

'Must-Have Wine'

O:TU SAUVIGNON BLANC 2007 - Awaterre Valley, Marlborough, New Zealand
BEST UNWOODED SAUVIGNON BLANC OF THE YEAR 2007



With the emphasis on un-wooded, that being fermented in stainless steel, this accolade goes to the most refreshing, crisp and zingy style Sauvignon Blanc released this year. Unashamedly intended for early consumption, this unpretentious style should not be relegated in dignity or shunned by wine buffs for the best examples are by no means lacking in distinctive character or signature of their terroir, as exemplified by this mineral specimen from the Awaterre Valley, Marlborough, New Zealand. The fact is Sauvignon Blanc remains the world's most popular white grape variety satisfying many criteria for the contemporary wine consumer and congenial comotation.

Winery Profile

Move over Cloudy Bay, here comes O:TU (abbreviation for Otuwhero, pronounced 'oar-two-fare-raw in the Maori language). This is Marlborough's newest player yet already trailblazing around the globe. For those who feel there is an element of predictability in Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, yes it is consistently first-rate and far from becoming passé. This relatively new sub-region of Marlborough has imparted new impetus on an established regional style adding a distinctive minerality, augmented by pronounced, refreshing natural acidity and a discernible elegance. Admirably, O:TU only produces Sauvignon Blanc and from totally estate grown fruit, this being the second commercial vintage crafted with precision by native Marlborough winemaker Gordon Ritchie. Amongst a bevy of fledging praiseworthy New Zealand producers, this is certainly one to watch.

Terroir (= total vineyard environment) & Vintage Synopsis

An extraordinary, if not enviable location that combines mountain freshness and ocean breezes, literally! The vineyard has a backdrop of Mt Tapuae-O-Uenuku, usually topped with snow from autumn to spring, supplying unlimited crisp mountain air as well as pure subterranean water. Planted in the estuary of an ancient riverbed that once flowed into the barren coastline of Clifford Bay, the eastern end of the vineyard almost has its feet in the South Pacific Ocean, only 1.5 km away. It is easy to imagine (see picture) how millions of years of rising and falling ocean-levels, glacial tailings, and volcanic upheavals have created an alluvium stony soil mixed with yellow-grey earths rich in minerals, yet free draining. The climate here is marginally warmer and notably drier than the Marlborough's main Wairau Valley, coupled with the unique mountain-oceanic airflow tempering the hot sunny days with a longer, cooler growing season finishing about three weeks later than the rest of the region. They do not get bad vintages in Marlborough however, 2007 is viewed as extraordinarily good with lower-yields, a result of late November frosts, and unparalleled intensity of flavor due to the longest, idyllic growing conditions on record.

Winemaking

There is not a lot say about the winemaking here other than stainless fermentation and minimal intervention. No fancy yeasts or enzymes, no malo-lactic characters, no oak, no acid adjustments. Just pure, pristine natural flavors harnessed by meticulous winemaking, bottled expediently and safely sealed under screw cap. Crucial to the equation is picking at the precise time as Sauvignon Blanc has a very small window for optimum ripeness and can have over-herbaceous characters if picked too early, or overt tropical tones and reduced acidity if overripe.

Tasting Note

Lively fragrance of grapes (like taking a green table grape and squeezing it), kiwi fruit, guava, hints of passion fruit with a back ground of zesty lemon-lime; unfolding a more intriguing perfume of snow peas shoots, fresh tarragon, bay leaf, fresh ginger, and mountain stream freshness amongst flinty minerals and a touch of white pepper. Zingy, tangy palate entry bristling with a charge of lemon then fleshing out with mouth-watering juiciness of grapefruit and mandarin sweet-sourness, building to sweeter guava, fresh figs and ripe pear checked by edgy acidity with garden mint and lemongrass nuances, lingering lemon, passion fruit and gooseberry with a spicy glow of pickled ginger. The perfect balance between attractive herbal and tropical tones with an elegant, crisp and racy frame: tantalizingly vivacious, exuding a purity and freshness that echo's its pristine environment.

Serving & Food Pairing

Serve well chilled to anyone that looks thirsty! Perfect for social comotation or when you need instant satiation after a hard days work. Obvious choice for summer salads with prawns, tuna, avocado or tangy Thai salads. Also works brilliantly with Malaysian style Curry Laksa and Balinese-style barbequed fish. One of the main shareholders tells me it pairs magnificently with freshly shucked oysters and a seafood platter of crayfish, mussels, and barbequed fish, all harvested with five minutes boat-rod of the vineyard!

Longevity & Price Point

Drink right now! Absolutely perfect drinking and I cannot think why you would cellar this wine although its will retains its freshness for a number of years as bottled under Screw cap closure. Offers excellent price/quality rapport at around HK\$180 per bottle.

Importer/Agent

Hong Kong: Limestone Coast Wines, email: angela@limestone-coast-wines.com
Indonesia: Vinplus, email: herman@vinplus.biz
For trade enquiries and worldwide agents, email: antonia.davison@otuwheroestates.com

Vineyard website

www.otuwine.com

Travel

Notwithstanding the excellent trout fishing, diving, sailing and fishing, cruising the Sounds remote coves and beaches, ballooning, hunting, trekking in dense forests, the Marlborough region is quintessential wine touring country and radiantly sunny year-round, although somewhat chilly in the winter months. Visit www.wine-marlborough.co.nz to plan your trip and if by chance you are there during the summer months, dinner at Herzog winery restaurant is a must www.herzog.co.nz



Otuwhero Estate - a pure, untouched haven where the land meets the sea

Curtis Marsh, The Wandering Palate

"Life is filling in time between meals... and a meal without wine could only be breakfast!"