



GIMBLETT GRAVELS WINEGROWERS ASSOCIATION

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VERY IMPORTANT Media Release: London Tasting Confirms Tipping Point Reached for NZ Red Wines

NZ Red Wines – Serious Contenders

The only major gap between a selection of Hawke's Bay red wines and the best from Bordeaux these days would appear to be just the price..

Q: What do you do when a low-key tasting of your wines in Taupo confirms that your wine is up to scratch with the very best from Bordeaux from that celebrated region's very best vintage from the past decade?

A: Take the whole thing to London, invite some of the world's best palates and wine critics and do it all again, just to make sure.

Jancis Robinson, Michael Schuster and Neal Martin all have big reputations within the international wine community. This afternoon they hosted a tasting panel in London that included wine industry luminaries such as James Lawther, Oz Clarke and a number of other extremely influential writers and wine buyers.

The occasion was a double-blind master class tasting of six wines from the Bordeaux region in France alongside six wines from the Gimblett Gravels wine district in New Zealand's Hawke's Bay. Apart from the provenance of the wines, even the names of the wines were hidden from participants until the tasting was complete and the results collated.

Before the results were announced, Jancis summed up the sentiments that were strongly mirrored by the majority who had participated "...it wasn't evident as to which wine was (from) which (region)", words echoed by Michael Schuster's comments "...there was a lovely freshness in all the wines, and it was quite difficult to tell which was which".

With more than a dozen refined Bordeaux experts in the room, these statements are very encouraging for the winemakers from the fledgling Gimblett Gravels. As Rod Easthope, winemaker at Craggy Range, explains "In a tasting of this stature, it is always a primary reflex for palates of this skill and experience to attempt to identify the Bordeaux wines, and in this case there were certainly some surprises."

The panel collated its results (as shown below) for the 'top six' wines. The list includes two Gimblett Gravels wines.

Considering the quality and reputation of the French wines, this is an exceptional outcome, extremely encouraging for the Gimblett Gravels, where the vineyards were only seriously established at the beginning of the 1990's.

This result is very significant for New Zealand wines. The UK is the largest importer of Bordeaux wines in the world, and the complexity and depth of these wines make them the most popular category for the UK's consumers. Amongst the several high-level buyers present at the tasting, all expressed pleasant surprise at the afternoon's discovery.

One of the UK's largest Bordeaux Traders is Farr Vintners who were represented at the tasting by Stephen Browett who stated "I haven't tasted much NZ wine, the last time I did a proper tasting was more than five years ago and I found 70% to be (undesirably) herbaceous – today there were no herbaceous tones – this has completely eliminated my (previous) impression of NZ red wines." These sentiments were further supported by wine writer Oz Clarke who stated that he felt that the Gimblett Gravels wines had undergone 'dramatic' development in the past eight years.

Perhaps the most telling of the day's comments came from Jancis Robinson who mooted to the entire panel the proposition that **"the (Gimblett Gravels) wines tasted were the closest comparison to the Bordeaux wines of any wine region (in the world) today."**, a sentiment that received full support from the assembled panel.

There is now no doubt whatsoever that the Gimblett Gravels has helped create a 'tipping point' for the world's perception of New Zealand's Bordeaux-styled red wines.

The Results

Rank	Vintage	Wine	District	Region	RRP UK £	Equiv. NZ \$	Vine Age
1	2005	Chateau Lafite Rothschild	Pauillac	Bordeaux	975.00	2,715.00	40 yrs
2	2005	Chateau Mouton Rothschild	Pauillac	Bordeaux	675.00	1,880.00	48 yrs
3	2005	Chateau Angelus	St Emilion	Bordeaux	295.00	821.00	30 yrs
4	2006	Sacred Hill – The Helmsman	Gimblett Gravels	Hawke's Bay	18.00	50.00	7 yrs
5	2005	Chateau Haut-Brion	Pessac-Leognan	Bordeaux	700.00	1,950.00	30 yrs
6	2006	Newton Forrest Cornerstone	Gimblett Gravels	Hawke's Bay	15.00	42.00	12 yrs

The Gimblett Gravels wine-growing district is home to around 30 vineyards, is just 800 hectares (less than 2000 acres) and stretches along New Zealand's state highway 50 south of the city of Hastings in the Hawke's Bay.

Once dismissed as useless land by sheep farmers, a small group of pioneering wine entrepreneurs recognised its potential in the 1980's.

In less than quarter of a century this tiny district has developed as a world-beater, renowned for its Bordeaux-style varietals such as Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon as well as Chardonnay, and the now rapidly pursued by the sky-rocketing popularity of its intense Syrah wines.

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