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MY NEW ZEALAND REDS OF THE YEAR 2014

January 13th 2015

Think New Zealand red, think Pinot

Noir but there's more to New Zealand red wine than one variety: some of the best reds I've reviewed over the past 12 months reflect New Zealand's ability to produce classy Bordeaux styles as well as sexy Syrah, particularly in the warmer climes of Hawke's Bay.

When it comes to Pinot Noir, Central Otago is the must-have region on most wine lists but quality abounds across the country with key players in the Martinborough and Waipara regions, in particular, continuing to impress in 2014.

My wine of the year was a five year-old Pinot from Canterbury's Pyramid Valley that is ripe for drinking now. Be quick if you want to get your hands on a bottle as there's not much left.

Here are **My Seven Superlative Reds** reviewed in the past 12 months...

[Pyramid Valley, Earth Smoke, Pinot Noir 2009, North Canterbury](#)

95/100

Hailing from Waikari in North Canterbury, 2009 was the warmest year owner-operators Mike and Claudia Weersing had experienced in their 9 years on the farm. Yet the wine remains delicate and ethereal. It is now a cloudy garnet in the glass, showing its 5 years of age. The flavours are alluring, offering up smoky notes, game and plum fruit but it is the silken texture that really impresses. And, while it is incredibly delicate and light bodied, it manages to combine this with mahoosive density of fruit, pointing to the site's low yields. This is all topped off with fine chalky tannins. Well done guys.

[Escarpment Kupe Pinot Noir 2012, Martinborough](#)

94/100

An incredibly classy and unadulterated Pinot Noir. The perfumed nose is pure and unsullied, giving aromas of damson fruit, Earl Grey tea and spice. It has impressive fruit density, fine-grained yet abundant tannin and a fine line of acidity that zips the wine up. A long, dry finish with plum and spice lingering. One of the best wines I've seen from this not-so-easy vintage.

[Mills Reef Elspeth Merlot 2010, Hawke's Bay](#)

93/100

Rich, ripe and smooth as a baby's bum, this Merlot is showing incredibly well right now. It's full bodied and plush, with classic Merlot flavours of plum, fruit cake, and spicy oak. Incredible depth of fruit and long length show the quality of this wine. Watch out Pomerol!

[Craggy Range Sophia Bordeaux blend 2013, Hawke's Bay](#)



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Minimum Score/20

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93/100

New World wines have been stereotyped as offering sweet fruit but this is broody and complex. The richly aromatic nose is full of spice, dark cocoa and fruit cake. Work at it a little and it then offers up typical herbal characters from the Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc-raspberry flavours. Smooth and supple in the mouth, finishing taut and dry finish. This is a wine with poise. High level of fruit concentration indicates low yields and you're left with stone-licking texture. Abundant tannin leaves a pleasant chewy texture. Barrel sample. Released June 2015.

[Elephant Hill Syrah 2013, Hawke's Bay](#)

92/100

A stylish and polished Syrah. Yummy juicy blackberry fruit plus a spicy black pepper and savoury note give this wine plenty of character. It shows the ripeness of the excellent 2013 season yet remains fresh and vibrant. Medium bodied and elegant with ripe supple tannins. This Kiwi producer is giving the Northern Rhone a run for its money.

[Fancrest Estate Pinot Noir 2009, Waipara](#)

92/100

2000 litres of this wine were saved from the flames of a winery fire and thank goodness: it's a sexy and svelte Pinot Noir. Work your way through the layers of complex flavours: plum, spice, savoury notes and a slightly meaty element. It's elegant and supple with fine-grained chalky tannin, reflecting its limestone soils. Considering the vines were just 6 years old when the fruit was harvested, this has incredible depth and purity of fruit. A very good effort that is still youthful at 5 years old. One to watch for the future.

[Valli Gibbston Valley Pinot Noir 2011, Central Otago](#)

92/100

Year-in, year-out, Grant Taylor's Valli Pinots never fail to impress. There's always a purity of fruit and because he doesn't fine nor filter, all the unadulterated goodness remains. This is pure and elegant Central Pinot, light bodied yet high in flavour concentration. Broody plum fruit and cinnamon spice combine to make this a sexy little number. Chalky texture to boot.

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