

# M E Q

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## *Bigger Than Bacchus?* The Story of The Mercure

**Morton Estate's "The Mercure" is a superb blend of Bordeaux reds that has developed something of a cult following since its release as a 1998 vintage. A fine addition to the White Label range, The Mercure combines merlot, cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc. How did it become "The Mercure"?**

From the start it was known that the constituents of the blend would change depending on the vintage. The New Zealand labelling laws say that if



the wine contains a grape variety comprising more than 15% of the total volume, it must be named on the label, if stating a variety.

We decided a brand name had to be developed and we turned to Roman mythology. The Roman God of Wine was named Bacchus. At Morton Estate, we felt we already had a Bacchus in our 1998 Black Label Merlot Cabernet – a multiple gold medal and award-winning wine. This new Bordeaux blend could be described as the understudy, the little brother to our Bacchus. After further research it was found that Bacchus had a brother, the God Mercury. French for Mercury is Mercure and with that the brand was born. Mercure was the God of Eloquence and messenger of the Gods.

We like to see our Mercure as an eloquent drink and messenger of the standard that Morton Estate Wines strives to achieve. A typical Bordeaux style blend containing merlot, cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc in various amounts. The Mercure 2003 blend contains more cabernet franc than

before, contributing more mid-palate weight and finer, less green tannins often associated with New Zealand cabernet sauvignon in cooler vintages. The result is a refined, smooth example of the label that will respond well to further bottle age.



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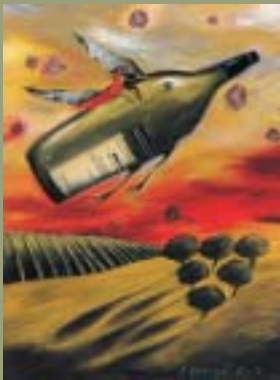
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# NEWS & VIEWS

## WIN SIGNED PRINTS



To WIN one of 20 "Discover The Art" signed prints, simply email us your name, address and phone number. Please specify if you would like to receive future emails from us, and write "Discover The Art Competition" in the subject line. Send entries to:  
**info@mortonestatewines.co.nz**  
**By Monday 7th November 2005.**

## New Releases



### THREE VINEYARDS HAWKES BAY CHARDONNAY 2001

This is an interesting study in what can be achieved by blending wines with complementary characteristics. The fruit was sourced from our three specialised Hawkes Bay chardonnay vineyards – with fruit elegance, intensity and structure from Kinross and Riverview and the delightful broadness and fatness on the palate from the warmer Tantallon vineyard. Barrel fermented and lees stirred, the effect is similar to our acclaimed Riverview Chardonnay.

The wine displays concentrated mandarin characters on the nose, with intense flavours. This unique chardonnay is full bodied, quite viscous and oily on the palate. Drinking well now – no need to cellar.

### NIKAU POINT HAWKES BAY RESERVE CHARDONNAY 2001

Nikau Point, a brand distributed by Morton Estate, continues to be a favourite with people who love food and wine. It's a wine created to enhance the Pacific rim flavours we Kiwis love from our food. The fruit was carefully selected from the Hawkes Bay. Clone 15 vines were used, resulting in rich and intense fruit, with great flavour development that is typical of our cooler Hawkes Bay climate.

The wine has extraordinary length and depth. The oak is well integrated with aromas of vanilla and coconut enhancing the ripe melon flavours and the tight citrus acid finish. This is a wine to excite the taste buds.

### MILL ROAD HAWKES BAY MERLOT CABERNET 2003

Mill Road is another brand distributed by Morton Estate. A predominantly merlot-based blend, which is clean on the nose with notes of dark fruits like raspberries, cherries and plums. This wine benefits from some high quality fruit and is a good everyday wine with just a little residual sweetness to round out the palate. Drinking well now and is a great accompaniment to barbecue cuisine.

"This is a great little wine – it's tight, with nothing out of place and a nice round palate," says Evan Ward our Hawkes Bay winemaker.

# GREAT BORDEAUX REDS AND METHODES



A stunning photo of Morton Estate's newest vineyard, Kuranui in Marlborough.

Look for some great reds and sparkling wines from this year's vintage, says Morton Estate's Hawkes Bay winemaker, Evan Ward. The 2004/2005 summer had its challenges, with a great start, difficult middle period and a very hot ending. The conditions were ideal for Bordeaux reds, which prefer a hot finish to ripen nicely.

"We have some of the best sparkling wine base ever," says Evan, which bodes well for one of Morton's acclaimed wines, the Premium Brut Non Vintage Methode Traditionnelle. Although the Morton Premium Brut NV is not an expensive wine, it regularly gains praise from wine writers and competition judges for its complex, breadly flavours. Its popularity around Christmas also tells us we're on the right track. We're looking forward to the 2005 vintage base coming through in our sparkling wines.

While conditions didn't favour the production of our top tier Black Label Chardonnay, it means that the other

chardonnays in our range have benefited from fruit that would have normally been earmarked for the Black Label range. The saying "it's an ill wind that blows no good" seems rather inappropriate in this particular context.

## And From Marlborough...

This season's Stone Creek wines are looking fantastic, especially Pinot Noir, which will be among the best Morton Estate has ever produced.

Our Winemaker Chris Archer and Stone Creek vineyard manager, David Craig successfully overcame the challenging growing conditions presented by the Marlborough region. While these conditions are ideal for sauvignon blanc, which responds to variable soils and conditions, pinot noir needs the opposite – stable and uniform soil as well as consistent ripeness. Canopy management and fruit loading were among the management techniques used to offset

the variable soils. With evenly ripened fruit and consistent quality, Chris Archer was able to work his magic.

"This year I have kept 14 barrels of pinot noir and they look sensational," says Chris. "This year's sauvignon blancs are also going to be outstanding."

As for all the Stone Creek wines, this vintage was a very good one, with a consistent growing season and no great fluctuations, allowing the fruit to ripen evenly to peak condition. Morton Estate has been concentrating on producing sauvignon blancs with intense tropical and herbaceous notes.

It was also an excellent year for riesling. Great flavour profile has been achieved with the new plantings coming online this year to complement the consistent block on Stone Creek. Near the end of the season the vineyard was under constant bird attack, which is always a good indication of flavour and ripeness.



Morton Estate recently sponsored the Marketing Magazine Awards. (Above Left) Marketing Award winners and MC Mary Lambie.(Above right)

# BLACK LABEL CHARDONNAY, NEW ZEALAND CLASSIC



"One of the classiest of New Zealand chardonnays" is the verdict on Morton Estate Black Label Chardonnay, according to Michael Cooper's latest book *Classic Wines of New Zealand*. The publication looks at the top five per cent of wines and "explores the reasons why top wines are as they are and the secrets behind the label." Michael discusses each wine in depth, giving insights into production and the reasons for quality, while also covering each wine's style and cellaring potential. Consistency of quality from year to year lies behind the reason for each wine's selection. This second edition updates the first edition published in 1999 and covers wine produced in the 10 key winemaking regions. Morton Estate's Black Label Chardonnay also featured in the first edition.



Michael Cooper is a well-known wine writer and the Wine Editor of *Cuisine* magazine. His other publications include the annual *Buyer's Guide to New Zealand Wines* and the *Wine Atlas of New Zealand* – a glossy coffee table publication that won the 2003 Montana Medal for Non-Fiction.

## EXCERPTS FROM MICHAEL COOPER'S BOOK

For 21 years, Morton Estate's flagship wine has been one of the country's most distinguished chardonnays. Since 1996, it has been under the direction of Evan Ward. The Black Label Chardonnay is a justly celebrated Hawke's Bay wine. Refined, weighty and tightly structured, it offers a lovely array of grapefruit and melon-like, mealy, oaky flavours and a long, rich finish.

The earliest vintages were substantial and huge in flavour, but after the 1991 vintage the style changed, placing greater emphasis on flavour delicacy, tightness and longevity. If you ask Evan Ward about the key reasons for the wine's quality, he points straight to the quality of the fruit.

"The grapes come from what can only be described as a unique site for

Hawke's Bay, and this has a profound influence on the wine's flavour profile." The Black Label Chardonnay is grown entirely at the company's Riverview vineyard at Mangatahi, an elevated, relatively cool inland site, on the banks of the Ngaruroro River.

"When I first came to Morton Estate, I could not believe the quality of the chardonnay grapes (Riverview Vineyard in Hawke's Bay) - their level of ripeness and flavour intensity. Its fruit character is its greatest strength."

The major winemaking impact has been in the choice of oak. Because the wine is fermented and aged in all-new oak, the choice of oak style is critical if the fruit characters are to be enhanced. To that end, the majority of oak selected is from coopers who water-bend their

staves, rather than use the traditional fire-bending. This gives a much softer, less phenolic oak impact. In general, the toast level is never more than medium. Morton Estate's Black Label range has not always been entered in New Zealand wine competitions. However, the 1995 vintage won a gold medal at the Air New Zealand Wine Awards in 1996, rated 94/100 in the influential *American Wine Spectator* magazine in 1997 and also scooped the trophy for "Champion Chardonnay" at the 1997 London International Wine Challenge. The 1996 vintage won golds in New Zealand and London and the 1998 collected a five-star rating in *Cuisine Magazine* and a gold medal in the International Wines and Spirits Competition in London.

Morton Estate Black Label Chardonnay is one of the classiest of all New Zealand chardonnays. It's a very powerful wine, robust and awash with flavour, yet highly refined, with beautifully intense fruit characters, firm acid spine and the structure to flourish with age. That London Trophy didn't surprise me.

A wine of great power and refinement, Morton Estate Black Label Chardonnay is robust, with strikingly concentrated, vibrant, grapefruit and peach flavours, woven with fresh acidity. Designed to be at its best after significant bottle age, it is deliciously complex and harmonious at four to five years old. Top vintages mature well for six to eight years, with the fruit flavours playing an increasingly subordinate role to the nutty, toasty, bottle development characters.

The 2002 Black Label Chardonnay. Youthful, light lemon green. Beautifully scented, with fresh, ripe fruit aromas mingled with mealy, biscuity notes. Weighty (14.5 per cent alcohol) young wine, immaculate and opulent, with grapefruit, peach, pear and toasty oak flavours showing lovely delicacy, richness and complexity. Still unfolding, with finely balanced acidity. A star vintage. Drink 2006 through to 2008.



# It would have been a textbook

introduction to modern art, if only I'd read a few textbooks on the subject. Which would have saved me from pointing out that one particular piece was reminiscent of my four year-old niece's art. Which wouldn't have been so bad, had Liz's mum, who created the work, not been standing behind me. Which is probably what prompted me to hastily remark that a rather boxy looking exhibit in the corner was a wonderful statement on 'spacial existentialism'. At which point Liz kindly explained that it was in fact a box of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. Which the critics agreed, was a modern-day masterpiece.

*distinctive passion*



# Winewriter's Choice

## Jane Skilton



### Black Label Hawkes Bay Syrah 2002

Syrah is a relative newcomer to New Zealand. For a long time it was thought that the country was too cool and wet to ripen the variety properly and as recently as 1995 only 14 hectares of NZ syrah existed. Fast forward ten years to 2004 and that figure has swelled to 183 hectares, an increase of 1200%! In the right sites syrah can ripen fully and produce wines not unlike the peppery, savoury reds of France's Rhône Valley. To reinforce this, New Zealand winemakers label their wines as syrah (unlike the Australians who call the same grape variety shiraz).

The 2002 Black Label Hawkes Bay Syrah comes from the region that has had greatest success with this noble grape variety. Hawkes Bay is well known for producing excellent Bordeaux blends from cabernet sauvignon, merlot and malbec. But the quality of syrahs emerging would suggest that soon it may be more famous for these fruit driven, deep flavoured wines. The region gets that extra degree of ripeness that makes all the difference and produces wines with the rich cracked pepper and spice characters that are hallmarks of great syrah. The wine is immediately appealing ; the textbook aromas of pepper, spice and dark berry fruit complement the elegant, ripe fruit flavours. At 12.5% the wine has richness and depth of flavour without seeming too alcoholic. The notes from the winery suggest it could be cellared for 3-7 years but is delicious right now – I would be tempted to drink it with an eye fillet of beef cooked over charcoal.



# Winemaker's Choice

## Chris Archer



### The Marchioness Of Morton 2004

#### Something different from Marlborough.

Once again, Morton Estate is leading the way with a wine that proves Marlborough can produce more than zingy sauvignon blancs.

We have created our first Black Label Sauvignon Blanc, called The Marchioness of Morton. The Marchioness plays a stylistic tribute to the great white wine houses of Bordeaux such as Domaine de Chevalier and Chateau Pape Clement. A wine with balance, harmony and complexity, the Marchioness has attributes never before experienced in Marlborough. On the nose, subtle limes mix with rose petals, lavender, cinnamon, sandalwood and vanilla bean. The palate is soft and seductive with generous weight and incredible length while still maintaining an element of rambunctious youth. To achieve the Marchioness's unique attributes, our winemakers used techniques perfected by wineries in the Graves region of Bordeaux. The Marchioness is ready for enjoyment now and will mature elegantly over the next four years.

