



# New Zealand's wonder whites

**Zingy and refreshing to full and complex; intensely mineral to downright hedonistic: Kiwi Sauvignons showcase everything this stylish variety has to offer. But they're not the only super whites from the Land of the Long White Cloud. Majestic Buyer Matt Pym takes up the story.**

## The rise and spread of Sauvignon

Sauvignon Blanc was really only first planted in New Zealand in the 1970s, yet by the 90s Oz Clarke was describing it as "arguably the greatest in the world." Since then, the UK has fallen in love with New Zealand "Savvy", as the locals call it, to the extent that NZ wines are behind only France in their popularity with our customers.

Marlborough can justifiably be thought of as the spiritual home of Sauvignon within New Zealand. Historically the stony, alluvial plains surrounding the Wairau River produce the best Savvies, with grapes from Rapaura's 'Golden Mile' making names like Cloudy Bay, Jackson Estate and Nautilus Estate synonymous with world-class Sauvignon.

Over the years, insatiable demand and a desire for experimentation have led to increased planting in Marlborough, alongside greater knowledge of microclimates and *terroir*. Many producers now blend different sub-regions to boost complexity, such as combining Awatere Valley's tight, citrus wines with the Wairau's more tropical, passion-fruit style. Nautilus Estate now use grapes from the Wairau, Awatere, Opawa and Kaituna regions for their benchmark Marlborough Sauvignon – a firm Majestic favourite since the late 90s.

A new area to me is the Kekerengu Coast in the far south of Marlborough, home of the superb Astrolabe Sauvignon. Many of the vineyards here are less than a mile from the Pacific Ocean shore and you can almost taste the fresh sea air in the clean, flinty, slightly salty finish of this classy, precise wine laden with honeysuckle.



Nautilus Sauvignon Blanc 2009,  
Marlborough  
**£10.99** or **£8.79** when you buy 2 bottles

Te Muna Road Sauvignon Blanc, Craggy  
Range 2008, Martinborough  
**£11.99** or **£9.59** when you buy 2 bottles

Cape Crest Sauvignon Blanc 2008,  
Te Mata, Hawke's Bay **New!**  
**£17.49** or **£13.99** when you buy 2 bottles

Astrolabe Kekerengu Coast Sauvignon  
Blanc 2009, Marlborough **New!**  
**£19.99** or **£15.99** when you buy 2 bottles

The Ned Noble Sauvignon Blanc 2009,  
Marlborough, **Half bottle New!**  
**£12.49** or **£9.99** when you buy 2 bottles



## Beyond Marlborough

Swap the north of the South Island for the south of the North Island and you move from Marlborough to Martinborough, home of world-renowned Pinot Noirs. But it makes some stunning Sawvies too. Craggy Range is one of NZ's top producers, making regionally distinct wines from all the major viticultural areas. The stony, limestone-rich soil of their Te Muna vineyard makes a great Sauvignon: all nectarine and floral aromas, with a broad lime and grapefruit palate. A very small proportion of the Te Muna wine is fermented in French oak to add depth and weight.

Te Mata's Cape Crest from Hawkes Bay, on the other hand, really goes for it, undergoing 100% barrel ferment in French oak as well as gaining complexity from small amounts of Semillon and Sauvignon Gris. The resulting style is somewhere between Marlborough, quality white Bordeaux and Californian Fumé Blanc, with lovely fresh stone-fruit, melon and sherbet flavours mixed with toast, vanilla and minerals. We only get a small allocation of this iconic, sumptuous, slightly crazy Sauvignon, so get it while you can.

We return to Marlborough to complete the gamut of Sauvignon styles. Thanks (allegedly) to EU protectionism, we haven't been able to import NZ dessert wines until this year. But now, at last, the UK gets to appreciate the excellence on offer. The Ned Noble (Botrytis) Sauvignon is a real treat – wonderfully intense with masses of honey and brioche, alongside zesty passion fruit flavours balanced with fine acidity.

## Aromatic attractions

Whilst Sauvignon has long been NZ's trump card, I was really impressed by the quality and range of aromatic white wines being produced there when I visited last September. These styles are not that new to the Kiwi wine scene (Pinot Gris has long been trendy as it goes so well with Asian-Pacific fusion cuisine), but recent times have seen a real surge in quality as winemakers learn more about the varieties and vines continue to age.



Waimea Estate Gewürztraminer 2009,  
Nelson **New!**  
**£11.99** or **£9.59** when you buy 2 bottles

We're already exclusive UK stockists of Waimea Estate's excellent Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris, but this really stood out on my last visit. It retains classic lychee and rose petal aromas, but is uncharacteristically elegant and almost delicate on the palate. Lovely stuff.

Main Divide Riesling 2008, Pegasus Bay,  
Waipara **New!**  
**£12.49** or **£9.99** when you buy 2 bottles

Made in an off-dry style, this is a real star from Waipara's most esteemed producer. Lime and orange zest dominate the nose, with wet slate and kerosene nuances and a touch of honeysuckle from a small amount of botrytised grapes. Citrus flavours shine through on the palate whilst fresh acidity keeps everything in balance.

Mount Difficulty Pinot Gris 2008,  
Central Otago **New!**  
**£17.49** or **£13.99** when you buy 2 bottles

Mount Difficulty's excellent wines consistently win awards and rave reviews at home and abroad. New to Majestic, this is a great example of NZ Pinot Gris – broad, creamy and powerful on the palate, with nectarine, peach and pear flavours. Lovely acid balance and a long finish.

# Leeds loves...

The Leeds store team – Manager Jamie, Assistant Manager Kathryn and Trainee Manager Ben – choose four of their favourites for your delectation.



## Jamie's choice

I've picked four very different wines that I enjoy drinking all year round, but which are especially fantastic when (or if) the sun shines.

## Kathryn's choice

Wine is a product of the land on which it's grown and threads together all areas of life – people, history and culture. With this in mind, I've picked a sample of four wines that reflect individual styles.

## Ben's choice

As the newbie in the team, I wanted to contrast four very different wines during my first few weeks at Majestic.

Grand Ardèche Chardonnay 2007, Louis Latour, Vin de Pays des Côtes de L'Ardèche, France  
**£8.49** or **£7.99** when you buy 2 bottles

A great example of Burgundian expertise being put to use outside the region - in this instance in an area closer to Rhône than Burgundy. Lovely butterscotch and vanilla flavours with a long finish. A classy wine that I even recommend to those who wouldn't normally drink Chardonnay.

Château de Sours Rosé 2008/09, Bordeaux, France  
**£9.99** or **£7.99** when you buy 2 bottles

Think summer, drink rosé. Always popular in the sun, this brightly-coloured Bordeaux rosé has plenty of creamy strawberry fruit, with a touch of refreshing redcurrant. I always recommend this as the rosé for non-rosé drinkers.

Clos de Los Siete 2007, Mendoza, Argentina  
**£12.99** or **£11.99** when you buy 2 bottles

It might not be everyone's idea of a summer wine but this will match any Aussie Shiraz at a BBQ. A blend of Malbec, Cabernet, Merlot and Syrah with plenty of red fruits and a full spicy flavour.

Roaring Meg Pinot Noir 2008, Mount Difficulty, Central Otago, New Zealand

**£17.49** or **£13.99** when you buy 2 bottles

I first had this wine with Christmas dinner but found it to be just as good a fit with spring lamb and summer dishes. Plenty of red and black berry fruits and a touch of spice from the oak give this wine a very layered feel.