Neudorf Sauvignon Blanc 2008 Nelson, NZ

1 Oct 2009 by Julia Harding MW

From £12.99, US$18, NZ$22, AU$22

Find this wine

'I am afraid that much of the UK wine trade appears to have written off the whole of New Zealand's 2008 Sauvignon Blanc vintage as rain-affected and are jumping through to the 2009. This ignores the many excellent wines produced, particularly from those of us who crop at low levels and harvested before the late-April rains. I guess we were swamped by the over-cropping cowboys.'

Tim Finn's lament is pretty accurate. But so is his **Neudorf Sauvignon Blanc 2008** from **Nelson** in the cool north west of New Zealand's South Island. I didn't have the chance to taste this wine with the line-up of new releases at the end of last year, described in NZ Sauvignons - 2008 marathon, because Tim and Judy Finn (pictured below) choose to release their Sauvignon Blanc later than most producers. As he explains: 'The style of wine does not rely on fresh zappy fruit and looks really good after about a year in bottle. So the 2008 was bottled in late 2008, released in early 2009 and is really coming into its own right now; I expect it to be a fine wine to drink over the next three to four years at least - but I may be the only one to have any left to taste ... In terms of production, this entails low crops (well ripened in a cool area), some neutral barrel ferment [ie older barrels], some hand-pick/whole-bunch press (to reduce phenolics without the need for fining) and a longer settling/later bottling regime.' By low crops he means around 6 t/ha (42 hl/ha) compared with the industry average of 12 t/ha.

Finn sent me these comments after I had tasted the wine but they explain just what you taste in the glass, even without that extra time in bottle that he recommends. Here's my note:

Restrained but distinctively citrus-styled Sauvignon aromas with an attractive hint of mineral-like reductiveness and an almost imperceptible, sensuous, floral note, possibly rose petals and maybe even fresh ginger? Really complex if you take long enough over it and don't rush it into your mouth. On the palate, richer than the nose suggested, intense but not overly pungent, bright and lemony but with a marked almost sour leesy character that gives tang and freshness. The use of older oak to ferment a small portion of the wine is very well handled so that it adds texture and weight and not oak flavour. Rich and long but finishes fresh. Delicious. The 14% is not intrusive though it does add a little extra weight and roundness in the mouth, as does the extrememly modest (and declared on the back label) 1 g/l residual sugar.

Tim and Judy Finn's adventure began in 1978. They started with, as they say in Our story, 'youth (temporary), self belief (unwarranted) and friends. At one stage we had four mortgages and three jobs each.' Today their wines are highly regarded and well distributed around the world, though I have personally found the Riesling and the Pinot Gris less exciting than their Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. (Jancis included the **Neudorf Moutere Chardonnay 2007** in her list of promising NZ Chardonnays a few months ago in NZ learns new tricks.) The sheer class of this 2008 Sauvignon, and the sure-footedness of this style from vintage to vintage, is a reflection of the truism that a good winegrower stands out most clearly in a vintage where the majority do not shine.

The 2008 Sauvignon Blanc is available in the UK from the following retailers via importer Richards Walford: Amps Fine Wines (Oundle), Amphora Wines (Melton Mowbray), Caviste (Overton), H Smith (Ashbourne), Cambridge Wine Merchants (Dry Drayton), Woodwinters (Bridge of Allen). Also available online from Must Wines in Scotland (www.mustwines.com) and www.everywine.co.uk.

Main retailers in the US include K&L (CA), Weimax Wines & Spirits (CA), Cleveland Park Wine & Spirits (DC), Sherry Lehman (NYC).

In Australia: Dan Muphys and Sydney Wine Merchants. In Denmark: Gobi Copenhagen. Wine-searcher (pro version) also lists Kiwi Weine in Germany and Wine Buzz in Toyama, Japan.

Find this wine