

News and opinion from New Zealand

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- Waipara is a fast- growing but still pretty sleepy little wine region near Christchurch in the South Island of New Zealand with thousands more sheep than Pinots (and such exciting wine producers as Bell Hill, Mountford, Pegasus Bay and Danny Schuster. Now comes news that the French hotel group, Accor, the biggest hotel group in the world (Sofitel, Novotel, Mercure, Ibis...), is planning to build a snazzy 'wine village and day spa' as part of their Grand Mercure Collection to be launched early in 2009. The intention is that it will become one of the country's leading holiday resorts with 132 rooms. This NZ \$60 million investment by Latitude Group, one of New Zealand's leading property investment companies, is schedule to open early in 2009 in Hurunui, north of Christchurch. The Waipara Wine Village & Day Spa will offer a the now rather commonplace Vinotherapy (see Ch Smith Haut Lafitte and their Sources de Caudalie in Bordeaux), a restorative health and beauty therapy using grape and vine based products, designed to firm skin and slow the aging process – as evinced by how incredibly youthful all of us wine professionals look.
- If you thought that Kiwi Sauvignons were a mite powerful – hold on to your seat and taste buds. At Auckland University they have recently isolated a yeast strain capable of producing Sauvignons that are five times as intense as the ones currently producer. Kerpow!
- *Harpers* wine trade weekly furthermore reports that Damian Martin who sits on the board of the Marlborough Wine Research Centre of Auckland University reckons that Britain's professional wine buyers are denying the British wine drinking public access to the wide range of styles of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc available by so rigidly sticking to the grassy aromatic style when in fact, he claims, consumers might well prefer riper, richer styles. Tim How, md of Majestic Wine Warehouses, robustly refutes this, maintaining that it's the grassy style that all his buyers (and by implication his customers) want.