay's agents *Negociants New Zealand*, the comparative blind tasting of 12 cabernets and cabernet blends selected from key areas such as Coonawarra, Hawkes Bay, Margaret River and Marlborough, was intended to illustrate the distinctive regional characters of several New Zealand and Australian top red wines.

Perspicacious trade and media palates picked the eucalypt aromas of Central Victoria and the cool climate herbaceousness inherent in some of the Long White reds, but selecting the Wallabies from the All Blacks wasn't as easy as one might expect. Notable, was the impact on the New Zealand wines of the addition of merlot.

The current release Cloudy Bay Cabernet Merlot 1989 boasts its fair share of this classic Bordeaux variety, a blend that recently caught the attention of visiting Sotheby's Wine Department head Serena Sutcliffe MW. "Sampling a Cloudy Bay 1989 [Cabernet] Merlot convinced me that Marlborough is not just a paradise for Sauvignon," she wrote in April's *Decanter*. A conclusion generally supported by participants at the Auckland "Cabernet in the Antipodes" tasting. Watch out Margaret River, move over Bordeaux - Marlborough can can-can!

# Cloudy but fine

We knew it all along. There is a science to sauvignon blanc and what's more it imitates art...or at least nomenclature. Australian oenologists admitted recently to knowing the secret of Kiwi sauvignon blancs - a simple organic compound called *methoxy-pyrazine*, present in vegies (especially capsicum) and sauvignon blanc grapes in parts-per-trillion. A heaven scent, all green and grassy, detectable in minuscule amounts by even the least audacious hooter.

CSIRO biochemist, Dr Mike Lacey who admits to playing with his mass spectrometer, discovered that New Zealand sauvignons contain about 30 parts per trillion of the magic substance; Australian sauvignons only ten per trillion. And fiddle as they may Aussie viticulturalists can't do any better.



An artful glass of science

—  
'There is a science  
to sauvignon  
blanc...'  
—

According to Dr Lacey the explanation is up in the air...or more especially, the clouds.

"We've tested the Australian grapes in the early stages of ripeness, and their levels of methoxy-pyrazine are just as high as New Zealand grapes, but by harvest the levels have dropped dramatically. It is possible that the compounds break down in the more intense Australian sunlight."

He goes on to recommend to wine drinkers desperately seeking Kiwi sauvignon, the following artful experiment. "Take a sliver of capsicum, steep it overnight in a rather average Aussie sauvignon. By morning it will have developed a silver lining." A recipe not yet tested in the Cloudy Bay kitchen, nor about to appear on the back label. But it's one we'd have liked to share with Captain Cook, who named the Bay and probably would have appreciated a good drop of Kiwi blanc.

*Bacchus would have been pleased. It was a great party. Even the Morris dancers behaved...*

The Marlborough Wine and Food Festival has become a major calendar event and this year's festival was no exception. From far and wide they came...ten thousand happy revellers...to frolic in sun-kissed vineyards; to sip Sauvignon with salmon, Müller with mussels and Cabernet with venison kebabs...

Every taste was accommodated. There were tutored wine tastings for the keen, spaghetti eating competitions for the greedy and garlic ice cream for the brave. There were Billy Burgers, Muscovy sausages, avocados dressed to please and chevron (goat) sausages. Miniature tasting glasses brimmed full with selections of Marlborough's very best wines and, as the temperature rose, the revellers romped to a hotch pot of Scottish dancing, Dixie, rock and Caribbean reggae.

At the Cloudy Bay tent necessary precautions were taken. 'Morris dancers will be served only if accompanied by an adult and they have left their sticks and bells at the tent entrance', read the warning. Last year the Morris men did not distinguish themselves and no one was taking any chances. The sign did the trick and Cloudy Bay's patrons enjoyed chilled Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay unmolested in the shade.

It was a sparkling day of remarkable moderation. One of Marlborough's very best and an occasion not to be missed. If you did, you will have to wait till Saturday 8 February, 1992, the date of next year's Blenheim Bacchanal... Morris men notwithstanding, it's a must!

Marlborough's Fair



**New Zealand International Wine Festival**  
June 28 - 30, 1991

New Zealand Expo Centre, Auckland

**Cape Mentelle Cabernet Tasting**

Sunday 28 July, 1991

Sydney Opera House

**Marlborough Wine & Food Festival**

Saturday 8 February, 1992

Blenheim



Methoxy-pyrazine in the making



# Test Treats



Four cricketers and a winemaker - from left: Kevin Judd, Graham Gooch, Robin Smith, Allan Lamb and Mike Atherton on a lay day at Cloudy Bay.

It's not every day the team at Cloudy Bay have to put their legs before wickets, though willow has at times been seen on the winery lawn and occasional maidens bowled. To be truthful tugs-o'-war are more Cloudy Bay's style. So imagine the CB Googlies consternation when the touring English Test team's gastronomic quartet (above) took a day off and came to lunch amongst tanks and barrels. Wisden was consulted, bodies aligned, replacements rallied. Rest assured readers, it was an even match. No one was hit for six or even legless before wicket) and the visitors seemed to enjoy their lazy Marlborough day.

To commemorate this auspicious occasion *Mentelle Notes* has secured a most valuable item of apparel - a CLOUDY BAY T-SHIRT signed by Lamb, Gooch, Atherton and Smith. And, if you're lucky, it can be yours!

All you have to do is answer the following three questions. The first entry drawn from a new Nevers oak barrel will win this rare, 100% cotton garment.

Please make sure you include your name, address and telephone number with your entry. All entries (correct or otherwise) to be sent to **Test Tee, Cloudy Bay Vineyards, PO Box 376, Blenheim** and received no later than 10 June, 1991. The winner will be notified by mail and the lottery draw will be final. Consolation prizes of a bottle of Cloudy Bay Cabernet Merlot 1989 to six other lucky punters.

**Q1. What is Allan Lamb's favourite tippie?**

- a) Pimms
- b) Cloudy Bay Chardonnay
- c) A cuppa tea
- d) None of the above

**Q2. If Kevin Judd had time for a hobby, what would it be?**

- a) Surfing
- b) Spot the botrytis
- c) Wedding photography
- d) Barrel topping

**Q3. How many glasses of Cloudy Bay Cabernet Merlot does it take to bowl a Marlborough maiden over?**

- a) 2
- b) More than 2
- c) Don't know - more empirical research required
- d) Depends on the maiden

Don't be stumped. Send your entry today!

# The Cellar Rat

*Harvest is past....*

Dear Mentelles,

G'day. The Rat has survived another successful vintage. As I sit here sipping a beer and suffering caffeine withdrawal, wondering how I did survive, my thoughts turn to winemakers...

Winemakers are born not made, with an incredible sense of smell and taste, and bad backs. They can smell wine faults at twenty paces, a malo at ten... Even when they try to destroy their senses with cigarettes and sulphur they still smell and taste things of which mere mortals fantasise.

That, gentle Mentelles is why winemakers write tasting notes. But try them on other whiffs... the garlic that seeps from their pores after a heavy night at the local Italian, the winery cat's bowl of morning yoghurt.... and the hooter is off duty.

Come vintage... you never see a winemaker when harvesting chardonnay or sauvignon blanc but bring in the pinot noir and you'll draw more winemakers than you can poke a hose at. They'll eyeball it, smell it, taste it, talk to it and sometimes they'll even strip naked and play in it. Winemakers call this plunging, but the Rat calls it kinky. Then for the next few days they walk round smiling & muttering something about Everest....

Winemakers have a sixth sense, it allows them to show up just as you've made a mistake. (Winemakers don't make mistakes, only assistant winemakers and cellar rats do.) When you've made one you get to see "winemakers face" - the raising of an eyebrow, then a blank look, a shaking head and a heavy sigh.

Winemakers love to show their wines in barrels - to fellow winemakers, wine writers, friends, relations and the man who was lost and only wandered into the winery for directions. The Cellar Rat has to top these barrels every week, so there are no secrets - he soon finds out the winemaker's favourites ...

Winemakers are incredibly kind, especially to said wine writers, they'll roll out barrel after barrel but like elephants, they never forget ....secretly wanting to kill for the rotten review ten years ago, the three star putdown. But at the end of the day, I wouldn't be without them. They're great guys....do an incredible job at blending time, cover the Rat's arse and occasionally, remember to stock the beer fridge. But when it comes to the crush ....the winemaker is Jesus ... because it is the Production Manager who is God!

Love, light and peace,

PS Any similarity between the winemakers in this column and any winemaker living or dead is accidentally on purpose.

# Latest Drops

**Cloudy Bay Cabernet Merlot 1989**

"Another superb example of this wine...light to medium red...dominated by subtle spicy plums and blackberries with expert integration of oak and fine-grained tannins. This is a classy wine, ideal for taking to dinner."

Ray Jordan, West Australian

**Cloudy Bay Chardonnay 1989**

"Cloudy Bay made its mark with sauvignon blanc, but its chardonnay is closing the gap. A flavoursome complex wine, this scores top marks."

John Fordham, Sydney Sunday Telegraph

**Cloudy Bay Chardonnay 1987**

"Just taste the 1987 now; it's like a really first-class 1986 Chablis."

Robert Joseph, WINE

**Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 1990**

"Wonderfully precise, incredibly powerful aroma, very fresh, quite complex, and absolutely superb. The greatest in the world? Possibly."

Prima Wine News, California

"New Zealand's finest export since Sir Richard Hadlee."

David Thomas, Punch