

RECENT ARTICLES

Cross-Tasman offering from 3 Tales

Sauvignon blanc turns up tasting in many different ways. So, too, do most other wines. It's terroir, you see – soil, sub-soil, day and night temperatures, water, how the vines are trellised and pruned.

If you are old enough you may remember the wonderful surprise of Marlborough sauvignon blancs, most famously Cloudy Bay. Here was a whole new repertoire of smell and taste sensations and we loved it all, back then 20 years ago.

Since then the grape has been persuaded to give up its treasures in many different ways, often resulting in wines that are barely recognisable as being SVB.

But the latest entrant in the fairly crowded field goes back to the originals.

It's 3 Tales 2008 Marlborough sauvignon blanc, the product of a trans-Tasman alliance of two strong wine-making families, DeBortoli on our side of the ditch and Marris, well-known, successful and at times controversial, over there.

An extraordinary amount of experience and expertise in grape-growing, wine-making and marketing has been poured into this product, carefully planned to reproduce the Marlborough magic.

And the first sniff of a glass tells you they've done it. The bouquet lifts the spirit as does a Mozart overture. The makers put it more technically: "Freshly-cut grass and nettle mingle with classic tropical aromas of passion-fruit and gooseberry".

What you smell is what you taste – a fresh and fruity mouthful. It's as dry as can be and delivers 13.5 per cent alcohol.

The makers say it will cellar for two to three years, but I don't see the point in that. Drink it now with seafood and salads.

The label is one you won't forget and I think the



David Bray

WINE



wine is well worth remembering. About \$20.

While they're at it, De Bortoli have put some fizz into the equation, with their new Emeri sparkling sauvignon blanc. New to the popular Emeri range, it's dressed up like an expensive fizz, is fresh and fruity and will do a fine job getting a party started.

About \$12.

Also in piccolos (little bottles).

The conservative world of northern hemisphere wine is changing, bowing to the inevitable influence of innovation and experience of the antipodes.

The most revolutionary change is in how the wine is kept in its bottle.

On this side of the world we have been screw-topping for years. Now something like 90 per cent of New Zealand wines and at least 70 per cent of Australian bottles are closed that way – or so far for a very small minority with a crown seal. Even the best of them.

The Brits resisted for a while and the French even more so, with the cork holding firm except down the bottom end of the market.

But word seeped out recently that two of the great names – Domaine de la Romanée-Conti in Burgundy and Bordeaux's Chateau Margaux – are thinking about using screw tops.

Romanée-Conti would not say anything but Chateau Margaux Paul Pontallier agreed that the Bordeaux domaine was trying them out.

"We've been doing tests for the past four or five years," he said. "But it's too early to say whether we will use them, as our wines are made to be kept," he added.

But well-known Burgundy producer Jean-Claude Boisset is using them on them on top wines, including a Chambertin grand cru 2005, a \$250 job. This year, a third of the producer's 200,000 bottles will use screw tops.

"We started at the high end, because we are convinced that screw tops are perfect for fine wines that need to age, as they protect them better than cork from oxidation," said Gregory Patriat, in charge of bottling at Boisset.

The Laroche group has also gone for screw tops, including on its prized Réserve de l'Obédiance, a white Chablis grand cru that sells for about \$150. But Renaud Laroche says he still likes cork for reds. "Screw top's advantage remains to be proven for red wines to be kept," he told *Le Figaro* newspaper.

He will learn. The absurdly influential wine critic Robert Parker recently reckoned wines bottled with corks will be in the minority by 2015.

Sooner than that, I'd say.



DE BORTOLI WINES