

## Villa Maria Private Bin Sauvignon Blanc 2006 Marlborough

2 Jan 2007 by JR

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Okay, so this is not the most original wine you will find, but I reckon that at this time of year you need something vibrantly, bracingly refreshing whose strong aroma and searing acidity will blow through your system, waking up those parts that have atrophied under the assault of all that rich food and strong drink over the holidays. Besides, there is something quintessentially spring- like about Marlborough Sauvignon, even if autumn approaches in the southern hemisphere region itself.

**Villa Maria Private Bin Sauvignon Blanc 2006 Marlborough** is the most basic bottling of Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand's largest independent wine producer (except for the even cheaper Riverstone range available only in New Zealand. The 2006, is particularly intense yet delicate. Far too many Marlborough Sauvignon producers seem to think they don't have to try – just bottle a vaguely aromatic, crisp white with varying amounts of asparagus, armpit and gooseberry (green fruit) aroma. Blended from Wairau and Awatere valley fruit – a sign of just how much is produced – this wine is the result of the notably warm, dry 2005/6 growing season and early harvest before rains fell, prejudicing the red wine grapes. It has been quite a while since I have been as impressed by a Marlborough vintage. Like the great majority of New Zealand Sauvignons, this has a residual sugar level over the usual perceptible threshold of 2 g/l: 3.5 g/l in this case, although high acid and low pH keeps the wine from tasting actively sweet.

You can read Linda Murphy's enthusiastic review of notable [New releases from New Zealand](#) for more pointers among the 2006s but at this time of year when pennies tend to be counted, I congratulate Villa Maria on being able to deliver such reliably exciting wine at a very decent price - a god antidote to the [Wither Hills saga](#) discussed in some detail recently on [members' forum](#).

The standard retail price is £7.99 (at 187 branches of Waitrose for example) – while at least one US retailer is offering it at \$7.99 and many have it at under \$10. Surely shome mishtake? The best price I can find in the UK is chez Majestic who are offering it at £6.39 a bottle if two bottles are bought. On mainland Europe, winesearcher.com identifies one German retailer offering at 9.05 euros – still a lot less than the UK price. Presumably the British are being made to pay for their longstanding love of this pungent wine style.

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Those looking for Marlborough Sauvignons with a little more individuality may also care to research **Clos Henri, Dog Point, Gravitas, Isabel, Saint Clair and Seresin**, among a host of other names clamouring for attention.