

Dry River, Craighall Riesling 2008 Martinborough

29 Jun 2010 by Jancis Robinson

From £21.50, NZ \$59.95 and \$42.99

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I took part in a blind tasting of a range of smart, non-European white wines that had been proposed for HM the Queen's dinner table yesterday. (I will be reporting in more detail on this tasting in the delightfully cool cellars under Buckingham Palace.) Unsurprisingly, most of them were Chardonnays of varying quality, but the single most impressive wine was clearly a bone-dry Riesling made with great skill and with real longevity in mind.

As a reminder of the greatness of Riesling in anticipation of our publication of hundreds of tasting notes on 2009 German Rieslings next week - many of them absolutely delicious - allow me to present **Dry River, Craighall Riesling 2008 Martinborough**. It is wonderfully dense and dry, verging on austere at the moment. I would ideally wait a couple of years before drinking this and am confident it will drink well throughout this second decade of the 21st century and probably even longer.

I have been following wines from this, one of New Zealand's most distinctive and admired wine estates, for years now and looked at a bottle of **Dry River Craighall Riesling 2001 Martinborough** last night. It is still going strong, though, like the **2002**, seems a little sweeter than the super-steely 2008. The 2008 is more in Grosses Gewächs style and thus does not look bad value at all.

The vineyards and winery of Dry River, in the south east of the North Island, have been run with great thoughtfulness and rigour by Dr Neil McCallum (pictured) since 1979. He could sell every bottle several times over within New Zealand but remembers his Oxford education (he has a chemistry PhD) by exporting a certain proportion of his output to the UK. Brits can buy this wine by the single bottle from Raeburn of Edinburgh, whose Zubair Mohamed has been a particularly faithful supporter of Dry River, and, even better value, can buy a dozen bottles for £195 in bond, from both Justerini & Brooks and Farr Vintners.

In the US, the wine is available from the resourceful K&L of San Francisco. (I certainly can't think of any California Riesling that offers this amount of tension and taut potential.)

McCallum always goes his own way. He's a great enthusiast of using reflective foil on the ground to increase the intensity of fruit in his wines, and he is one of a tiny minority of NZ wine producers to eschew screwcaps. He is a particular fan of his 2007 Riesling, labelling it Amaranth, as he does all of the wines he reckons are exceptional.

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