

Photo by Anneliese Hough



# by the glass

Yvonne Lorkin finds big blends can be beautiful...

## BLENDED WHITES

Five years ago, while sipping my way around the WineNZ trade show, I noticed an unusual trend – people were blending their whites, and it wasn't pretty. While there's nothing strange about adding a bit of Semillon to the Sauvignon you might say, it was the other combos that had me confused. Riesling, Viognier, Pinot Gris and Muscat were being thrown together, Chardonnay and Gewürztraminer, Gewürztraminer and Viognier, Müller Thurgau and well, pretty much anything. Why was this happening? "Oh we had half a tank of Gewürz, a spare barrel of Chardonnay and some extra Pinot Gris floating around so we thought we'd chuck it all together and Bob's your auntie! We reckon our 'Griswurzonny' has huge potential." Hmm. I struggled on, but found those wines boring, bland and blousy. They smacked of something that had been thrown together as an afterthought, certainly nothing to be taken seriously. But those were the bad old days. The world's a different place now and with winter approaching I decided to change my attitude and get back amongst those blends. Good thing I did because I might never have had the pleasure of tasting **John Forrest's The White 2006 (\$50)**. The mother of all blends, this draws on Viognier, Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Riesling, Gewürztraminer and Chenin Blanc from Marlborough, Hawke's Bay, Central Otago and the Waitaki Valley. Incredibly aromatic and deliciously dry, it boasts unusual lemongrass, citrus zest, elderflower and nashi-like notes along with mouth-filling complexity, weight and toasty persistence of flavour.

Art, nature and science merge in the form of **Dada 1 2007 (\$50)** by Kate Galloway and David Ramonteau. A saucy, sexy (and,

I suspect) Sauvignon Blanc-based blend (the winemakers won't confirm or deny) that's perfumed with hay, dried herbs and white flowers. Dadaism is an artistic movement based on deliberate irrationality and negation of traditional artistic values. First impressions suggest the wine is crisp, dry and delicate, but in the mouth it has power and mature character – if Lady Gaga were a wine, she'd be Dada 1.

**Waimea Estate's Edel 2009 (\$22)** combines Riesling, Pinot Gris and Gewürztraminer after inspiration from the wines of Alsace. It has gorgeous lifted minerality, citrus blossom and lychee notes along with poached pear and five-spice and a long, lingering finish. The **Bellbird Spring Home Block White 2009 (\$30)** is created from Pinot Gris, Riesling, Gewürztraminer and Muscat grown on a single vineyard in Waipara's Glasnevin Gravels. Gorgeous lifted florals mix with honeyed stonefruit characters to leave a rich, softly spicy, oily and textural mouth feel. And finally, **Alpha Domus The Aviatrix 2009 (\$23)**. This intriguing Hawke's Bay blend of Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Viognier is a must with the 'Pork Fillet with Apple and Shallot Sauce' recipe in our Easy Everyday section. Jasmine and citrus blossom aromas and nutty, toasty complexity in the mouth make it a must sip.

## DARK HORSE OF THE FAMILY

New pony in the paddock, Dark Horse Vineyard, is ready to bolt. Their debut Cabernet Merlot has winemaker Juliet Lyons very excited. "We grow grapes to the highest standards to make the very best wine we can. Our philosophy is to make single estate-grown handcrafted wines derived from nature." Well, they all say that, but the proof is in the wine, which is ripe, ready and raring to go. The Lyons family

has been growing grapes on Mere Road in Hawke's Bay's Gimblett Gravels district for more than 20 years and in addition to their Cab Merlot, a sensational Syrah is on its way. Visit online at [darkhorsevineyard.co.nz](http://darkhorsevineyard.co.nz) for where to buy.

## V IS FOR VICTORY

Villa Maria scooped the 'Champion Other Whites or Reds' trophy at the Royal Easter Wine Show for its 2008 Single Vineyard Ihumatao Verdelho – the first ever trophy for this variety in New Zealand. "Villa Maria and associated brand Esk Valley are leading the charge for Verdelho production in New Zealand, so to win a trophy for the Single Vineyard Verdelho gives us confidence that we are getting the techniques right and heading in the right direction," says Villa Maria's Senior Auckland Winemaker Nick Picone. Verdelho originates from the small volcanic island of Madeira and, coincidentally, has found a home for itself in the extinct volcanic basin that is Villa Maria's Ihumatao vineyard in Auckland. It's also one of only three wines grown on the Estate. In addition to Verdelho, Villa Maria is enjoying the increased popularity of the rare French variety Viognier. Sales of Viognier grew 260 per cent in 2009, with domestic sales increasing by a whopping 350 per cent.

## TEAM AMERICA

It was the Americans who took top honours this year at the international 42Below Cocktail World Cup, snatching the title in a fast-paced, furious frisson of 'flair' (that's bar-speak for throwing bottles around). Following a week of extreme cocktail challenges in the deep south, the Old Museum Building in Wellington played host to a rock star-themed event that pitted teams of the world's best 'mixologists' in a battle to create the best burst of flavour



From left: John Forrest's The White 2006; Dada 1 2007; Waimea Estate Edel 2009; Bellbird Spring Home Block White 2009; Alpha Domus The Aviatrix 2009; Dark Horse Gimblett Gravels Cabernet Merlot 2007.

in a glass. Team America's winning cocktail was made with 42BELOW Pure, apple bitters, lime thyme syrup and an artichoke aperitif and was entitled 'I have too much thyme on my hands right now at this point in my life'.

## CELLAR DOOR CELEBRATIONS

Gibson Bridge has been judged Best Cellar Door in Marlborough, despite the fact it only opened two and a half years ago. Owners Howard and Julie Simmonds are thrilled with the title. "Moving into the wine industry has been a late-found career for us both," says Howard. "It has been five and a half years, seven days a week...so this acknowledgement is an absolute delight."

He says their aim was to create a wine studio that reflected the quality and passion of their wines. Their ability to impart information in a friendly and knowledgeable way was also commented on by the judges. The Marlborough Cellar Door competition has been run by Wine Marlborough for the past four years, with each cellar door in the region visited twice by mystery shoppers during the busy summer months. They're all judged on a variety of business aspects, including the service given over the telephone, knowledge of the local wine industry right through to the experience of tasting wines in person. In each of the six categories, Gibson Bridge scored a perfect 100 per cent, a never before achieved feat. Gibson Bridge is in Renwick, for details visit online at [gibsonbridge.co.nz](http://gibsonbridge.co.nz) ☺

## DISH PROMOTION

### Chinese Steamed Fish

Use the Gaggenau Combi-Steam Oven to create this deliciously healthy Asian-inspired dish.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 x 850 gram snapper, (or any other firm white fish) cleaned and scaled | 2 tablespoon Chinese shaoxing cooking wine  |
| 4 kaffir lime leaves  | 2 tablespoons soy sauce                     |
| 4 slices ginger   | 1 teaspoon sugar                            |
| handful coriander stalks  | juice of ½ a lime                           |
|   | <b>To serve</b>                             |
|   | 1 long red chilli, seeded and finely sliced |
|   | 2 spring onions, thinly sliced              |
|   | small handful each coriander and mint       |
|   | <b>Sauce</b>                                |
| 1 tablespoon sesame oil   |   |
| 2 tablespoons vegetable oil   |   |
| 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced  |   |
| 2 tablespoons julienne ginger   |   |

Preheat the combi oven to 100°C with steam set at 100%.

Line the unperforated cooking insert with baking paper.

**Fish:** Stuff the cavity with the kaffir lime leaves, ginger and coriander stalks and place the fish on the baking paper.

Steam for 15-20 minutes.

Discard the stuffing and carefully drain off the cooking liquids around the fish. These can sometimes taste a little bitter and will dilute the sauce.

Carefully transfer the fish to a serving platter.

**Sauce:** Heat the sesame and vegetable oils in a small saucepan until hot. Add the garlic and ginger and sauté until the garlic is just starting to colour. Add the shaoxing, soy and sugar, take care as it will bubble furiously and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Add the lime juice.

**To serve:** Immediately pour the sauce over the fish and garnish with the chilli, spring onions and herbs. Serve with hot cooked rice if desired.

**Serves 4**



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