

Harvest 2007

# isabel vineyard

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## In the vineyard

Global warming still hasn't reached Marlborough... or New Zealand for that matter.

Our Spring was variable but tended towards the coolish side with frosts "wiping out" some large vineyards in the southern valleys and the Awatere valley - as late as November. The flowering season did not suit the Sauvignon Blanc cycle and some vineyards failed to set crops entirely.

Here at Isabel, this cool event affected our Sauvignon Blanc with definite reduced crop levels. On the bright side, this saved us the task of fruit thinning mid Summer.

The naturally reduced yields have certainly added to the concentration and vibrancy of our wines at this early stage.

Another positive due to the cooler weather was that disease pressures remained low.

When it seemed Summer would never emerge, it did! January's sunshine hours increased daily and from February we experienced perfect warm days.

The 2007 harvest itself was one of the most relaxed vintages Isabel has witnessed. The weather couldn't have been more ideal. Rain

stayed away throughout veraison which encouraged grapes to develop concentrated juice. Our Pinot Noir will especially benefit.

Rain continued to stay at bay during picking allowing us to bring fruit in at optimum ripeness. To brag slightly - two hours after the final grape was picked, it began to rain. Talk about good karma!

Pruning has now commenced and vines are enjoying a wee break. We have experienced some hard morning frosts lately which encourages vines to 'hibernate' - nutrients are stored up in the root system which will be utilized next Spring.

*Mike Newman, Viticulturist, and Patricia Miranda, Oenologist, debating rugby in 'Elevation' vineyard.*



*Harvest Crew 2007!  
Missing from photo is JG and Laetitia*

## In the winery

As usual, we welcomed a fabulous collection of international interns to the Estate this year.

Jean-Guillame and Laetitia Sipp from Alsace were the first to join us. Prior to harvest they worked in the vineyard but it was quickly recognized that JG's superior size, 6 foot 7, would be utilized to its fullest in the winery. We are proud to announce that their harvest was even

more successful than ours - with their first child set to arrive in September!

Next to join us were Katharina and Thomas - both from Germany, followed by Laura of Spain. Our trio from Chile came shortly thereafter; Karen, Paula and Tamara. Still with us, is Francois from South Africa who continues to assist Patricia with the daily win-

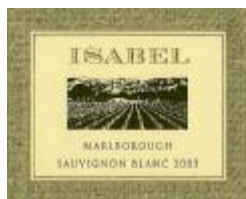
ery activities.

At this early stage, Patricia and Mike are pleased with how all five of our varietals are evolving and we only wish there was more to offer!

Crop thinning is always a sad process, but once again, we were rewarded with full and complete wines.



## Isabel hits the lounge... and a few other places



*Sauvignon Blanc 2005 continues to enjoy time in the limelight.*

It has been a year of new opportunities! Although sometimes our commitment to quality can hinder growth in production, we refuse to make anything less than the best and enjoy our slow but steady growth! 2006's perfect growing season was a welcome site and offered Mike and Pati a little extra juice to 'play' with!

I finally had wine to offer a few new faces....

This year, we welcomed a couple

of new markets to our international portfolio... We are now proud to be represented in both Vanuatu & Norway.

This coming September, we will also make our debut in Quebec, Canada. We are quite pleased with this accomplishment, but we must thank our translators, Irene and Eric for all their assistance. My numerous years of French classes apparently failed to stick!

On the local front, it is my pleas-

ure to announce that our wine is enhancing a few lounge experiences in beautiful New Zealand! Isabel Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2005 is now being poured at Koru Lounges nationwide. Air New Zealand's spin on the Airport lounge is a delight. Local wines are always on hand to compliment local cuisine and we are honored to be included in their wine selection for the next few months.

I can't think of a better way to pass time at an airport!

## Announcing... 'Elevation Vineyard'

*"Elevation vineyard has been carefully cultivated since planting four years ago..."*

As hinted at a few times over the past couple of years, we are *finally* delighted to announce that our 'single vineyard' Sauvignon Blanc is set for release in October 2008.

Elevation vineyard has been carefully cultivated since planting four years ago to capitalize on its specific terroir. Due to its unique elevation, the highest vineyard site in Marlborough, there will no

doubt be some exciting characteristics revealed next harvest.

This year we dropped all the fruit off the young vines, painful as it was, to encourage a healthy crop next year. Of course, intensive tasting of the grapes was still high on our priority list and delicious and distinctive flavors were discovered in full.

The soil of 'Elevation' is high in

calcium and limestone, similar to the Estate blocks, and offers delicious minerality to the juice. We look forward to discovering how Elevation's unique site will influence the resulting wine. Based on the grapes, it is sure to be a pleasure to drink.

Elevation will be bottled as an independent wine to the Estate range as it is grown outside our original vineyard site.

## Environmentally considerate...



*Riesling ripening in Block 2.*

At Isabel we are always researching new ways to ensure that our practices are environmentally sustainable. For twelve years now, the marc (left over stems and skins of pressed grapes) is returned to the vineyard soil as mulch. This organic cycle eliminates wastage and provides the vines with much needed nutrients for healthy growth and fruit production.

A good worm count is a sure fire indication of soil health. Our worms gain extra organic matter with light applications of a natural fish based fertilizer. This is applied in tandem with the mulch and enhances their 'environment' while the worms

aerate and fertilize our soil. A recent diagnosis confirmed that our organic soil matter is at a most favourable level.

Another measure of sustainability is ensuring that water is not wasted; all water used in the winery is put through our recycling program which cleans the water without chemicals. The water is tested everyday to ensure that the pH level is correct and is then returned to our vineyard.

Our biggest advantage against disease is the natural environment of Marlborough. The climate, especially wind direction, is studied before any planting

takes place - utilising the microclimate within each block to its fullest. The combination of our open vine canopy and the seasonal winds allow vines to stay dry and disease free. This eliminates the need for sprays.

In the production of our wines, Mike and Pati use minimal amounts of 'additives'. In the fining process, no animal products or dairy proteins are used allowing wines to be enjoyed by the more sensitive consumer. Although sulphite is a natural preservative, we still utilise it carefully. Changing from cork to screw cap closure further decreased its use; actually allowing us to use 2/3's less.

## Visitors to the winery

Over the last few months we have welcomed many exotic visitors to the winery.

John Hutton of BBR, our UK distributor, brought with him the charismatic and renowned Caprice restaurant team - GM, Des McDonald, Chef, Mark Hix, and Maitre d' extraordinaire, Jesus Adorna. We were spoilt by Robyn's talents in the kitchen which featured a couple truly Kiwi menu items - Whitebait patties and NZ lamb.

Shingo Munakata of LUC corporation, our Japanese distributor,

visited us in February. Although his third visit, it was his first time to see our Cellar Door and visit Elevation vineyard. We took advantage of his photography skills while touring - a crisp shot of the winery is now being displayed on the 'cellar door' page of our website.

Shingo stayed in our rustic vineyard lodge - situated next to the tractor shed... When asked how he slept, he declared it was the quietest night he had enjoyed in a long time! I suppose a tractor shed is nothing compared with the railway next to his Tokyo

apartment!

Anthony Rose, a key contributing writer to several UK wine magazines, visited us in February as well. Poor Patricia was a little jealous of him - his next stop was her homeland, Chile.

To round out the international tours, we were visited by Peter Rae and Eric Dequire of the Tri-alto Group, Canada. Eric was a welcome sight as he helped diagnose the intricate Quebec export program. Now if only we could understand his French accent!



*Eric and Peter, of Trialto Canada, join us for lunch on the patio. A perfect Summer's day!*

## Marlborough Wine Festival & The Wine Weekend

The Marlborough Wine Festival is always a great time. I strongly encourage anyone who hasn't been to keep it in mind for next year!

Every year more wineries participate and the marquee circle expands even further. Musical acts also continue to impress. This year we enjoyed the stylings of Rhombus, Greg Johnson and the Beat Girls. MC, That Guy, was also very entertaining.

Miraculously, it has only rained once in the 24 years that Wine

Fest has been operating, but we got close this year. It was overcast for most of the morning, but surprisingly, it was a welcomed change from the usual sunburns!

We enjoyed a steady stream of wino's at our stand and new 'trends' became obvious. Aromatics are hot! Although Sauvignon Blanc will never be out ranked, we were impressed by the amount of Pinot Gris and Riesling being requested.

This year, Wine Marlborough is adding a new local celebration to

the calendar. Hosted at Old St. Mary's Convent, the Wine Weekend is an event not to miss! Of course, local wine is the focus, but the weekend will be highlighting several attributes of Marlborough.

- NZ celebrity chefs, (local) Chris Fortune & Martin Bosley
- Live entertainment from Sarah Brown, a native of Marlborough

- Visits to unique locations in the three growing regions of Marlborough for focused tastings events
- Both international and local guest speakers & panellist's

I suppose it is obvious that we intend to participate in this grand event - alongside 34 of our colleagues... Hope you join us too!

Further details and ticket info for both these events are available at [www.wine-marlborough.co.nz](http://www.wine-marlborough.co.nz)

## Isabel goes pint sized

The first release of our half bottle Sauvignon Blanc has proven a great success. Thank you for all the support, both locally and abroad.

Restaurants really seem to have taken a liking to this format as it is a nice alternative to the 'by the glass' option - without being an annoying 'up-sell'.

Boutique hotels have also shown great interest with requests for a partner in crime. To which we are happy to oblige - a 375 ml Pinot Noir will be included in our 2008 vintage release!

On the pint sized topic, this is a great opportunity to remind of our 2006 Noble Sauvage. Since we never 'encourage' noble bo-

trytis, our dessert wine is only crafted in years that offer the ideal conditions. It has been a long, sad, four year drought for my taste buds!

Our sticky is always a favorite and we will be very pleased to release our '06 offering next year..... Ah, a light at the end of the tunnel.



*Noble Sauvage 2002 - our most recent offering.*

Isabel Vineyard  
72 Hawkesbury Road  
Renwick  
Marlborough  
New Zealand

Phone: +64 3 572 8300  
Fax: +64 3 572 8383  
Email: [info@isabelestate.com](mailto:info@isabelestate.com)  
Website: [www.isabelestate.com](http://www.isabelestate.com)



Estate Grown ~ Estate Bottled

## Mike's travels continue...

Michael has had one busy year. After finally resting up after he and Robyn did two months straight of over sea's work last year, we sent him off again. This time to the UK, Europe and Asia.

In the UK, Mike joined Fields, Morris and Verdin at the Decanter Fine Wine Encounter. This is an invite only event and we are always honoured to be included. All current releases were poured along with a '97 Sauvignon Blanc for added interest.

The following week FMV kept Mike out of trouble by shipping him all over Great Britain for tasting events and wine dinners. A favourite stop of Mike's is Jeremy's Restaurant and this year it was no

exception. A fabulous dinner was hosted in their expansive garden on a perfect Summer's evening.

Since Mike was in 'that neck of the woods', we added on a five day whirlwind tasting event in Holland with our distributors, Residence Wijnen. Fabulously prepared events took place at boutique wine shops, art galleries and restaurants.

Next stop Japan - no rest for the wicked I say! LUC Corporation kept Mike busy for three days with in-store tastings and visits, as well as, a seminar for 30 key trade members on NZ wine and Isabel. The seminar was complete with Shingo offering translations. Mike, although worn out,

managed to enjoy himself thoroughly... in fact, I heard that he was the star of the show on the Karaoke stage later that night! John Denver was it?

Final destination, Hong Kong. After being impressed by Berry Bros & Rudd's centrally located premium wine store, Mike's schedule was filled with market visits and tasting events. I hope he wasn't too worn out by all that singing....

Now back on home turf, Mike will finally be able to relax a bit. Although I have a feeling it won't be for long.

Next stop Australia, followed by the USA in September!

## Cellar Door

Don't forget to come visit us the next time you are in Marlborough!

Cellar door Winter hours:

Monday thru Friday, 11am - 4 pm

Please call for an appointment outside of these hours and we will do our best to accommodate you!

*Mike's preferred mode of transportation!*

