

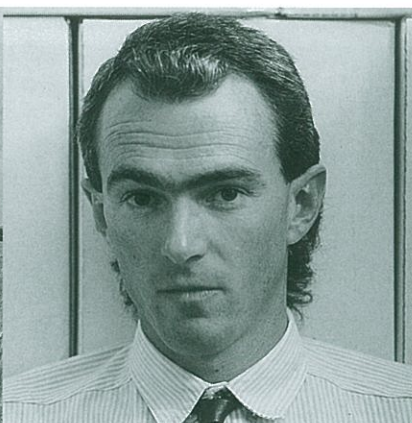
MENTELLE NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER OF CAPE MENTELLE AND CLOUDY BAY - NOVEMBER • 2004

Simply Sauvignon



Roof off, Cloudy Bay 1986.



Kevin Judd in the era of the thin leather tie.



Pruning the original sauvignon blanc block, 1990.

International wine commentator Robert Joseph sips back – and reflects on two decades of Marlborough sauvignon blanc.

The past, as the novelist LP Hartley memorably noted, is a foreign country where they do things differently. And that's as true of wine drinking as it is of anything else. When it comes to wine, the Britain of 20 years ago, to which I'd returned after five years in Burgundy, was still essentially ruled by France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Wine essentially consisted of Liebfraumilch and white Lambrusco at the cheaper, sweeter end of the scale, and Soave, Sancerre, Muscadet, and Meursault for those who favoured something a little drier. The range of reds was similarly limited, with Valpolicella, Rioja, Beaujolais and Chianti competing for shelf-space with Bordeaux and Côtes du Rhône.

Varietal wines were not actually unknown, but they were either mostly cheap – cabernet sauvignon from Bulgarian cooperatives, or exotically pricey. Australian wine was still a novelty, represented by Jacob's Creek (then a special Germanic semi-sweet blend made especially for the UK), Rosemount Chardonnay and Brown Brothers' Orange Muscat. New Zealand was home to Muller Thurgau, and precious little else.

Wines labelled as sauvignon blanc, let alone examples of this grape from New Zealand, barely made the radar screen. Hugh Johnson's *Wine Atlas* (1985) devoted one page to New Zealand – the same as England, China and Japan, but a quarter of the space allocated to South Africa. It included the prescient suggestion that 'the innovation that may well promise most of all, is the move to the South Island' where, in Marlborough, 'grapes are making notably aromatic wines'. Sauvignon blanc went unmentioned.

'New Zealand redefined sauvignon blanc and Cloudy Bay took that new definition to a new dimension.'

My own book, *The Wine Lists*, also 1985, praised New Zealand for producing 'credible attempts at that unattainable holy grail: good, non-Burgundian Pinot Noir' and noted that Marlborough had grown to become the country's third most important wine region. But it too, completely ignored Kiwi sauvignon.

Armed with this comprehensive ignorance of New Zealand sauvignon, I landed in Blenheim in summer 1985 with the late British wine merchant, Kit Stevens MW. We had allowed a day and a half for our near-comprehensive trip around Marlborough, plenty of time to taste at Montana, Te Whare Ra, Danielle Brun, Hunters – and Cloudy Bay.

This last winery left something to be desired. To be more precise, it had walls but was decidedly lacking when it came to a roof. The lean young winemaker who had just produced the label's first vintage using facilities at Corbans explained – if that is the correct term for a man who distributes words as though he has paid for them in blood – that the building would hopefully be rain-proof in time for the 1986 harvest.

Retrospect and wisdom make easy bedfellows, but I can honestly say that when I had my first taste of *Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc* in that building site, I knew that this was something entirely new; a wine that forced me to rethink stuff that I had previously taken for granted.

Continued page 2

In this 20th Vintage Issue

• 2004 Vintage Exposed	2
• Keith Stewart Reflects...	3
• Riesling Revealed	4
• Cabernet Classified	5
• and the Cellar Rat Returns...	6

**NEW
RELEASES**

PARTY TIME

Almost the end of another year – so don't hesitate. It's time to reward and spoil yourself, or at least your friends, with any or all of these new releases. Classy sparkles; Margaret River's classic white, the ideal relaxed sipping blend; and a creamy Chardonnay – and of course the 20th vintage release of the highly sought *Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc*. This bevy of wonderful whites is willing and able to fill your Christmas stocking, the boardroom fridge or your cellar.

Cape Mentelle Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2004

'Heady aromas of passionfruit, orange blossom, ripe lemons and notes of tarragon mingle with a waft of vanilla derived from barrel fermentation. The palate is creamy and textural with vibrant, flamboyant citrus flavours that finish crisp and clean, with great length and focus.'

This is the first time this wine has been labelled Sauvignon Semillon, the reason being a small shift in percentage varietal content, rather than a shift in winemaking philosophy.

Cape Mentelle Chardonnay 2003

'This is a wine of great intensity with fruit and oak both gloriously magnified. The vibrant lemon and fuzzy peach aromas are underpinned by vanillin and nutty oak characters with complexity derived from the creamy, mealy notes of natural yeast. The palate is rich and creamy with cleansing acidity, a penetrating finish and flavours that hang around longer than a busker on a street corner!'

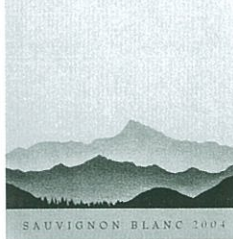
Plus two of Marlborough's finest from across the Tasman Sea...

Pelorus Vintage 1999

'Aromas of ripe mandarins, warm brioche and roasted hazelnuts introduce this decadent sparkling wine. Pelorus Vintage 1999 has a deliciously mouthfilling palate brimming with crisp apple and savoury cashew flavours that lead to a finely balanced and persistent finish.'

Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2004

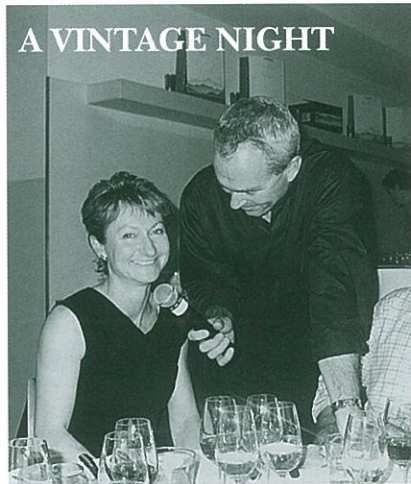
CLOUDY BAY



'Pale straw green in colour and strikingly aromatic, Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2004 evokes memories of a late summer picnic – the spiciness of vine-ripened tomatoes with freshly picked basil, red currants,

juicy mandarins and a zesty lemon cake. Layers of pure, bracing fruit flavours on the palate finish with terrific intensity and length and the crispness of a crunchy green apple.'

A VINTAGE NIGHT



Eveline Fraser and Kevin Judd tell tales at the 20th Vintage Dinner at Circa in Melbourne.

SEASON TWENTY

Two decades hasn't trained Mother Nature to behave just as Marlborough's winemakers would wish, but all in all she eventually gave the 20th Vintage her blessing.

A cool spring culminated in a frost alert in the Southern Valleys on 18 November, 2003 – exactly 12 months to the day of the severe 2002 frost. Helicopters were on stand-by to mitigate frost damage to tender vine shoots, but there was only minimal impact in the most sheltered vineyard sites.

Very warm and dry conditions during December and January ensured even flowering and a desirable fruit-set. An unusually cool and cloudy February was redeemed by mild, sunny weather during March and April, which ensured complete physiological ripeness was achieved.



Although the season was protracted – and at times precarious – new state-of-the-art fruit receival facilities enabled all varieties to be harvested with great efficiency at optimum ripeness and in sound condition. Overall, the 2004 wines show great promise with excellent flavour profiles and concentration.

SIMPLY SAUVIGNON cont

Sauvignon blanc, I had been taught in France – and gone on to teach others – smelled of cat's pee. It was how one recognised it blind from a line-up of chardonnays and rieslings. But this one was totally feline-free.

That was also true of all the other New Zealand sauvignons I tasted – but the Cloudy Bay also had a creaminess and layers of complexity that were absent from the others. Stated simply, in the early to mid-1980s New Zealand redefined sauvignon blanc and Cloudy Bay took that new definition to a new dimension.

I remember asking Kevin Judd to explain how and why his wine tasted so different. And I remember the shrug he gave in response. I'd had more effective communication with Portuguese producers of Vinho Verde – and I don't speak Portuguese. But Kevin Judd's famously laconic style merely added to the magic of the discovery.

Over the years, I have revisited the now safely rain-proofed and expanded Cloudy Bay several times, and had several more attempts at conversation with Kevin, but have learned that his wines will always be far more eloquent than the man who made them. For an Australianised Pom transplanted into New Zealand, he's actually remarkably like an old-fashioned Frenchman. What he does, with consummate skill, is allow the vineyard and the vines to speak for themselves.

By 1988, people wanting to buy the latest vintage of Cloudy Bay had to join a waiting list – just like the one for Romanee Conti. In 1989 when British wine merchant Simon Loftus declared that New Zealand was making the finest sauvignon blanc in the world, there were few here to disagree.

Mind you, Britain was an early convert. French tasters to whom I showed bottles of Cloudy Bay, found it far too 'exotic' and openly wondered about added flavourings. (This was before Loire producers visited Marlborough and decided to invest their own francs in vineyards there.)

Maybe those winemakers – and the Americans, Chileans, and Spaniards – would all have somehow found their way to making modern, ripe, dry sauvignon blanc from the Loire-style wines, but I'm ready to bet that the Marlborough gang, led by Cloudy Bay, sped up the evolution by at least a decade.

In short, Kevin Judd and David Hohnen did something that is more usually associated with the world of art, music and architecture than wine. Like Max Schubert with Grange and Antinori with his Super Tuscans, they successfully staked a claim in previously uncharted territory. The greatest tribute to these pioneers lies in the band of distinguished winemakers who have followed in their wake. And, as far as sauvignon blanc is concerned, I'd rather live in the here-and-now, than in the cat's pee redolent country of a couple of decades ago...

Robert Joseph is the Publishing Editor of Wine International and for 20 years has been a regular visitor to Marlborough.

The Long March

New Zealand wine writer Keith Stewart ponders hedonists, brief histories and heroes.

Sauvignon blanc is the product of empire, the British Empire, which it has to be said, has been responsible for the invention of some of the world's greatest drinks. Do not laugh at the suggestion that the often prim, pudding-eating British have been the catalyst for some of the world's greatest drinks.

Gin and tonic and India Pale Ale are directly attributable to the British Empire, and in its earliest of days it laid the foundation for classic Bordeaux reds that could mature for a generation in the cellars of its landed gentry. Then there is port, marsala, rum, pink gin, even that beverage of colonial resurrection and drowning dukes, Madeira. And now there is Cloudy Bay.

The dream of a Western Australian for a New Zealand wine-growing region, aided and abetted by an English-born, Australian-trained winemaker, and sold to every sophisticated market on earth, what could be more imperial than Cloudy Bay? Even the theme of the current celebration 'It was 20 years ago today' has its roots in a Liverpool nightclub and recognition throughout the world.

The story of Cloudy Bay, of a crazy Australian who actually believed he could make a world-class wine by growing the grapes in New Zealand, and somehow coerced one of the great fundamentalist winemakers to assist, has been told and told again.

No doubt it will be told by even more in this Year of Anniversary. But what will not be told is how Cloudy Bay, the archetype of sauvignon blanc as it is now known, nay, the standard bearer, has been a singular weapon against the encroachment of pompous pedantry into the hedonistic heartland of wine.

The world of wine was already in the thrall of wine-scribe ideology when David Hohnen went drinking with a band of reprobate New Zealand winemakers who had secreted about their persons bottles of licentiously exciting sauvignon blanc from an unknown, stony corner of their homeland called Marlborough.

Talk about the Road to Damascus, only in those days the road to Blenheim was infinitely less promising. Yet, Hohnen got on his bike and went, because he had a vision.

And the first miracle happened. Hohnen, in classic Australian tradition, is a laconic man, but alongside a young Kevin Judd he was positively garrulous. Yet the two of them managed to get enough talking done to form one of the great wine partnerships of the modern era, and from then on the unlikely creation of a great wine was virtually assured.



Revolutionaries David Hohnen and Kevin Judd blending Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 1990.

Not a great wine in the manner of Chambertin, admired and treasured by lords, kings and various other megalomaniacs, but a great wine for the modern era, the pre-Bush world where democracy was valued.

This was a time when commoners everywhere were flexing their wine-drinking muscles, realising their potential as aristocratic drinkers in the wake of the inspiring writings of one Hugh Johnson. The UK's Johnson popularised wine drinking as no one before him had, and all the populace needed, was a wine to match his crystalline brilliance of prose, his honesty, and his joyful hedonism. Hohnen and Judd were working on it.

“It is a wine in which everybody can taste what makes it great.”

What they were actually working on was not the faux science of post-Johnson wine writing, the pH and TA of wine anoraks, but the wine philosophy of another of the great 20th-century hedonists, Australia's legendary Len Evans, OBE. It was Evans who described democracy as not universal milk, but Bollinger for all, a pie in the sky that Cloudy Bay has made real.

The essence of Cloudy Bay's glory is that it is a wine in which everybody can taste what makes it great. It is the ultimate message in a bottle, confirmation that there is truth in life, that the classy bottle of wine you put on the table to impress your guests is actually a great drink that everybody enjoys. You don't need lessons in tasting, years of drinking arcane old wines, or a degree in

Eastern European art history to get the message. Yum! Aren't I clever for choosing it?

It is exactly the 'Bollinger for All' wine, the logical extension of Hugh Johnson's message to the world to get out and enjoy the wine experience.

The problem about Johnson's message was that it also provided evidence that a good living could be made writing about wine, and suddenly there was a wave of wannabe wine writers who armed themselves with faux science and certificates in pomposity to become a New Elite, the only ones with the competence to actually enjoy good wine.

These poseurs can easily be identified by the enthusiasm with which they deride Marlborough sauvignon blanc in general, and Cloudy Bay in particular, because the very idea that there is a wine out there that undermines their self-appointed authority scares them. The fact that Cloudy Bay continues to be what it has always been, simply fine wine, delivered with class and universal appeal, will always be a threat to the gatekeepers of having fun.

Long live the revolution! I think Cloudy Bay should put red-bordered, heroically posed portraits of Hohnen and Judd in every case of its wine, so that the true followers of wine democracy can hang them on their dining room walls. Perhaps they could also publish a wee green book – the Thoughts of Chairman Kevin.

Keith Stewart's regular wine column appears in The NZ Listener.

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A Dry Argument

Kevin Judd visits Alsace and discovers sugar – or the lack of it.

We sat in anticipation. Sommeliers and waiters with pressed white shirts hovered around tables decked out with linen to match. The lighting was subdued and the room had a low ceiling held up by huge wooden beams that had sagged under the strain of centuries of gravity. Nothing was out of place and there was a contemporary feel about the interior, despite the ornate timber wall detailing and polished wooden floors. Clearly this was the right place.

Le Sarmet d'Or was the restaurant we'd been told not to miss. Just a couple of doors down from the headquarters of the famous Hügel winery in Riquewihr, an incredibly picturesque medieval village in the heart of Alsace.

Nestled at the foot of the famous south-facing slopes of the Grand Cru Schoenenbourg, Riquewihr dates back almost a thousand years, a tiny settlement that was fortified in 1291 by the Lords of Horbourg.

Menus and wine lists were eagerly accepted and we started perusing the evening's offerings. The wine list contained a comprehensive cross-section of the wines that have made this region famous, including the many Alsatian Grand Cru vineyards. Rieslings from neighbouring Schoenenbourg and Rosacker to the north, near Hunawihr; gewurztraminer from Hengst to the south; and the pinot gris of Furstentum over the hill, and from Brand that overlooks the village of Turckheim.

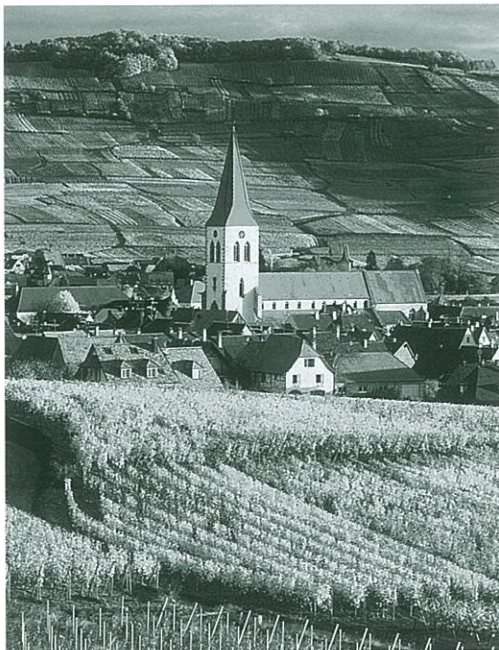
Having wandered around all these vineyard sites during the preceding days I could visualise them individually – all south-facing slopes with row after row of golden yellow autumnal leaves.

So, what to choose? Should we kick off with a crisp, dry riesling or perhaps a pinot gris? The choice seemed endless – and then the penny dropped.

With the exception of the wines labelled *vendage-tardive* (late harvest), there was absolutely no way of telling which wines were dry and which were sweet. This was a sugar minefield and the wrong choice would see us sipping on something with 50 g/l residual sugar with the entrée.

If this was a selection of sauvignon blancs and chardonnays we would have been safe, but the great aromatic wines of Alsace come in various styles that depend on the producer.

In this Antipodean part of the world the same is true to a certain degree. New Zealand aromatics of the Alsatian kind, can often contain varying degrees of sweetness, or at the other end of the spectrum, be crisp and mouth-puckeringly dry.



Ammerschwihl in the heart of the Alsace.

‘This was a sugar minefield...’

Many Kiwi's label their un-sweet rieslings as 'Dry Riesling'. This gives the consumer the inside information they need if they are looking for a crisp, steely riesling to go with that piece of fresh blue cod, but what do winemakers do if their style is not quite dry – or not dry at all?

At Cloudy Bay our riesling debut was marked by the cellar-door-only release of the *Cloudy Bay Riesling 1999* – a wine that was meant to be just off dry, but due to the vagaries of wild yeast fermentation ended up with 23 g/l sugar.

So, what did we do when we next released a riesling with only 8 g/l sugar under the same label – a smidgen off dry as we originally intended it? Hmm...we called it *Cloudy Bay Riesling 2001*.

NOTE: *Cloudy Bay Riesling* is currently only available at the Cellar Door in Marlborough – an ideal incentive for any readers who may be visiting New Zealand's largest wine region to call at Cloudy Bay. Pop in and ask for a taste...

‘The best wine...that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.’

SONG OF SOLOMON, 7:9

BYE-BYE BIRDIE

Birds are not loved by winemakers or viticulturists, especially those with a liking for plump, juicy, ripe grapes. Vineyard managers go to great lengths to deter their avian raiders. Some deploy noisy gas guns (increasingly controlled by noise control by-laws), or high frequency devices, others use over-the-row netting, and occasionally, diversionary diets of ripe watermelons are offered.

More recently, side netting has been used to protect the grapes from the hungry marauders. Certain varieties, like sauvignon blanc with its characteristic vertical canopy, are more suited to the side-strip net approach which has both cost and vine health advantages compared to over-row netting. Of particular benefit is the fact that sunlight is not impeded by side netting, reducing disease risk. What's more, the nets are easier to handle.

Cloudy Bay has another secret weapon – a four-wheel bike equipped with a powerful stereo system. Viticulturist Siobán Harnett reckons The Carpenters at top decibel is a terrific deterrent, and worked a treat on the Widow's Block this year.



Bird scarer at the ready...

WINES SHINE



Cloudy Bay's 20th anniversary in no way diminishes recent accolades for a clutch of Cape Mentelle wines from the 2003 and 2001 vintages. First goal scorer was *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Merlot 'Trinders' 2001* that caught the eye of the judges at the 2004 *Decanter* World Wine Awards, collecting the Australian Bordeaux Varietal Trophy. Not to be outshone (by much), the *Cape Mentelle Semillon Sauvignon 2003* scored Silver at the same awards.

Cloudy Bay celebrates its 20th Vintage with this photographic essay of the 2004 harvest...

Twenty Seasons Later



20th harvest...time for new gloves.

Pics, Jim Tammoek

Lightning doesn't strike twice we thought – 18 November, 2003 – 12 months to the day after an unexpected frost had crept silently across the Wairau Valley taking half the 2003 crop with it – and here we were, below zero in the pre-dawn darkness of the lower Brancott, adrenalin running, rotor blades thumping, as the ground crew directed the chopper pilots to the coldest pockets in one of our best pinot plots. The 2004 season was off to a chilly start – but Jack Frost only managed to snatch a few acres this time round.

It only seems like yesterday that our very first harvest commenced in similarly dark and near-freezing conditions. It was April 1985, under the watchful eye of David Hohnen that a harvester crawled along the rows of the Stoneleigh Vineyard in Rapaura, shaking the vines throughout the dark night. Then transferring the fruit to a semi-trailer destined to cross Cook Strait for the long haul to the Corbans winery in Gisborne, where I made the first vintage.

We had no vineyards, no winery and no name – things could only get better.

Two decades later, things certainly have improved, as did spring 2003. The carpet of deep green vineyard rows that now stretch right across the Wairau, basked under clear, blue Marlborough skies and the surrounding hillsides became parched and golden.

But in true unpredictable, maritime fashion, a blanket of cloud settled in during February and ripening slowed down to a crawl.

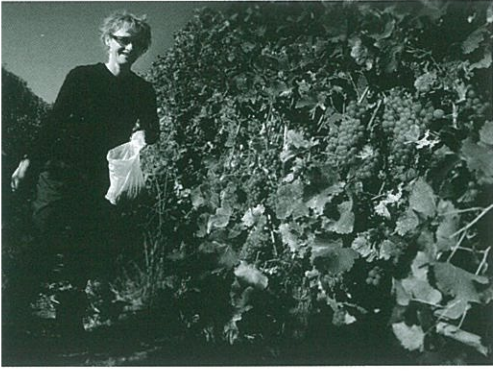
Late summer was capricious and as the sauvignon blanc approached ripeness, the distant peaks again donned snow caps, night-time temperatures plummeted and back came the choppers, flocks of them, flying in from every direction. This time they hovered to protect the leaves, so essential for the vines' photosynthetic finale.

Marlborough's ever-reliable sunshine continued to break through and during the cool nights of April we harvested our 20th Vintage...

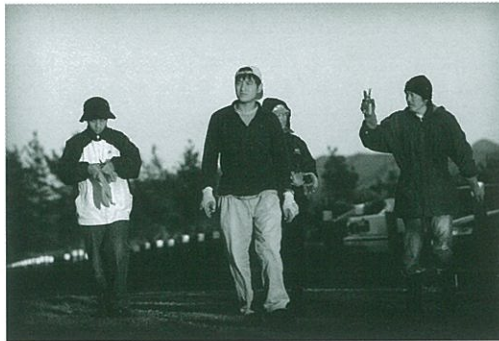
Kevin Judd.

CLOUDY BAY

THE FIRST 20 YEARS



Vineyard manager Siobán Harnett ... samples high and estimates low yet again...



Do we need work permits or just gloves?



Faye picks her millionth bunch of grapes.



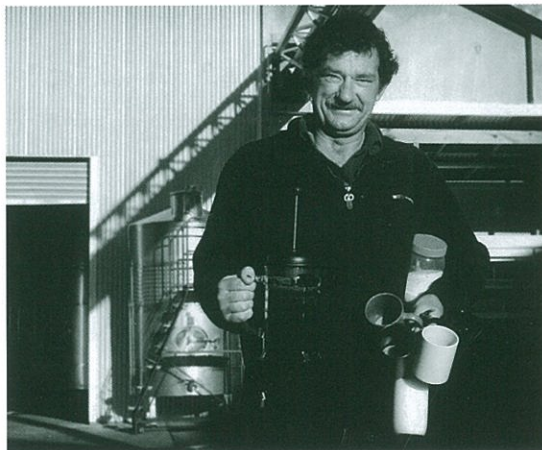
Buckets to fill...



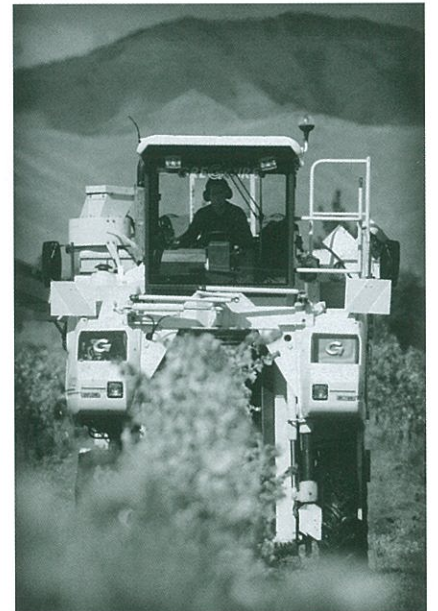
...and empty.



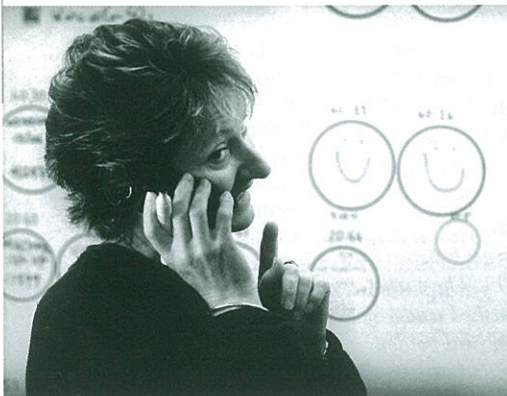
Roger makes a successful landing on planet Cloudy Bay.



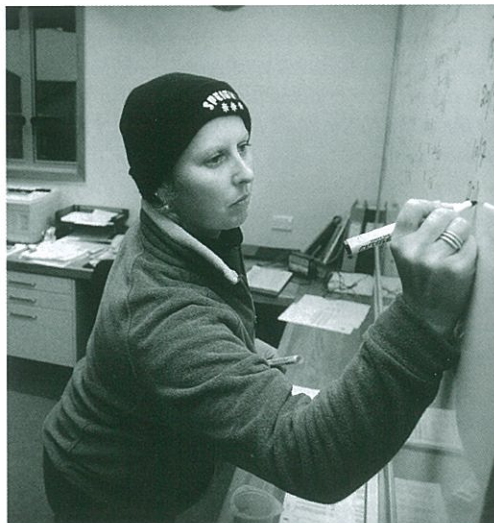
...ahhh...coffee.



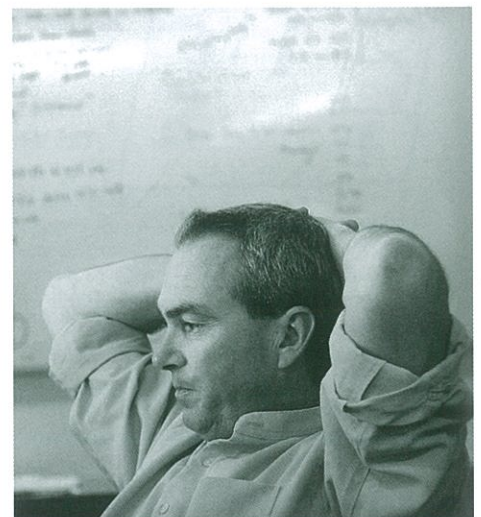
The big yellow harvester took all our grapes away...



No, I said, three meat-lovers and one vego - and I'll have a Supreme...



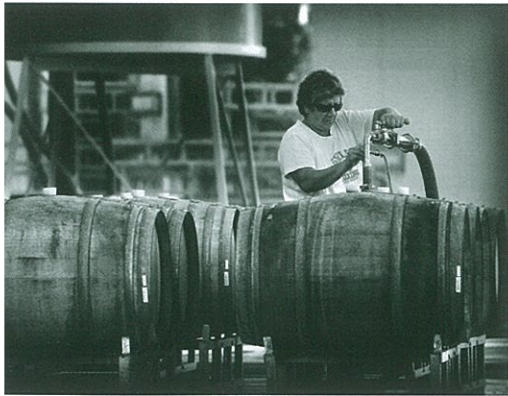
Lab report...Hang on, was it 3 meat-lovers and 8 BBQ?



Kevin Judd waits for pizza.

CLOUDY BAY

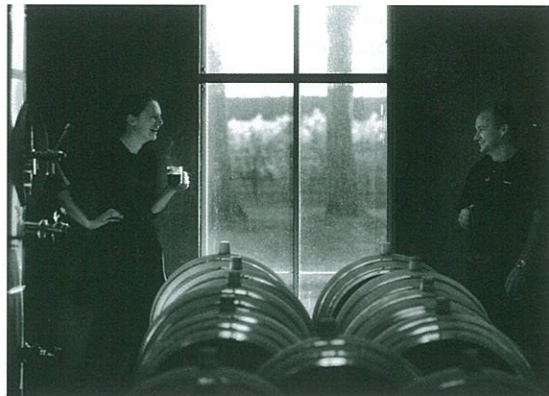
THE FIRST 20 YEARS



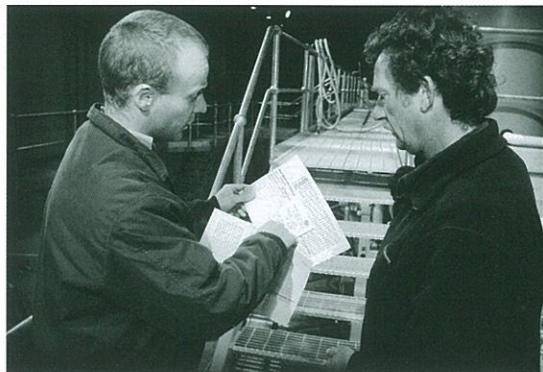
Sylvia filling barrels.



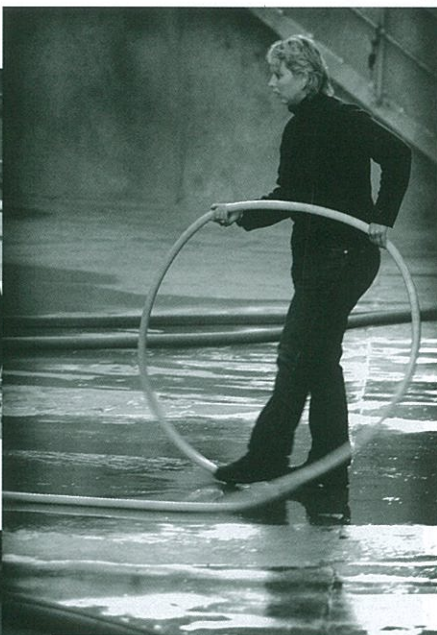
Karen cleans up.



First caffeine hit for the day.



How much did you say it weighed...?



Would have helped if I'd had a hula hoop when I was a kid...



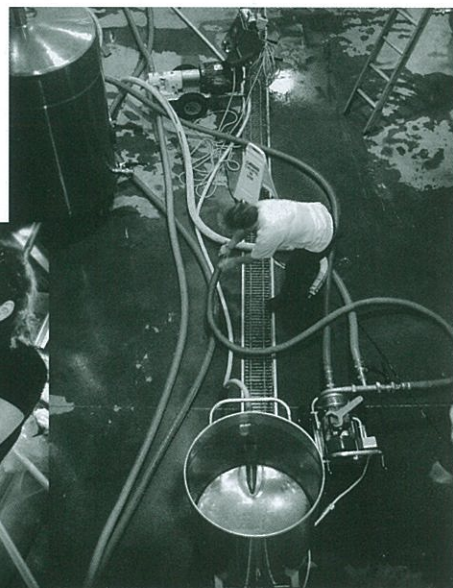
Cloudy Bay sniffer dog detects lunch.



Lug washing.



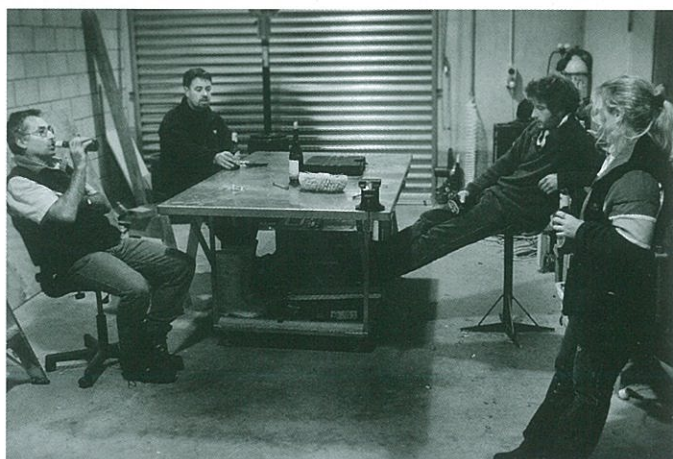
Amy plunging pinot.



Spaghetti junction.

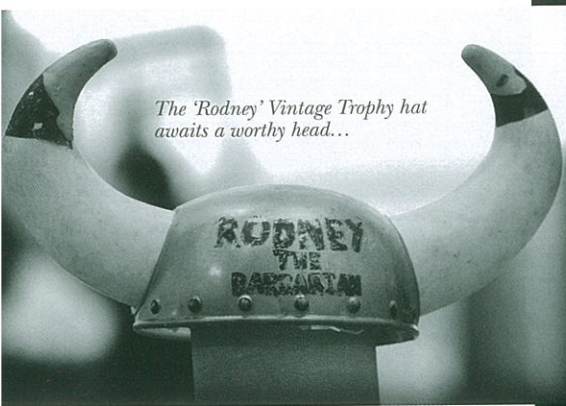


All I said was nice pair of jugs...



It's a rap at Mo's Bar.

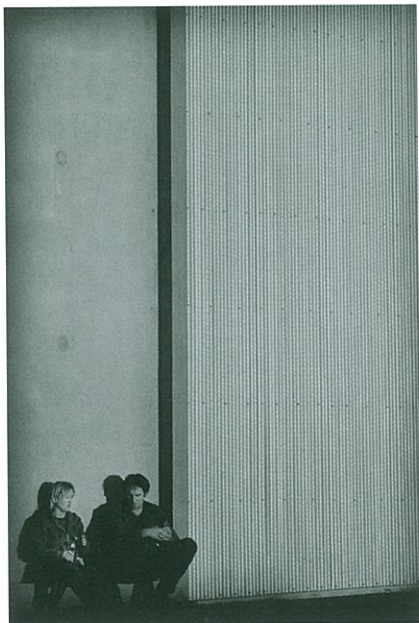
The 'Rodney' Vintage Trophy hat awaits a worthy head...



Siobán and Thomas head home.



At the end of a long night...



Then and Now...

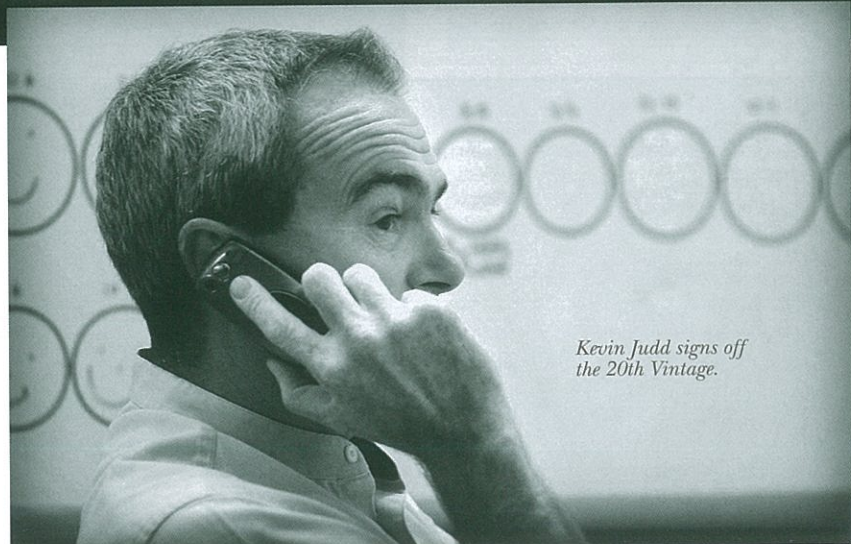
'The Best of Both Worlds' was the title of the 1986 edition of *Mentelle Notes* that announced with minimal fanfare the launch of Cloudy Bay's first vintage, a wine described as having 'unmistakable varietal character' – but not much else. Minimalist marketing indeed.

Who could have predicted that the wine with the misty mountain label, and a name first coined by Captain James Cook, would take the wine world by storm?

Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc has been lauded, awarded and applauded – the crisp, sassy Kiwi ambassador that has provided two decades of consistent pleasure to wine lovers the world over.

The passionate team who created this 20th Vintage, and talented Blenheim photographer Jim Tannock, who artfully captured its moods and moments, invite you to twist a top, pour a glass and share in a toast – to Marlborough's one and only Cloudy Bay!

Jane Adams, Editor



Kevin Judd signs off the 20th Vintage.

The Cape Challenger

Cape Mentelle winemaker Simon Burnell raids the cellar for some old cabernets...

In late August, I received a call about a vertical tasting of selected back vintages to be held in Paris. It was to include some of the world's finest wine – and *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon* was to be amongst them. Chief winemaker, John Durham was overseas, so would I take on the task of screening the wines from the eighties, to see which ones would do us proud? You bet I would!

In the two years I have been at Cape Mentelle, I have never had the opportunity to taste this part of our heritage at one sitting. Indeed, I had only tasted two of these wines, so I rounded up a couple of other younger members of the team – to qualify you had to still be in school when these wines were being made – and went down to the dungeon to dig out some bottles.

Now, as Mr Durham was away, and being respectful of those older (and possibly even wiser) than ourselves, the decision was made to patch a call through to Old McHohnen's Farm to tempt 'Farmer Dave', as he now prefers to be known, away from his chooks, pigs, sheep, cows, deer, nuts, vines, oaks and worms, just for long enough to shed some light on the vintage conditions and philosophy behind these wines. Besides, having made most of them, he never kept any for himself until the nineties when he decided he could afford to!

Regular *Mentelle Notes* readers will recall that the annual Cellaring Notes only go back 10 vintages of each wine. In the case of the Cabernet, I now understand why. If we annually tasted all the vintages that were still drinking well, the library stock of these earlier wines would soon run out!

The tasting got off to a reasonable start with the 1982, the first Jimmy Watson Memorial Trophy winner. Now, I say reasonable because on first taste I only pointed this wine – on our complex five-star scale – at three stars. Nicely delicate with some hickory, tobacco and barbecued red capsicum followed by dark mint chocolates (like my parents used to serve after dinner parties round the time this wine was made), and a fine lattice of tannin.

What happened in the glass over the next hour, was a revelation. This wine grew in stature and complexity, showing a different range of aromas and flavours each time I returned to it. To me, this is the sign of a great wine. Mr Hohnen stated that the '82 had 'knocked him out.' He recalled, 'We'd written this one off years ago' – so we gave it four-and-a-half stars.

The second Jimmy Watson winner, the 1983 was a broodier, dark-fruited wine, but lacked the ponderous complexity of the '82 – three-and-a-half stars, not bad for a hot, drought year.



Star-crossed winemaker, Simon Burnell.

Strangely enough, since these trophy winners, the show system awards have moved to the opposite end of the ripeness spectrum. But often, you still can't drink them!

The '84 stepped up a notch. Dark blood red, it initially even smelled like a fine rare steak, but opened up with all sorts of post-main course characters. Rhubarb crumble followed by blue cheese – four stars.

Something that amazed us youngsters, and even the (wise) old man, was how well these wines have aged, given what we'd heard of their early characters. The style of these wines had been modelled, at the time, on 'the bad vintage Bordeaux we had been drinking' – that is, picked lean and herbaceous.

‘What happened in the glass over the next hour, was a revelation.’

As David explained, the 1983 Cabernet won the Jimmy, but he couldn't sell it, because it was undrinkable at the time. To me, this just goes to show what a vineyard with pedigree can do, such as the original Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe vineyard. No matter what style we aim for at the time, it is this block that comes through in the end.

The '85, a very cool year, typified the herbaceous style, with some nice layered texture and cedary notes, but to my taste they remained there a bit too long – three stars.

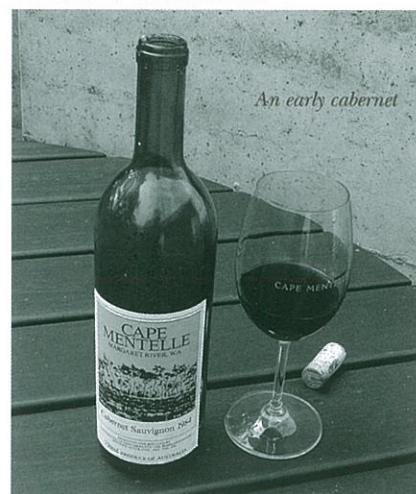
Continuing a top run of even-year wines, the 1986 was a cracker – elegant and citrus-blossomed to start, it moved through fresh, leathery characters to a cherry-packed finish with chalky tannins – four and a half.

While 1987 was a wet year, and not a bad wine, it did not shine amongst those either side of it – two and a half. The 1988 on the other hand, well it deserves its own paragraph...

What a wine! Looking back through old Cape Mentelle tasting notes, the original blurb in 1990 was 'a wine to welcome the 21st century with.' I'm not sure if anyone remembered to keep this advice, but I wish I had. Violets, plums, sweet jubey fruit, elegant yet powerful, structured, complex and chewy. Five stars from a star miser.

After that, the '89 was a poor cousin at three and a half, so I will close with the tasting notes of the '88 written at the time of its release by one of Australia's great wine writers, the late Mark Shield, 'Hey! Clean, neat and positively top gun... The wine is beautifully put together with just the right balance between cigar-box and cassis on the palate and fine-grained tannin on the finish. It needs a lot of time. Serve with firm cheese. Five goblets.'

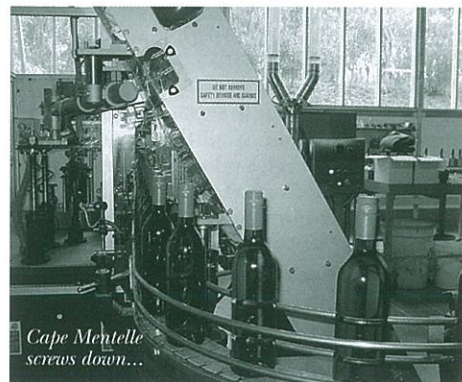
Note: The wines eventually selected to compete in France were the *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon* 1982, 1988, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1999, 2000 and 2001.



An early cabernet

UNDER THE SCREW

There is no denying that the winemakers of Marlborough have led the Kiwi charge for the adoption of screwcaps, so it's no wonder that the first international **Screwcap Symposium** is to be held in Blenheim (10-12 November). Speakers will include Australia's acknowledged pioneer Jeff Grosset; Randall Graham, USA; and Michel Laroche, France. The event dovetails with the Air New Zealand Wine Awards. Details: www.screwcap.co.nz



Cape Mentelle screws down...

Ewes Have It

Jane Adams meets Marlborough cheesemaker Roger Frazer.

My earliest memories of Marlborough (back in the mid-eighties) deliver images of a rugged mountain range sheltering a fertile valley where clean (for an Aussie) sheep grazed contentedly in green paddocks. The bucolic patchwork was interspersed with apple, cherry and stone-fruit orchards, and the occasional field of garlic and other vegies.

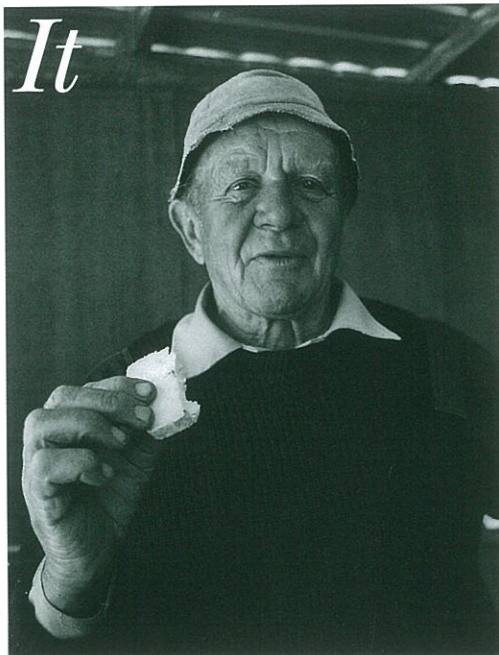
Twenty years later most of the orchards, vegies and roast lamb legs have made way for endless rows of vines – Marlborough's liquid gold so demanded by the world's fine wine drinkers.

Back then, I recall championing anyone who'd listen about a possible complementary food business opportunity – locally produced farmhouse cheese. Goats cheese to match sauvignon blanc, washed rind cheeses, in fact any at all with more appeal than bland 'block' cheese.

Nothing happened. Then a few years ago I heard murmurs about a chap 'up the Wairau' who was experimenting with sheep cheese.

Meet Roger Frazer, retired ships' engineer who farms 200 acres in the middle of the valley. His flock comprises 200 Coopworth East Friesian cross ewes specially bred for milk production, rather than meat or fleece.

Roger, a self-taught cheesemaker, has developed a range of organic ewes milk cheeses, some of which are reminiscent of the sheep cheese of the Pyrenees.



Roger Frazer says – cheese...

There is a fetta, a hard white – awarded Gold at the NZ Cheese Awards – its Rimu-smoked equivalent, and a *roqueforti penicillium* inoculated delicious crumbly Blue.

Roger makes 3000 kilos in a good year and matures some of the range in vacuum packs, minimising wastage. In the milking season (September – January) he gets about 200 litres daily from 'his girls' and makes cheese every four days.

Visitors to the Wairau Valley are welcome at the farm and can find River Terrace sheep cheese at the weekly Sunday morning Blenheim Farmers' Market (Spring – Autumn). Details: www.riverterracefarm.co.nz

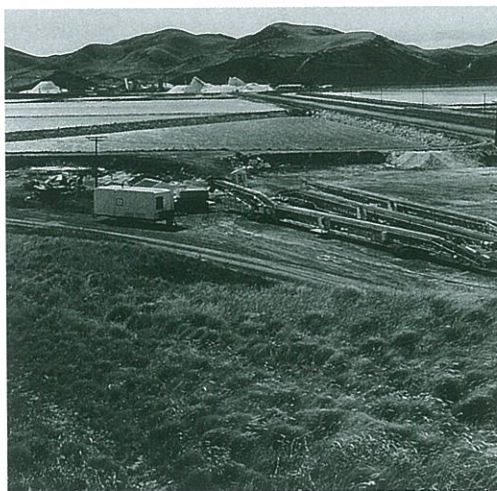
LOCAL HARVEST

Marlborough is becoming known for more than its wines.

April is a busy time in the Wairau and adjacent valleys – when the region's 300-odd grape growers pick their carefully nurtured crop, which in 2005 is expected to tip the scales at over 92,000 tonnes.

But autumn heralds another lesser known harvest in the region – sea salt. New Zealand's only salt producer, Dominion Salt, has, since 1943, operated solar-powered (aka sun-dried) salt works at Lake Grassmere, a few kilometers south-east of the Awatere Valley on the road to Kaikoura and Christchurch.

Over 1400 hectares of flat coastal land is sub-divided into storage, concentrating and crystallizing ponds where Marlborough's minimal rainfall and reliable sunshine facilitates the natural evaporation process for sea salt production. During the salt-making season (which commences in October) up to 40 tonnes of sea water are pumped per minute from the main lake into the inter-connected evaporation ponds. The eventual salt crust, which at



Marlborough's other harvest.

certain times takes on a bright pink algal induced hue, is then harvested and washed. Up to 6000 tonnes can be scraped, scooped and piled in a day.

Much of the production is destined for industrial use but Dominion also markets a range of Marlborough Natural Salt for domestic use. Available grades include fine, coarse and flaked – all 'ripened' by Marlborough's bountiful sunshine. More information is available at: www.naturalsalt.net

CELLAR RAT

Sancerre About Sauvignon Blanc

Dearest Mentelles,

A funny thing happened on the way to the fridge. The Rat passed over a Stella and grabbed a bottle of Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2004. That's right. I'd pinched one off the line that morning, purely QC you understand, to check out our Twentieth Vintage.

Yes, Cloudy Bay has been making Sauvignon Blanc for 20 years and you discerning drinkers are still loving the lychees on a gooseberry bush.

'Twenty years', I hear you say, disbelieving your own and the Rat's age. Who says sauvignon blanc doesn't age?

Twenty years is pretty respectable for a yuppie trend they said wouldn't last. Just a passing phase? I think not. Marlborough's hung its hat on sauvignon blanc and a good little hat hanging it's been too. At least we have a hat.

When I cast my much addled mind back to my first harvest in 1988 I knew nothing about wine apart from drinking it, and sometimes I even drank it with food.

My interest in wine grew and even infected people very close to me. I distinctly remember my mother telling Kev that the 1990 Sauvignon Blanc not only tasted fabulous but when rubbed on sand-fly bites alleviated the pain. I'm still not sure which compliment Kev appreciated most – 1990 was a bad year for sand-flies.

People ask me about the perfect Marlborough harvest and I have to say we have never had one. One or two have come close but more often than not God takes a hand, and I mean God, not the viticulturist.

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I could go on. God, this is depressing. But hang on a moment, we managed to make good wine, which says something about the variety.

So, the perfect harvest, in the words of Sam Cooke, will 'bring it on home to me!' With a bit of luck, I might be around to see it. (OK Kev, 1991 was quite close).

But let's get all this in perspective. What's 20 years anyway? There are three-hundred-year-old wineries lurking in the northern hemisphere but no-one's left to tell us what their first 20 years were like. For the successful ones, good I imagine, otherwise they wouldn't still be there.

One thing I'm sure they had, was the right variety matched to their conditions, which is something I'm equally sure we've got right, here in Marlborough.

Thank God we planted sauvignon blanc and not pinot gris. If we had, there's no way I would have passed up the Stella.

Love, Light and Peace,

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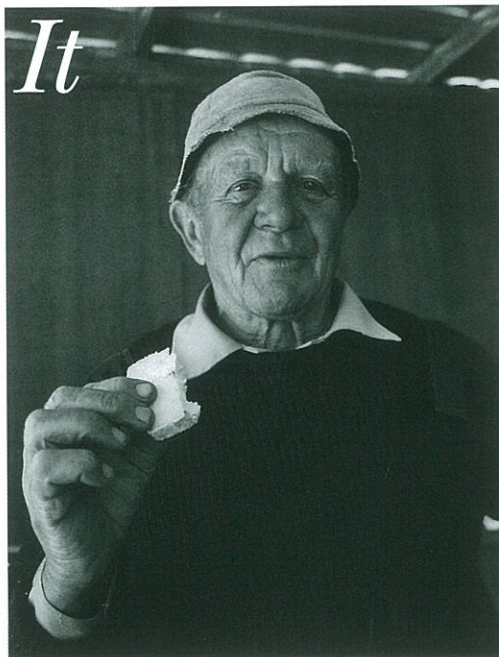
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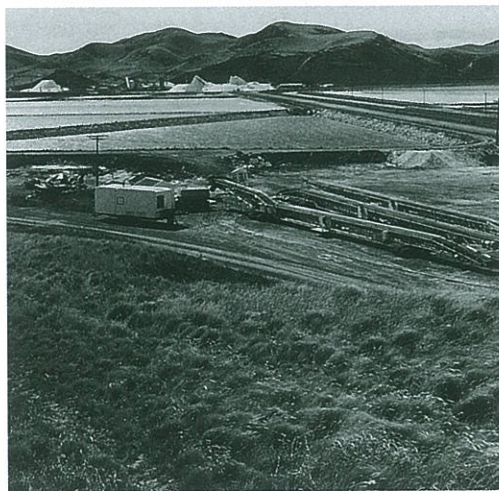
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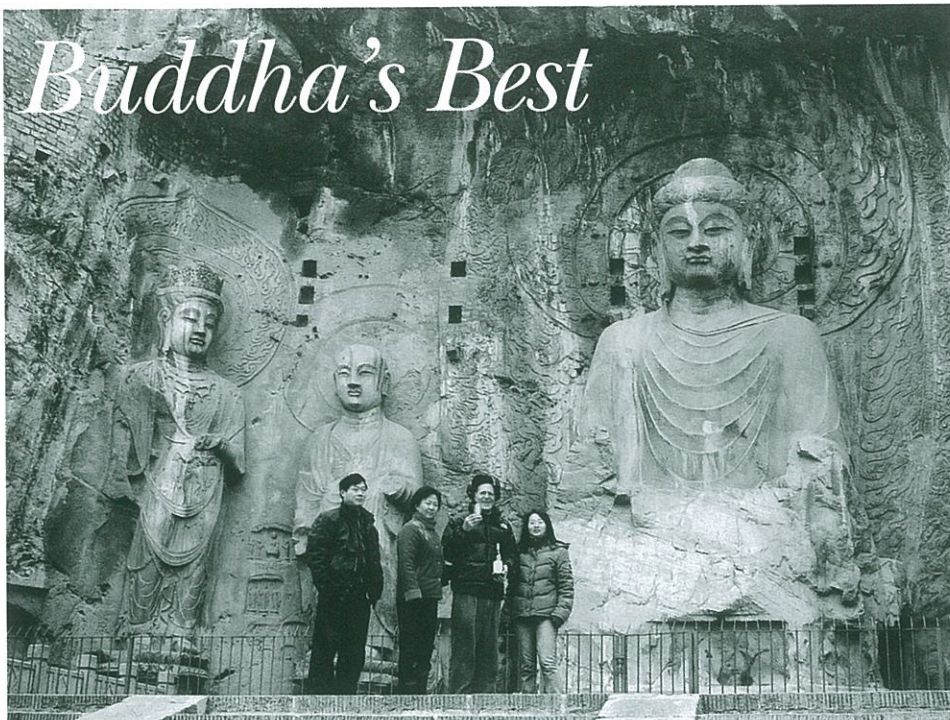
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Buddha's Best



Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc is an undisputed international ambassador both for the New Zealand wine industry and Marlborough sauvignon blanc. Countless thousands of bottles have found their way into homes, restaurants, boardrooms and picnic baskets the world over. Comparatively few have been drunk to date in China.

But two ambassadorial bottles did find their way to Mengjun in Henan Province, where Sally and Peter Hansen from Hastings, New Zealand, were engaged on a UN international trade project. One bottle was poured on a bitterly cold day at Longmen Shiku Grottoes where over 100,000 Buddha images and statues dating back to AD494 are carved into the cliffs of the Yitue river. The other was emptied at the Hansen's farewell banquet at the Henan hotel.

DOG GONE

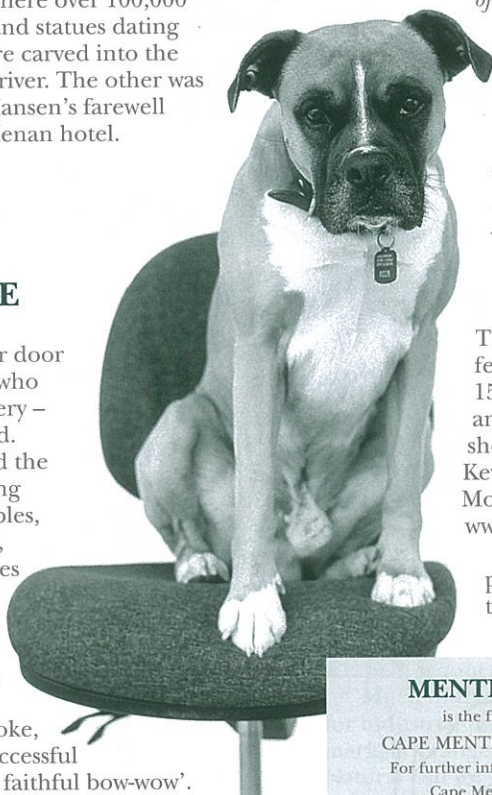
Committed cellar door visitors all know who really runs a winery – the winery hound. They hang round the entrance to tasting rooms, picnic tables, the smoko room, under lab benches – anywhere they can be part of the action.

According to Australian wine writer Huon Hooke, 'behind every successful winemaker sits a faithful bow-wow'. This is surely the justification for the second, deluxe edition of *Wine Dogs* by Craig McGill, to be published in Australia in early November.

The Hansens in Henan.

You too can be part of CBV's export effort. It's easy. Next time you're far from home and spot a bottle of Cloudy Bay – in a tapas bar in Toledo, a boudoir in Barcelona or on the shelf of the local wine stockist, buy it and take a photo. Then send it to The Editor, Mentelle Notes, PO Box 1101, Potts Point NSW 2011, Australia, or email to marketing@capementelle.com.au Taking a bottle with you is also highly commended and encouraged. MN will publish the best and most alluring photo (make sure digital images are high resolution) and the winning Mentelle Ambassador will receive a FREE mixed case of CBV or CMV wine.

All entrants receive a CB or CM T-shirt.



Waldo the Boxer-Lab-Ridgeback cross and faithful friend of Cloudy Bay nurseryman, Paul Brown.

The canine album features over 150 Australasian dogs and their tales – some shot by Cloudy Bay's Kevin Judd. More details available at: www.winedogs.com.au Mentelle Notes is proud to bring you this preview...

MENTELLE NOTES

is the free publication of
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Ph (+61 8) 9757 0888 Fax (+61 8) 9757 3233
Website: www.capementelle.com.au

Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2003

'Beautifully judged, a benchmark Sauvignon Blanc.'

5 Stars, DECANTER, UK

'Gorgeous, overflowing with green apple, gooseberry, herby and cedary flavours of remarkable complexity, weight and length. It's still a benchmark for the style.'

Huon Hooke,

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, AUSTRALIA

'Still fresh and vital with intense flavours of kiwifruit, gooseberry plus a hint of guava and passionfruit soufflé. Power and flavour length.'

UNCORKED, THE AGE, AUSTRALIA

Cloudy Bay Chardonnay 2002

'By far the best 2002 Chardonnay at a new release tasting. Lemon yellow, white flowers and honey on the nose, ripe yet precise Chardonnay fruit with underlying minerality, great polish and persistence. A simply superb wine for drinking now.'

Best New World White, Stephen Spurrier
DECANTER, UK

Cape Mentelle

Semillon Sauvignon 2003

'Has been the benchmark now for so long it is sometimes easy to overlook its sheer quality. This is a bottle full of West Australian sunshine – and it has class, elegance and really is just waiting for a fridge, a few prawns and a perfect summer's day.'

Stuart Gregor,

DON'T BUY WINE WITHOUT ME 2005

Cape Mentelle Shiraz 2002

'This is the best Cape Mentelle Shiraz for some years – ripe, spicy and whistle clean. It has a nutty almond oak and cherry, blood plum fruit aroma suffused with dry spices. The palate is deep and lushly fruited, the flavours underlined by supple but ample tannins. Impressive stuff.'

5 Stars, Ralph Kyte-Powell
THE AGE, AUSTRALIA

'A scrumptious shiraz...'

Best Shiraz, PENGUIN GOOD AUSTRALIAN WINE GUIDE 2004/05

'A classic Westie... tight and complex with blackberry, mulberry and pepper and spicy tones from well-seasoned oak.'

92 points, Philip White
THE ADVERTISER, AUSTRALIA

Cape Mentelle

Cabernet Merlot 'Trinders' 2002

'Sophisticated and faultlessly made, with clear ripe blackcurrant fruit, vivid acidity and a taut tannic undercurrent.'

Silver Medal

INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALLENGE 2004

'A dense fruit-packed nose offering plenty of chocolaty oak and a subtle thread of green herb. A big wine on the palate with an impressive structure to the fleshy fruit flavours, overlaid with tarry oak.'

4.5 Stars, WINESTATE, AUSTRALIA

Cape Mentelle

Cabernet Merlot 'Trinders' 2001

'Very dark red colour. Classic aromatic expression. Lots to it. Ripe and luscious with a fruit spice. Good acid balance. Goes through with a great length.'

Keep for up to 5 years.'

Australian Bordeaux Varietal Trophy
DECANTER WORLD WINE AWARDS

Cape Mentelle Zinfandel 2002

'A big boisterous wine to warm you on a winter's night. Spice, panforte and deep blackberry fruit make a great impact and the wine has a chewy feel, voluptuous texture and grippy tannins. Definitely not for the faint-hearted.'

4.5 Stars, Ralph Kyte-Powell, THE AGE